Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

P

Paarai, Pace (Measure), Paddan, Paddan-Aram, Padon, Pagans, Pagiel, Pahath-Moab, Pai, Palace, Palace of the Forest of Lebanon, Palaestra, Palal, Palestina, Palestine, Pallu, Palluite, Palm, Date Palm, Palmerworm, Palms, City of, Palsy, Palti, Paltiel, Pamphylia, Pannag, Panther, Paper, Paphos, Papias, Papyrus, Parable, Paraclete, Paradise, Paradox, Parah, Paralysis, Paralytic, Paralyzed, Paran, Parapet, Parchment, Pardon, Parent, Parmashta, Parmenas, Parnach, Parosh, Parousia, Parshandatha, Parsin, Parthia, Parthians, Partridge, Paruah, Parvaim, Pas-Dammim, Pasach, Paseah, Pashhur, Pashur, Passion, Passion of Paul, Passion of Peter and Paul, Passover, Pastor, Pastoral Letters, Patara, Path, Pathros, Pathrusites, Patience, Patmos, Patriarchs, Period of the, Patrimony, Patrobas, Patroclus, Pau, Paul, the Apostle, Paulus, Sergius, Pavement, Pavilion, Peace, Peace Offering, Peacock, Pearl, Pedahel, Pedahzur, Pedaiah, Pekah, Pekahiah, Pekod, Pelaiah, Pelaliah, Pelatiah, Peleg, Pelet, Peleth, Pelethites, Pelican, Pella, Pelonite, Pelusium, Pen, Pence, Pencil, Peniel, Peninnah, Penknife, Penny, Pentateuch, Pentecost, Penuel (Person), Penuel (Place), People of God, People of the East, People of the Land, Peoples, Peor (Deity), Peor (Place), Peraea, Perdition, Perea, Peres, Peresh, Perez-uzzah, Perez, Perezite, Perfume, Perfumer, Perga, Pergamos, Pergamum, Perida, Perizzite, Persecution, Perseus, Perseverance, Persia, Persians, Persis, Peruda, Pestilence, Peter, First Letter of, Peter, Second Letter of, Peter, the Apostle, Peter's Letter to Philip, Pethahiah, Pethor, Pethuel, Petra, Peullethai, Peulthai, Phalec, Phallu, Phalti, Phaltiel, Phanuel, Pharaoh, Pharaoh Hophra, Pharaoh Necho, Pharaoh Nechoh, Pharaoh Neco, Pharaoh Necoh, Pharaoh's Daughter, Phares, Pharez, Pharisees, Pharosh, Pharpar, Pharzite, Phaseah, Phasiron, Phebe, Phenice, Phenicia, Phichol, Phicol, Philadelphia, Philemon (Person), Philetus, Philip, Philippi, Philippians, Letter to the, Philistia, Philistines, Philo, Judaeus, Philologus, Philometor, Philosophy, Phinehas, Phlegon, Phoebe, Phoenicia, Phoenicians, Phoenix, Phrygia, Phurah, Phut, Phuvah, Phygellus, Phygelus, Phylactery, Physician, Pi-Beseth, Pi-hahiroth, Pig, Pigeon, Pilate, Pontius, Pildash, Pileha, Pilha, Pillar of Fire and Cloud, Piltai, Pim, Pine Tree, Pinon, Pipe, Piram, Pirathon, Pishon, Pisidia, Pison, Pispa, Pispah, Pistachio, Pistis Sophia, Pit, Pitch, Pitcher, Pithom, Pithon, Pity, Place of the Dead, Plague, Plagues upon Egypt, Plain of the Pillar, Plane Tree, Plants, Pledge, Pleiades, Plow, Plowman, Plowshare, Plumb Line, Plummet, Pochereth-hazzebaim, Pochereth of Zebaim, Poetry, Biblical, Pokereth-hazzebaim, Pollux, Polycarp, Polygamy, Pomegranate, Pommel, Pontius Pilate, Pontus, Pools of Solomon, Poor, the, Poplar, Poratha, Porch, Porcius Festus, Porcupine, Porter, Portico, Solomon's, Posidonius, Possession, Demon, Postexilic Period, Pot, Potentate, Potiphar, Potiphera, Potsherd, Potsherd Gate, Pottage, Potter, Potter's Field, Pottery, Pound, Power, Powers, Praetorium, Praetorian Guard, Praise, Prayer, Prayer of Azariah, Prayer of Azariah, Prayer of Joseph, Prayer of Manasseh, Preaching of Peter, Predestination, Preparation, Day of, Presbyter, Presence of God, the, Prickly Alhagi, Pride, Priesthood, Priests and Levites, Primogeniture, Principalities and Powers, Prisca, Priscilla and Aquila, Prison, Prison Gate, Prison, Court of the, Prize, Prochorus, Procorus, Proconsul, Procurator, Promise, Prophecy, Prophet, Prophetess, Prophets, False, Propitiation, Proselyte, Prosperity, Prostitute, Prostitution, Protevangelium, Protoevangelium of James, Proverbs, Book of, Providence, Psalm 151, Psalm Titles, Psalms of Solomon, Psalms, Book of, Psaltery, Psychics, Ptolemaic Empire, Ptolemais, Pua, Puah, Publican, Publius, Pudens, Puhite, Puite, Pul, Pulse, Punishment, Punishment, Eternal, Punite, Punon, Pur, Purah, Purgatory, Purification, Purim, Purple, Purse, Put (Person), Put (Place), Puteoli, Puthite, Putiel, Puvah, Pygarg, Pyramids, Pyrrhus

Paarai

One of the mighty men of King David. Paarai was from Arba, in Judah (2 Samuel 23:35). He may be the same person as Naarai the son of Ezbai (1 Chronicles 11:37).

Pace (Measure)

Linear measure equivalent to the average distance of a man's stride, or about one yard (.9 meter). *See* Weights and Measures.

Paddan, Paddan-Aram

Northwestern Mesopotamian district whose name means "Field of Aram," distinguishing this flatland from the mountainous regions to the north and east. Paddan-aram is alternately called Paddan in Genesis 48:7, the "land of Aram" in Hosea 12:12, and Aram-naharaim in Genesis 24:10 meaning "Aram of the two rivers" (see nlt mg). The two rivers probably referred to the Euphrates and Balih rivers, between which this tract of land was situated.

See also Aram-naharaim.

Padon

Forefather of a family of temple servants who returned with Zerubbabel to Palestine following the Babylonian captivity (Ezr 2:44; Neh 7:47).

Pagans

In the Bible and Christian tradition, a pagan is someone who does not follow the God of Israel or Christian teachings. The word comes from the Latin *paganus*, which means a person from the countryside. In ancient times, people in rural areas often kept their old religious practices longer than those in cities.

Pagans usually believe in many gods, unlike Christians and Jews who believe in one God. They may worship nature or follow traditions from before Christianity spread. In the Old Testament, pagans are often called "gentiles."

Pagans in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God often warns the Israelites to stay away from pagan practices:

- Deuteronomy 12:31 tells the Israelites not to worship God in the same way pagans worship their gods.
- In Exodus 23:24, God tells the Israelites to destroy the idols of pagan peoples.
- The story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 shows a contest between the God of Israel and the pagan god Baal.
- Many of Israel's kings are criticized for allowing pagan worship (for example, King Solomon in 1 Kings 11:4–8).

The prophets often spoke against the influence of pagan religions on Israel. They saw pagan practices as a threat to the worship of the one true God.

Pagans in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the early Christians dealt with paganism in new ways:

- Jesus talks about pagans (gentiles) in Matthew 6:7–8, telling his followers not to pray like them.
- The apostle Paul often preached to pagans. In Acts 17:16–34, he speaks to philosophers in Athens about the Christian God.
- Paul's letters, like 1 Corinthians, give advice to new Christians who used to follow pagan practices.
- The book of Revelation warns against compromising with pagan culture and worship (for example, Revelation 2:14).

The early church had to figure out how to live among pagans and how to welcome pagan converts to Christianity.

Today, "pagan" can mean different things. It might refer to modern people who follow old nature-based religions, or more generally to those who are not part of major world religions.

See Gentiles.

Pagiel

Pagiel was a son of Ocran from the tribe of Asher. Moses chose Paigel to help count the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. Paigel also served as the leader of his tribe during that time (Numbers 1:13; 2:27; 7:72, 77; 10:26).

Pahath-Moab

Head of a family of Israelites who returned with Zerubbabel to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (Ezr 2:6; Neh 7:11). Other members of his family, about 200 men, came with Ezra (Ezr 8:4). After the return, certain of his sons were included among the Israelites who vowed to sever their relationships with foreign wives (10:30). Hasshub, Pahath-moab's son, helped rebuild the Jerusalem wall and the tower of furnaces in Nehemiah's day (Neh 3:11). Pahath-moab, called a chief of the people, set his seal on Ezra's covenant (10:14).

Pai

Alternate form of Pau, an Edomite city, in 1 Chronicles 1:50 (see nlt mg). *See* Pau.

Palace

A palace is a house for a king or queen.

In the ancient world, cities with royal support often had a palace. These cities sometimes had a second wall around the palace and nearby buildings. This wall helped protect the area where the king or ruler lived. This part of the city was called the acropolis (the high part of the city).

Jerusalem had a similar area. It was called the City of David. Before that, it was known as the Citadel of Zion (2 Samuel 5:7–9).

Palaces in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not give clear details about palaces in the land of Israel. For example, there was the palace of King David (2 Samuel 11:2, 9), the palace of Tirzah (1 Kings 16:18) and the palace of Ahab in Jezreel (21:1).

Even the description of Solomon's palace in Jerusalem is not very clear. In 1 Kings 7:1–12, the construction of public and private buildings close to the temple went on for 13 years. Solomon used the best materials. But the Bible does not give enough details to fully describe these buildings.

The buildings included the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the Porch of Pillars, the Porch of the Throne, Solomon's palace for his Egyptian wife, and the royal palace. We do not know exactly how these buildings were arranged. All of them were surrounded by a large courtyard made of cut stones and cedar wood.

Forced Labor in Palace Building

Forced labor was common in the ancient Near East. The prophet Samuel warned that Israel's king would use this system (1 Samuel 8:12–17). This happened during Solomon's rule. Solomon used forced labor for his large building projects, including his palace.

Solomon took workers from all over Israel. This system made many people unhappy. It caused Jeroboam to lead a revolt (1 Kings 12:4, 16).

Later kings also used forced labor. King Asa used it (15:22). It was still happening in the time of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 22:13). n contrast, the builders who worked with Nehemiah were volunteers (see Nehemiah 3:5).

The Temple

One of Solomon's most important buildings was the temple. It stood inside a courtyard called the inner court (1 Kings 6:36). A larger courtyard, called the great court, surrounded both the temple and the palace (7:12. The palace itself had its own inner court (verse 8). The northern wall of the palace's inner court was next to the inner court of the temple. This means the king's palace was very close to the temple. The king could easily move from his court to the Lord's court.

The King's Throne and Royal Power

The enthronement (when he became king) happened in the palace, in a place called the Porch of the Throne (1 Kings 1:46; 2 Kings 11:19). Sitting on the throne showed that the king now had royal power (1 Kings 16:11; 2 Kings 13:13). Solomon's throne in the palace became a symbol of this power. But people still called it the throne of David (1 Kings 2:24, 45; Isaiah 9:7). This was to show the connection to his father.

Solomon's throne was famous. It was known as one of the wonders of the world (1 Kings 10:18–20).

Important leaders came and showed him honor while standing around his throne (1:47).

Life in the Royal Palace

The daughters of the king lived in the palace under the care of women until they were married (2 Samuel 13:7). They wore a distinctive dress (verses 18–19).

The king's sons also lived in the palace. Nurses cared for them when they were young (2 Kings 11:2). Important men of the city taught them (10:1, 6–7). When the sons were older, they served in the royal court (2 Samuel 8:18; 1 Chronicles 18:17). Later, they lived on their own and the king gave them what they needed (2 Chronicles 21:3).

Some sons, like Amnon and Absalom, lived outside the palace. Amnon had his own house (2 Samuel 13:5). Absalom had a house, land, and animals (13:20, 23; 14:24, 30).

The royal family was surrounded by palace officials (1 Kings 10:4–5). These officials were called the king's servants. Some were allowed to "see the king's face," which meant they could enter his presence (2 Samuel 14:24, 28, 32). Others stood before the king (1 Samuel 16:21–22; Jeremiah 52:12). Being invited to eat at the king's table was a great honor (2 Samuel 9:7, 13).

Palace of the Forest of Lebanon

Name for Solomon's palace in Jerusalem, adjacent to the temple, given this designation because of the amount of Lebanese cedar used in its construction. The structure was about 150 feet (45.7 meters) long, 75 feet (22.9 meters) wide, and 45 feet (13.7 meters) high (1 Kgs 7:2–5). Three hundred gold shields were made to decorate it, and all the vessels of the house were made of gold. A large ivory throne overlaid with gold was constructed and placed within the palace (2 Chr 9:16–20). Besides providing housing and a formal palace for Solomon, it was also used to store arms (Is 22:8).

Palaestra

Greek word designating a place for athletic exercise (2 Macc 4:14).

Palal

Uzai's son, who helped rebuild the Jerusalem wall in Nehemiah's day (Neh 3:25).

Palestina

The King James Version spelling of Philistia, a country along the southwest coast of Canaan, in Exodus 15:14 and Isaiah 14:29–31.

See Philistia, Philistines.

Palestine

A country on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, also known as Canaan and Israel.

Palestine is at the western end of a curved strip of rich farmland called the "Fertile Crescent." This fertile land stretched from the Persian Gulf through Mesopotamia and Syria, all the way to Egypt. The soil here was very good for growing crops.

Palestine's location made it very important in ancient times. It formed a natural bridge of land between two major ancient centers of culture, Mesopotamia and Egypt. It also connected the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Many trade routes passed through Palestine. Merchants used these routes to carry goods from distant places like northern Europe, India, and southern Egypt. These same roads were later used by armies who wanted to gain control of the region and its wealth.

This land was very important in religious history. According to the Bible, God promised this land to Abraham and his descendants. It became the homeland of the Jewish people, and many events in the Bible took place here. Today, Palestine is sacred (holy) to three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Palestine has many different types of land and weather in a small area. Within just 241.4 kilometers (150 miles), you can find almost every kind of environment on Earth:

- Fertile plains good for farming
- Sandy deserts
- Rocky areas
- Forests
- Mountains
- Lakes
- Rivers

These different environments create strong contrasts. In the north, Mount Hermon is so high (2,773.7 meters or 9,100 feet) that it always has snow on its peak. About 160.9 kilometers (100 miles) away, the Dead Sea sits in a warm valley. This is the lowest point on Earth's surface.

Preview

• Name

• Territory

• Climate

• Geography

Name

This land has had many different names throughout its history. Most foreign traders first came to know the area through its coastal region. This is probably why the whole land was first called Canaan and later Palestine (named after a region called Philistia).

According to the Bible's record of ancient peoples (the Table of Nations), the land of Canaan stretched from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south and east to the Cities of the Plain (Genesis 10:19). The first time the Bible uses "Canaan" as the name for this region is in Genesis 11:31.

After the Israelites took control of Canaan, people began calling it the land of Israel (1 Samuel 13:19; 1 Chronicles 22:2). Then around 930 BC, during King Rehoboam's rule, the land divided into two kingdoms:

- The northern kingdom kept the name Israel.
- The southern kingdom was called Judah (later known as Judea).

Territory

The Bible first describes Palestine's size in God's promise to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:18–21). The borders stretched from the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) in the southwest to the Euphrates River in the northeast. This area was home to ten groups of people:

1. Kenites
2. Kenizzites
3. Kadmonites
4. Hittites
5. Perizzites
6. Rephaim
7. The Amorites
8. Canaanites
9. Girgashites
10. Jebusites.

In Genesis 17:8, the whole area is simply called "all the land of Canaan."

God gave Moses more specific instructions about the borders of the land Israel would live in (Numbers 34:1–12). The southern border stretched from the River of Egypt, south of Kadesh-barnea, and followed the wilderness of Zin to the southern tip of the Dead Sea. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea. The northern border was near the entrance to Hamath, and the Jordan River and the Dead Sea marked the eastern border.

The largest area that the promised land ever occupied is described in Exodus 23:31. God told Moses he would set Israel's boundaries from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and from the wilderness to the Euphrates River.

During the early period when judges led Israel, and later when Saul was king, the Israelites did not control all the land that had been given to their tribes under Joshua's leadership. This changed during the time of two later kings, David and Solomon.

King David used military power to expand Israel's borders. He efeated King Hadadezer of Zobah, pushing the northern border to the Euphrates River. He won battles against Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Amalek. David made the kingdom larger to the east and south (2 Samuel 8:1–14; 1 Chronicles 18:1–13).

King Solomon used peaceful diplomacy to maintain and expand the kingdom. He had trading ships at Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba. He started copper mining operations in that area.

Climate

Palestine has many different types of weather in a small area. It has more different kinds of weather (climate) than any other place of similar size in the world. The weather is generally mild, but it varies in different parts of the country.

In Jerusalem, temperatures can range from negative 3.3°C (26°F) to 41.6°C (107°F). The area gets about 50.8 centimeters (20 inches) of rain each year. The coastal plain is warmer and humid all year. In the city of Joppa, the average temperature is 19.4°C (67°F). The Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea is subtropical, with summer temperatures reaching up to 48.8°C (120°F).

Rainfall is seasonal, with most rain falling during the cooler months, from October to April. The rest of the year is usually dry. This happens because wet winds blow from the west. When these winds reach the cooler land, they drop their moisture as rain. Moist winds from the west bring rain over the colder land, similar to the "lake effect" snow seen near the Great Lakes in the United States. The Bible mentions two rainy periods (Jeremiah 5:24; Joel 2:23):

- The "former rain" in October and November
- The "latter rain" from March to April

Different areas get different amounts of rain each year. The coastal area receives about 71.1 centimeters (28 inches) of rain each year. The country's overall average is 55.9 to 70 centimeters (22 to 24 inches).

Geography

Palestine can be divided into five main regions that run from north to south:

1. The Maritime or Coastal Plain, which is the land along the Mediterranean Sea
2. The Shephelah, a region of low hills
3. The Western Plateau or Hill Country, a high plateau of mountains and hills
4. The Jordan Valley, a deep valley (also called the Arabah)
5. The Eastern Plateau, the high land east of the Jordan River (also called Transjordan)

The Maritime or Coastal Plain

The Coastal Plain can be divided into three areas from south to north: the plain of Philistia, the plain of Sharon, and the plain of Acre.

1. The plain of Philistia stretches from the Wadi el-Arish (also called the River of Egypt) in the south to about 8 kilometers (five miles) north of Joppa. It is around 112.6 kilometers (70 miles) long and widest near Gaza, measuring 48.3 kilometers (30 miles) across. This plain, mostly fertile, was ideal for growing grain.
2. The plain of Sharon lies north of the Philistine plain. It was likely under Philistine control. The Old Testament recognizes it as separate from Philistine lands (see Song of Solomon 2:1; Isaiah 65:10). This plain extends north to Mount Carmel and includes the towns of Dor and Caesarea.
3. The plain of Acre starts beyond Mount Carmel, near the city of Ptolemais (also known as Acre or Acco), mentioned in Acts 21:7 and Judges 1:31. This narrow plain stretches about 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) to the Ladder of Tyre (Ras en-Nakurah). The Kishon River (Judges 4:7, 13; 1 Kings 18:40) flows through this area.

The Shephelah

The Shephelah is a region between the low coastal plain and the highlands of the Western Plateau. Its elevation is around 152.4 to 304.8 meters (500 to

1,000 feet), and it is only a few miles wide. It extends from the valley of Aijalon to Beersheba. The valleys in the Shephelah were good for growing grain, while the hills were good for growing vineyards and olive trees. This area was important strategically because it provided access to Jerusalem.

The Western Plateau or Hill Country

The Western Plateau or Hill Country rises to an elevation between 304.8 to 609.6 meters (1,000 and 4,000 feet). It extends about 241.4 kilometers (150 miles) from Lebanon in the north to Beersheba in the south. This region can be divided into three parts: Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.

1. **Galilee** is divided into ***Upper Galilee***, with elevations from 609.6 to 1,219.2 meters (2,000 to 4,000 feet), and ***Lower Galilee***, below 609.6 meters (2,000 feet). It was a region mostly used for farming and open to invasion. Its location made Galilee a diverse and culturally mixed area, referred to as "Galilee of the nations" in Isaiah 9:1.
2. **Samaria** was another area that was good for growing crops and keeping livestock. Joseph's brothers were grazing their sheep in the plain of Dothan when they plotted against him (Genesis 37:17).
3. **Judea** is about 609.6 to 1,066.8 meters (2,000 to 3,500 feet) above sea level and stretches around 96.5 kilometers (60 miles) from Bethel to Beersheba. Jerusalem, located in Judea, sits at 808.9 meters (2,654 feet). Surrounded by mountains and valleys, Jerusalem had natural defenses (Psalm 125:2). Jerusalem became Israel's religious center and capital when David moved the ark of the covenant there. As prophesied, Jerusalem became the center of worship when Solomon built the temple, one of the era's most impressive buildings.

The Jordan Valley or the Arabah

The Jordan Valley (also called the Arabah) has both the highest and lowest points in Palestine. Mount Hermon, at 2,793.8 meters (9,166 feet), is the highest point. The Dead Sea's surface is 395 meters (1,275 feet) below sea level. Its deepest point goes down another 396.2 meters (1,300 feet).

1. The North Arabah (or Upper Jordan Valley) is where the Jordan River begins near Mount Hermon. The river has four different starting points (sources). It flows through the former Lake Huleh (now partly drained and made into a wildlife refuge). The Bridge of Jacob's Daughters, which crosses the Jordan on the road to Damascus, is located 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) below Huleh. The river then moves through a 1,200-foot (365.8-meter) gorge.
2. The Sea of Galilee is located about 16.1 kilometers (10 miles) from Lake Huleh. It sits at an elevation of negative 208.8 meters (negative 685 feet). It spans 24.1 kilometers (15 miles) in length and 12.9 kilometers (8 miles) in width, with a maximum depth of 228.6 meters (750 feet). Its shape inspired its Old Testament name, Chinnereth, meaning "harp" (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27). In the New Testament, it was called the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) and the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1).

3. The Middle Arabah (or Ghor) contains the Jordan River. The name Jordan means "descender." The Jordan River covers about 96.5 kilometers (60 miles) in a straight line from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This part of the river's course drops over 182.9 meters (600 feet), flowing in a series of sharp back-and-forth turns. The actual length of the river is 321.8 kilometers (200 miles).
   This stretch of the Jordan Valley is known as the Ghor or Rift. The Yarmuk River enters the Jordan from the east from 9.7 kilometers (six miles) below the Sea of Galilee. Some smaller streams empty into the Jordan, but the next important river is the Jabbok (Genesis 32:22). The Ghor, just south of the Sea of Galilee, is about 6.4 kilometers (four miles) wide. Near Beth-shan, it reaches 11.3 kilometers (seven miles) wide. Beyond that, for around 24.1 kilometers (15 miles), the mountains are close to the river, making the valley 3.2 to 4.8 kilometers (two to three miles) wide. Near Jericho, it expands to about 19.3 kilometers (12 miles) wide.
4. The Dead Sea is a unique region. It is the deepest point on Earth. The Dead Sea is also known as the "Salt Sea" (Genesis 14:3; Numbers 34:12; Joshua 12:3) or the "Sea of Arabah" (Joshua 12:3). Josephus calls it "Lake Asphaltitis."
   It is 74 kilometers (46 miles) long and 16.1 kilometers (10 miles) wide and 396.2 meters (1,300 feet) deep. With a mineral content of about 25 percent, it is a valuable chemical deposit. The Dead Sea receives water from the Jordan and other streams, such as the Arnon River on the east. Much of the runoff of seasonal rains also collects into the Dead Sea. Summer temperatures can reach 48.8°C (120°F), with extreme humidity. The sea experiences 5.4 to 7.3 million metric tons (6 to 8 million tons) of daily evaporation.
5. The Southern Arabah is a mostly barren region. It stretches from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba, spanning 241.4 kilometers (150 miles). The Arabah rises from its lowest point, the Dead Sea, to its highest, a watershed just west of Petra. Ports like Elath (modern Eilat) and Ezion-geber were located at its southern tip.

The Eastern Plateau or Transjordan

The Eastern Plateau (or Transjordan) was not part of the promised land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh claimed it. It had better water resources than the Western Plateau, with permanent streams such as the Yarmuk, Jabbok, and Arnon. The King's Highway, a key north-south route, passed through this region. It is mentioned in the Israelites' journey during the Exodus (Numbers 21:22). It was probably also the route taken by the invading kings of Genesis 14.

The northern section of Transjordan was known as Bashan. It was famous for its cattle and oak trees (Psalm 22:12; Ezekiel 39:18; Isaiah 2:13; Zechariah 11:2).

Gilead was an area east of the Jordan River. It was well-known in ancient times for making a healing

medicine called balm (Genesis 37:25; Jeremiah 8:22), The Bible mentions Gilead many times (for example, in Deuteronomy 3:10–16 and Judges 11). The region of Gilead stretched from the Yarmuk River to Heshbon. In David's time, it was covered with thick forests (2 Samuel 18:8).

In Palestine proper, two areas are especially important:

1. The Plain of Esdraelon was known for its fertile lands and historical battles. This plain lies between Galilee and Samaria. It is often associated with Armageddon and was guarded by fortress cities like Megiddo, Ibleam, and Taanach. In the Old Testament, the Jezreel Valley was considered separate from Esdraelon. At the eastern end was the stronghold of Beth-shan.
2. In the far south of Palestine lies a dry wilderness area called the Negev (also known as the South Country). This region extends from Beersheba to Kadesh-barnea. It does not rain often so it is difficult to grow crops there. But, the region has long been used mainly by nomadic shepherds who move around with their animals.

See Arabah; Conquest and Allotment of the Land; Dead Sea; Decapolis; Sea of Galilee; Jordan River; Negev; Shephelah; Transjordan.

Pallu, Palluite

Reuben's son, the father of Eliab (Genesis 46:9; Exodus 6:14; Numbers 26:8; 1 Chronicles 5:3). The founder of the Palluite family (Numbers 26:5).

Palm, Date Palm

The palm tree mentioned in the Bible is certainly the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*). At one time, this tree was as common in Israel and the surrounding areas as it is still today in Egypt. The date palm has a trunk with no branches that tapers as it grows upward, reaching heights of up to 24.2 meters (80 feet) or more. At the top is a large cluster of feathery leaves, each 1.8 to 2.7 meters (six to nine feet) or more long.

Because of its height and unusual shape, people naturally used it as a decorative form in Eastern architecture. The trunk and leaves were favorite subjects for architectural decoration. The huge, branch-like leaves (which are called "branches" in the Bible) were symbols of victory and were used during times of great celebration (John 12:13; Revelation 7:9).

People still use the large leaves to cover the roofs and sides of houses and to strengthen reed fences. They make mats, baskets, and even dishes from them. Small leaves are used as dusters, and the wood from the trunk is used for timber. People make rope from the web-like material in the crown of the tree.

The fruit grows in a huge drooping cluster that may weigh from 13.6 to 22.7 kilograms (30 to 50 pounds). Dates are the main food for many native people of Arabia and North Africa. A single tree may produce up to 90.7 kilograms (200 pounds) of dates each year. The dates can be dried for future use.

Palmerworm

The King James Version term for the cutting locust in Joel 1:4, 2:25, and Amos 4:9.

See Animals (Locust).

Palms, City of

Designation for Jericho in Deuteronomy 34:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:15. *See* Jericho.

Palsy

See Paralysis, Paralytic.

Palti

1. One of the 12 spies Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan before the Israelite conquest. Palti represented the tribe of Benjamin (Numbers 13:9).

2. A son of Laish, to whom King Saul gave Michal, his daughter and wife of David. This was after the break between Saul and David (1 Samuel 25:44). Ish-bosheth recovered Michal from Palti and returned her to David (2 Samuel 3:15; here called "Paltiel").

Paltiel

1. A son of Azzan and a leader of the tribe of Issachar (Numbers 34:26). Eleazar and Joshua chose him to assist in the distribution of the land west of the Jordan River among the ten tribes to whom it was given.
2. Another name for Palti, a son of Laish (2 Samuel 3:15).
See Palti #2.

Pamphylia

Coastal region on the southern shore of Asia Minor (Turkey) stretching 80 miles (128.7 kilometers) from Lycia on the west to Cilicia on the east, and about 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) wide from the seacoast to the Taurus Mountains. Being little more than a narrow coastal plain with an unpleasantly hot and humid climate, this province produced few important cities. This, combined with its general inaccessibility—lying as it did deep at the north end of the bay of Adalia and separated from the rest of inland Asia by a rugged mountain range—made it a haven for pirates. In 102 BC the Roman senate established patrol stations on the coasts of Pamphylia and western Cilicia to police the area, but no effective control was established until 67 BC, when Pompey was given unlimited resources to clean up the Mediterranean.

There was evidently a Jewish population in the province because Luke names Pamphylia among 15 countries from which Jews came to Jerusalem to the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Some have argued that Pamphylia could not have possessed any significant numbers of Christians because it and Lycia are not mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1, which seems to sum up the whole of Asia Minor. That argument is not convincing, however, because the date of the writing of 1 Peter is not known, and if it was written during the period from AD 43 to 74, when Pamphylia was considered a part of Galatia, Pamphylia could have been included in that designation. Peter may also have considered Lycia in the broad designation of Galatia because his introduction mentions only the larger political divisions of Asia Minor. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Paul apparently had little success in the Pamphylian city of Perga, because there is no statement of opposition to him there or of any converts being made. He did not revisit the province on his second journey, even though his plan was to return and visit the Christians in every city where they had preached (Acts 15:36). Perhaps Paul's separation from Barnabas was the reason for this, and it may be that Barnabas and John Mark visited Pamphylia after Cyprus (vv 37–41).

See also Attalia; Perga.

Pannag

KJV rendering of millet (Ez 27:17), an annual grass whose seeds are used in making bread. *See* Plants (Millet).

Panther

A panther is a large wild cat. In the Bible, the word may refer to a leopard.

See Leopard; *see also* Animals.

Paper

Word in English translations of the Bible better understood as papyrus. *See* Writing.

Paphos

Paphos was a city in southwest Cyprus. It began as a Phoenician settlement called "Old Paphos." Later, a Greek settlement called "New Paphos" was built about 16.1 kilometers (10 miles) away from the original city. New Paphos became the main government center when Cyprus became part of the Roman Empire in 22 BC.

The combined city was famous for its temple. The people first dedicated the temple to the Syrian goddess Astarte. According to the Roman historian

Tacitus, people worshiped Astarte using ancient Phoenician ceremonies. These ceremonies included putting oil on a cone-shaped stone (possibly a meteorite). The Greeks later identified Astarte with their goddess Aphrodite. They believed Aphrodite came out of the sea.

In Paphos, the apostle Paul faced his first strong opposition to the good news about Jesus. This opposition came from a man named Elymas. In response, Paul performed his first miracle that is recorded in the Bible. Paul made Elymas blind, but the blindness was only temporary, showing Paul's mercy (Acts 13:11).

Papias

Papias was an early church leader who lived from about AD 60 to 130. He was from a place called Hierapolis and wrote about the early days of Christianity. We learn about Papias from two other early church writers: Eusebius of Caesarea and Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus said that Papias had heard the apostle John preach and knew another church leader named Polycarp.

Eusebius mentioned a book that Papias wrote called *Explanation of the Sayings of the Lord.* In this book, Papias said he wanted to write down true stories about what the apostles said and did. He got these stories from an older church leader (presbyter). Irenaeus thought Papias was talking about the apostle John. Eusebius thought that Papias was talking about two different Johns:

- The apostle John
- Another John who was the friend of someone named Aristion.

Papias said that the author of the Gospel of Mark was the interpreter of Peter, who was named Mark. While Mark had never heard Christ speak, he carefully gave an account of everything he remembered from the preaching of Peter. Papias agreed that Matthew wrote down the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew. While Irenaeus understood this to mean Hebraisms (Hebrew idioms or expressions) in Matthew's Gospel, Origen thought it meant that Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew.

Papias's writings have made people ask questions about:

1. how the Gospels were put together;
2. whether Matthew's Gospel was first written in Hebrew (or Aramaic, a related language); and
3. whether there were two important men named John in the early church.

According to tradition, Papias was killed because of his faith and died a martyr.

Papyrus

An ancient Egyptian writing material that comes from the papyrus plant. The Egyptian bulrush or papyrus (Exodus 2:3–5; Job 8:11; Isaiah 18:2; 19:6–7; 35:7; 58:5) has smooth three-sided stems. These stems usually grow 2.4 to 3 meters (8 to 10 feet) tall, but sometimes reach even 4.9 meters (16 feet). At the base, the stems are 5.1 to 7.6 centimeters (2 to 3 inches) thick, with a large tuft of tiny flowers at the end.

The papyrus once grew in great abundance along the banks of the Nile River, forming what was almost a dense jungle. Today it has nearly disappeared from lower Egypt, although it is still found along the White Nile and in Sudan. The papyrus still grows in parts of Israel and the surrounding areas. It grows especially around the northern end of the plain of Galilee and the Huleh swamps.

People used papyrus to make small vessels to float in water (Exodus 2:3), for mats, and for various other household purposes. But it is best known as the source of ancient paper. To make paper from papyrus, workers first peeled the stems of the plant and then cut them lengthwise into thin slices. These slices were laid side by side. The slices were then sprinkled with water and pressed together to unite them into one piece. The sheet was then dried and cut into pieces of the required size. For better grades of papyrus paper, several layers of stem slices were laid crosswise on each other.

The pale, fawn-colored, tassel-like flower clusters at the top of the stems were used to decorate Egyptian temples and to crown the statues of gods. People also wore them as crowns by famous men and national heroes.

See Writing.

Parable

A particular form of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels.

Preview

- Introduction
- History of Interpretation
- The Meaning of "Parable"
- The Purpose of Parables
- The Reason Jesus Taught in Parables

Introduction

An understanding of parables is essential if one is to understand the teaching of Jesus, since the parables make up approximately 35 percent of his recorded sayings. At no point are the vitality, relevance, and appropriateness of his teaching so clear as they are in his parables. While the parable form is not unique to Jesus, he was certainly a master at using parables as a way of teaching. The parables are not merely illustrations for Jesus' preaching; they *are* the preaching, at least to a great extent. Nor are they simple stories; they have been truly described as both "works of art" and "weapons of warfare." How one interprets the parables is not as easy a task as one might think. The way one understands the nature of a parable and the essence of Jesus' message obviously will determine the method and content of interpretation.

History of Interpretation

A great deal of insight can be obtained by following the course of treatment the parables have received over the centuries. Not surprisingly, they have been subjected to radically different approaches. But the questions that underlie all interpretations are these: (1) How much of the parable is really significant—all the details or only one point? (2) What is the meaning of the parable in the teaching of Jesus? (3) Of what relevance is the parable to the interpreter?

The Allegorizing Approach

From the second century even to the present, many people have allegorized the parables. In effect, they have said that every detail in the account is significant and that the meaning and relevance of a parable are to be found in the way it portrays Christian theology. This method, often identified as the Alexandrian school of interpretation, is best illustrated by a classic example that comes from Augustine (AD 354–430), the scholar who, despite his allegorizing, was a great theologian. His interpretation of the parable of the good Samaritan views Christ as the good Samaritan, the oil as the comfort of good hope, the animal as the flesh of the Incarnation, the inn as the church, and the innkeeper as the apostle Paul (to say nothing of the other details). Obviously, this interpretation has nothing in common with Jesus' intention but rather reads into the story preconceived ideas of the interpreter. Such an approach can sound good theologically, but it prohibits the hearing of the Word of God. Medieval interpreters went even further than the allegorizing approach by finding multiple meanings in the text. Usually four were listed: (1) the literal meaning; (2) an allegorical meaning relating to Christian theology; (3) a moral meaning giving direction for daily life; (4) a heavenly meaning indicating something about future life.

Not all of the church was dominated by such allegorizing interpretations. The school of Antioch was known for its commonsense approach to hearing the text. However, its influence was limited when compared to the Alexandrian school and, apart from notable exceptions, most of the church's efforts at understanding the parables over the centuries have involved allegorizing.

The Approach of Adolph Julicher (1867–1938)

Julicher was a German scholar who published two volumes on the parables toward the end of the 19th century. His major contribution was the wholesale rejection of allegorizing as a means of interpreting the parables. In his reaction against allegorizing, Julicher went to the opposite extreme to say that a parable of Jesus has only one point of contact between the story and the fact being portrayed. He believed that this one point alone is important in interpretation and that it will usually be a general religious statement. Julicher went so far as to say that not only was allegorizing wrong but that Jesus did not use allegories, since they tend to hide rather than reveal. He said that any allegory appearing in the NT comes from the writers of the Gospels rather than Jesus. Julicher was correct to reject allegorizing (i.e., making an allegory of what was not intended to be allegory), but the rejection of allegory itself as a legitimate means of communication for Jesus is unfounded.

The Historical Approach

Twentieth-century study of the parables, particularly the work of C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) and Joachim Jeremias, has rightly emphasized the historical context in which the parables were originally told. Focus is placed on cultural factors that help in understanding the details of the parables and on the context of Jesus' original preaching about the kingdom of God. Usually this approach has assumed that the first-century church changed the original thrust of some of the parables to meet her own needs, and consequently various procedures have been proposed to recover the original intent. It is true that the parables have been shaped, edited, and collected in units by the Gospel writers (note, e.g., Matthew's collection of eight parables in Mt 13:1–52). Also, the aim of an interpreter should be to hear the parables as they were originally intended by Jesus and as his original audience heard them. The attempt to go behind the Gospel accounts, however, is a delicate task, and some of the procedures proposed for doing so need to be questioned. Notice must be taken of the way each of the Gospel writers has used his material, but the extent to which one can go behind the Gospels is limited.

Modern Trends in Parable Research

In the past few decades a number of attempts to interpret the parables have suggested new avenues of approach. Basically these new approaches have been somewhat dissatisfied with (although appreciative of) both Julicher and the historical approach in that both limit the impact of the parables on today's reader. Julicher reduced Jesus' teaching to pious moralisms, and the historical approach tended to focus on 2,000 years ago while ignoring both the artistic and psychological features of the parables. Consequently, numerous attempts have been made to convey the same impact the parables had for the original hearers to today's hearers. Increasingly, less focus is placed on the historical meaning of the parables and more emphasis is placed on their artistic, existential, and poetic effect. Jesus' parables are regarded as works of art that can be regarded as open-ended as far as meaning is concerned. A parable, then, would have an original meaning and the potential for a series of further possible meanings. While the original meaning would provide some control for reinterpretation, these approaches are not bound by the author's intention.

A great deal can be learned from modern approaches, especially from their concern to make sure that the parables speak to our day with their original vitality. However, there is also the danger of abusing the parables in a way similar to earlier mistreatments. Those allegorizing the parables in the history of the church were not bound by the meaning of Jesus and found their own meaning. Modern interpreters, too, can find their own meaning, and even though the explanations may sound convincing (as no doubt Augustine's did to his hearers), they will not be a communication of the Word of God. If God and his ways are revealed by Jesus, then we err if we do not hear his parables as they were intended in their original context. There is indeed a dynamic interaction between the text and the interpreter, but the interpreter is brought to a moment of truth most effectively when the Spirit confronts him or her with the parable as Jesus intended it for his hearers.

The Meaning of "Parable"

The usual definition of a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning" will not suffice for understanding Jesus' parables. Nor are parables merely comparisons or illustrations of what Jesus wanted to say. The situation is much more complex with regard to the biblical meaning of the word "parable." In fact, one must distinguish between three uses of the word "parable" in biblical studies.

First, one should be aware that the Greek word for parable and its Hebrew counterpart are both broad terms and can be used for anything from a proverb to a full-blown allegory, including a riddle, a dark saying, an illustration, a contrast, or a story. For example, the Greek word for parable is used in Luke 4:23 with reference to the saying "physician, heal yourself" and most translations render it as "proverb." In Mark 3:23 "parables" is used with reference to the riddles Jesus asks the scribes, such as "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Similarly, Mark 13:28 uses "parable" of a simple illustration. In Luke 18:2–5 the unjust judge is *contrasted* with God, who brings justice quickly. If one compares the Hebrew OT and the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the OT), the word for parable is used most frequently with reference to a proverb or dark saying. The broad meaning of "parable," then, can refer to any of these methods used to stimulate thought.

Second, "parable" can be used of any story with two levels of meaning (literal and figurative) that functions as religious and ethical speech.

Third, "parable" can be used technically in modern studies to distinguish it from other types of stories, such as similitudes, exemplary stories, and allegories. In this case a parable is a fictitious story that narrates a particular event and is usually told in the past tense (e.g., the parable of the lost son). A similitude, however, is a comparison that relates a typical or recurring event in real life and is usually told in the present tense (e.g., Mt 13:31–32). An exemplary story is not a comparison at all; rather, it presents character traits as either positive or negative examples to be imitated or avoided. Usually four exemplary stories are identified: the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–35), the rich fool (12:16–20), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31), and the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:10–13).

Allegory is the most difficult to define and has caused considerable debate. Usually allegory is defined as "a series of related metaphors." A metaphor is an implied comparison that does not use "like" or "as." This definition is used broadly, but it is not entirely satisfactory for two reasons: (1) It does not indicate whether obscurity is an essential element in allegory. Some view allegory as needing to be decoded and as being understandable only to a select few. If, however, the allegory uses customary metaphors that all could understand, it would not be obscure. (2) It does not specify how much of the story is important as related metaphors. If there were only two or three related metaphors, would the story be an allegory? At the other extreme, do minor details in the story (such as the three levels of harvest in the parable of the sower) have significance? An example of an allegory would be the parable of the sower.

This raises the problem of the difference between a parable and an allegory—a frequently debated issue. On definitions one and two above, allegory is included in parable. But on definition three, a distinction is made between them because a parable is not a series of related metaphors. The details of the story of the lost son (the swine, the far country, etc.) do not stand for something else as they would if they were in an allegory but rather convey in dramatic terms the depths to which the son had sunk. However, a parable is *not* thereby limited to one point of comparison between the story and the fact being portrayed. There may be several items that need to be mentioned from a particular parable. The parable of the lost son emphasizes the rejoicing that takes place at repentance (note the repetition of this theme in Lk 15:24, 32), but the receptivity of the father obviously parallels the grace of God and the younger and elder sons reflect sinners and religious authorities, respectively. The distinction between parable and allegory is vague at best and will vary, depending on what definitions are assigned the terms. One should note that what can be said about parable usually can also be said about allegory.

The Purpose of Parables

The purpose of parables and a description of their characteristics will assist understanding. The parables focus on God and his kingdom and in doing so reveal what kind of God he is, by what principles he works, and what he expects of humanity. Because of the focus on the kingdom, some of the parables reveal many aspects of Jesus' mission as well (note the parable of the wicked tenants in Mt 21:33–41).

The following characteristics of parables should be observed: (1) Parables are usually concise and symmetrical. Items are presented in twos or threes with an economy of words. Unnecessary people, motives, and details are usually omitted. (2) The features in the story are taken from everyday life, and the metaphors used are frequently common enough that they set up a context for understanding. For example, the discussion of an owner and his vineyard would naturally make hearers think of God and his people because of the OT use of those images. (3) Even though the parables speak in terms of everyday life, often they contain elements of surprise or hyperbole (an exaggeration used as a figure of speech). The parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–35) introduces a Samaritan in the story where one would probably expect a layperson. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:23–34) puts the debt of the first servant at $10 million, an unbelievable sum in that day. (4) Parables require their hearers to pass judgment on the events of the story and, having done so, to realize that they must make a similar judgment in their own lives. The classic example is the parable of Nathan to David (2 Sm 12:1–7), where David judges the man in the story as worthy of death and then is told that he is the man. Because they force one to decide, to come to a moment of truth, the parables force their hearers to live in the present without resting on the laurels of the past or waiting for the future. The parables are the result of a mind that sees truth in concrete pictures rather than abstractions, and they teach that truth in such a compelling manner that the hearer cannot escape it.

The Reason Jesus Taught in Parables

There is little doubt that Jesus taught in parables because they are both interesting and compelling and therefore are one of the most effective means of communicating. When one reads Mark 4:10–12, however, it seems that Jesus taught in parables in order to *keep* people from understanding so that they would not turn and be forgiven. It seems as well that there is a mystery that is given to the *in* group and that the *out* group is prohibited from learning. Herein is the meaning of the term "mystery." Rather than being that which is not known or understood, as the word is used today, the biblical use of this word is usually for that which has been revealed by God and would not have been known had God not revealed it. The content of the mystery is not explained here, but from Jesus' teaching on the kingdom elsewhere, it probably refers to the fact that the kingdom is present in Jesus' own words and actions.

The other factor crucial for understanding this passage is that the word "parable" in biblical usage has a broad meaning referring to any striking speech or dark saying intended to stimulate thought. Jesus did not spoon-feed his hearers; rather, he taught in such a way as to bring about a response, and where there was a response, he gave additional teaching. Consequently, it is not merely that parables are interesting, poetic, and arresting (as important as those characteristics are). In addition, parables stimulate thought and bring about response—if hardness of heart does not prevent it. It is as if Jesus were saying, "If you cannot hear what I am saying, I will reveal my thought in parables." Where there is response to this initial teaching, additional information is given.

Paraclete

Transliteration of a Greek word meaning "one who is called to someone's aid" or "one who advocates for another." Thus, the term may be used technically for a lawyer. More generally, the word denotes one who acts in another's behalf as a mediator, an intercessor, or an encourager. In 1 John 2:1 Christ is called a paraclete because he represents people to God. This function is akin to his ministry as High Priest (cf. Heb 7:25–28).

The most numerous uses of "paraclete" come in John's Gospel, all referring to the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:13). In these passages Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit will come from the Father when he departs. The Paraclete, also called "the Spirit of truth," will lead them into all truth and aid them in their ability to recall correctly Jesus' message. He is to become their special replacement for the departed Lord.

See also Spirit of God.

Paradise

A term borrowed from the Persian language and means "garden of God." The Hebrews used a different word for gardens. They applied it to both everyday gardens and to God's garden in Eden (Genesis 2–3; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 28:13). Later in their history, they borrowed the Persian word that eventually became "paradise." This word appears three times in the Old Testament. It refers to a park or orchard (Nehemiah 2:8; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Song of Solomon 4:13). When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, they used a Greek form of the same word. For Greek-speaking Jews, the garden in Genesis 2 became known as *paradeisos*.

Paradise in the Old Testament

The original Persian word meant an enclosed or walled garden, especially the royal parks of Persian kings. The Greeks understood it this way as well. This fits with the Hebrew idea of a garden where God walked (Genesis 3:8) and from which people could be excluded (Genesis 3:24). Key features of the Genesis paradise were its fruit trees and rivers.

Paradise in the New Testament

By the time of the New Testament, views of God's garden had changed in several ways, like many myths in various cultures. Like the "Golden Age" in Greek and Roman stories, paradise was once a distant past. But, the Jews began to believe it still existed somewhere unknown, like the "Elysian Fields." It was a place where the righteous dead lived. Over time, they described its wonders more and more, believing it would reappear at the end of time.

The idea of paradise combines myths from various cultures. They describe a perfect world at all times, where death and evil do not exist. The New Testament affirms the truth behind these beliefs. Paradise is a real, otherworldly place. Paul was mysteriously "caught up" there during his life (2 Corinthians 12:4). It is also where Jesus promised

the repentant thief on the cross would be with him after death (Luke 23:43). The third and final New Testament reference to paradise (Revelation 2:7), is another promise. It tells us that paradise is where the tree of life grows. It connects the original world of Genesis 2 and the future world of Revelation 22. It includes the life-giving tree, a river, a protective wall, and the presence of the king.

See also Heaven; New Heavens and New Earth.

Paradox

A form of expression that seems either self-contradictory or absurd, but it also expresses fundamental truth. It is often used to evoke deeper and critical thinking. It may be closely related to hyperbole (an exaggerated statement). Paradox includes a clear element of contradiction. The surprising nature of a paradox makes people stop and think carefully about what it means.

How Did Jesus Use Paradox?

Jesus used paradox in his teaching ministry. For example, he said grown persons must be born again. In John 3:4 Nicodemus asks, "How can a man be born when he is old… Can he enter his mother's womb a second time to be born?"

Another example is when Jesus spoke to the rich people entering the kingdom of God. Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (an impossible thing) than for a rich person to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:25). The point is not to focus on the literal statement or take it word for word but to understand its essential purpose. This statement is meant to surprise people and make them think differently. Jesus is forcing the wealthy to see how their attitudes toward wealth have excluded them from the kingdom of God.

Much of the use of paradox in Jesus's ministry shows how the kingdom of God reverses the values by which people live:

- Whosoever will lose his life will find it (Matthew 10:39).
- The last will be first, and the first last (Luke 13:30).
- Whoever would be greatest of all must be servant of all (Mark 10:43; Luke 22:26).

Indeed, the servant ministry of Jesus himself underscores this great reversal of the kingdom. After washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus says, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, because I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:13–14).

Paradoxes in Describing God

Paradox is also a part of Christian expression when one attempts to speak of God using human language. Thus God is "before all time." Even "God in flesh" is paradoxical yet profoundly true. People always use words from their own experience to talk about God, but God is much greater than human language can fully express. Thus, language is a limited instrument for speaking of God who is not limited.

Parah

City belonging to Benjamin's inheritance (Jos 18:23). It is undoubtedly Khirbet el-Farah, approximately five and a half miles (8.8 kilometers) northeast of Jerusalem.

Paralysis, Paralytic, Paralyzed

Paralysis is a symptom of a disease of the central nervous system. A paralytic experiences temporary or permanent loss of sensation and/or voluntary muscle control in one or more areas of the body. In the case of permanent loss, an affected individual is paralyzed.

This degenerative condition was considered incurable. A few cases of paralysis are mentioned in the New Testament. All occur in connection with Christ's healing ministry.

Paralytics sought Jesus's healing in Galilee (Matthew 4:24). Some paralytics were among the sick at Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:3). Philip

cured some paralytics in Samaria (Acts 8:7). Luke described the paralyzed servant of the centurion as very sick and at the point of death (Luke 7:2). This man was probably the victim of an often-fatal form of paralysis that begins in the legs and spreads upward through the rest of the body.

The paralytic at Capernaum was most likely suffering from paraplegia, a paralysis of the lower half of the body (Matthew 9:2, 6; Mark 2:3–10; Luke 5:18, 24). This disease may have come from an injury at birth or from damage to the spinal cord. Aeneas, whom Peter healed at Lydda, may also have suffered from paraplegia (Acts 9:33).

See also Disease; Medicine and Medical Practice.

Paran

Desert region in the northeast Sinai Peninsula west of the Arabah (Rift Valley). The settlement of Kadesh-barnea is its northernmost limit. Some scholars identify the great Et-Tih plateau of the central Sinai as a part of this wilderness.

The wilderness of Paran is a wild, arid expanse of tableland, mountains, gorges, and wadis. The lack of water and vegetation made it a most inhospitable place and a stark contrast to the land flowing with milk and honey that was promised to Israel.

This wilderness became the home of Ishmael (Gn 21:20–21). The nation of Israel camped there on the way from Egypt to Canaan (Nm 10:12; 12:16). From Kadesh-barnea, at the northern edge of the wilderness, Moses sent spies to reconnoiter the Promised Land (13:3, 26). David is said to have led his band of men to this region after the death of Samuel so as to distance himself from King Saul (1 Sm 25:1).

See also Palestine; Sina, Sinai; Wilderness Wanderings.

Parapet

Protective barrier around the circumference of house roofs. The parapet was required by the Law (Dt 22:8) since flat roofs were widely used (Jos 2:6; Jgs 16:27; 1 Sm 9:25; Is 22:1). Construction of a parapet would relieve the dweller from liability should a person fall from the roof.

See also Architecture; Homes and Dwellings.

Parchment

See Writing; Pergamos, Pergamum.

Pardon

To pardon someone means to forgive them.

See Forgiveness.

Parent

See Family Life and Relations.

Parmashta

One of the ten sons of Haman killed by the Jews (Esther 9:9).

Parmenas

One of the seven men chosen by the early church in Jerusalem to serve the widows and manage the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:5). These seven men were selected because they were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. The other six men were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Nicolas.

Parnach

The father of Elizaphan from the tribe of Zebulun (Numbers 34:25).

Parosh

Head of a family who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile (Ezr 2:3; Neh 7:8). One of his descendants, Pedaiah, participated in rebuilding the Jerusalem wall (Neh 3:25); other descendants are mentioned as having taken foreign wives (Ezr 10:25).

Parousia

The spelling of a Greek word meaning "presence," "arrival," "appearance," or "coming." While it is used often with reference to people (1 Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6; 10:10; Philippians 1:26; 2:12) and once with reference to the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:9), the word is mostly used to refer to Christ (Matthew 24:3, 27, 37–39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8). So, the Parousia has come to denote the second coming of Christ at the end of the ages.

Paul was probably responsible for the technical emphasis on Christ's return. He discouraged trying to calculate the time (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3; compare Matthew 24:4–36). Still, he paints a vivid picture of the Parousia (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–2:8; see also 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 50–55).

He teaches that it will be a personal, visible, sudden, and glorious coming (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15–17). He apparently felt he and his readers would experience Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:15; compare Romans 8:23; 13:11). However, he changed his mind when confronted with his martyrdom (Philippians 1:23).

James, also sensing the delay in Christ's return, called for patience (James 5:7–8). Peter, too, cautioned against allowing the delay to create doubt (2 Peter 3:8–10). The message is not a myth (2 Peter 1:16), and doubters will be silenced (2 Peter 3:3–4). John encouraged consistent faith so the coming would not put believers to shame (1 John 2:28).

See also Eschatology; Second Coming of Christ.

Parshandatha

One of the ten sons of Haman killed by the Jews (Esther 9:7).

Parsin

An Aramaic word interpreted as "divided" (Daniel 5:25, 28). *See* Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin.

Parthia, Parthians

Land (roughly corresponding to modern Iran) lying beyond the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire, and so almost outside the world of the NT.

It is included, however, in maps of the OT world, which generally encompass Eastern territory. Many Jews deported from Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions were living in this area when in the sixth century BC it became part of the vast Persian Empire of Cyrus, and thousands stayed on in spite of Cyrus's offer of repatriation. Two centuries afterward, that empire was conquered by Alexander the Great. But 100 years later several parts of it, including Parthia, threw off the yoke of his successors and became independent.

Parthia eventually became a great empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the Indus. In the NT period, even mighty Rome regarded it as a potential threat. The first confrontation between the two powers actually resulted in a defeat for the Romans (at Carrhae, the biblical Haran, in 53 BC). Only in the second century AD did the balance shift, and even then, though twice annexed, Parthia twice recovered its independence. It fell eventually in AD 226, not to the Romans, but to a neo-Persian coup within its own borders.

Wealthy because of their position astride Asian trade routes, and militarily strong because of their famous mounted bowmen, who won many a battle by apparently retreating and then shooting at the pursuing enemy (hence the phrase "parting [or 'Parthian'] shot"), the Parthians seem also to have been a tolerant people. A large Jewish community continued to live among them, and at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) their province of Babylonia had, curiously enough, a Jewish governor. More important, Jews from Parthia, and possibly also Parthian converts to Judaism ("proselytes"), were in Jerusalem on that epoch-making day (v 9). By them the gospel may have been taken, within weeks of the resurrection, well on its way to India.

Partridge

A partridge is the most common game bird in the Holy Land. It looks like a chicken but has a slimmer body and a longer tail.

Two kinds of partridge live in the Holy Land:

1. **Sand partridge** (*Ammoperdix heyi*) — Found near the Dead Sea, in the Jordan River valley, and in the Sinai Desert. It is medium-sized with yellow feet. The male has sandy-buff feathers with brown bars on the upper tail and a chestnut and white underside. The female is grayish buff.
2. **Chukar partridge** (*Alectoris graeca*) — Similar to the French partridge of Europe. It is about 40.6 centimeters (16 inches) long and has bright, colorful feathers.

Patridges in the Bible

The partridge was hunted for food. People caught it by chasing until it was too tired to run (1 Samuel 26:20). It could also be caught with snares (Psalm 91:3) or by hunters hiding in a shelter. Although it can run quickly and jump up steep cliffs, it is still easy to catch when tired. Its brownish-green feathers help it hide among bushes.

The bird lays many eggs, which keeps it from becoming extinct despite heavy hunting. Sometimes the female lays two groups of eggs: one for herself and one for the male to keep warm. This may explain the saying in Jeremiah 17:11 about a bird gathering eggs it did not hatch. This was used as a picture of someone taking credit for work they did not do.

See also Birds.

Paruah

Father of Jehoshaphat from Issachar's tribe. Jehoshaphat was appointed to provide food for King Solomon and his household one month out of the year (1 Kgs 4:7, 17).

Parvaim

Geographical area from which Solomon obtained gold for use in the temple (2 Chr 3:6). According to rabbinic sources, the gold had a reddish hue and was used to make the vessel with which the high priest removed the ashes from the altar of burnt offering on the Day of Atonement. Parvaim was probably located in Arabia.

Pas-Dammim

Alternate form of Ephes-dammim, a place in Judah's tribe, in 1 Chronicles 11:13. *See* Ephes-dammim.

Pasach

Japhlet's son from Asher's tribe (1 Chr 7:33).

Paseah

1. Eshton's son, the brother of Beth-rapha and a descendant of Kelub from Judah's tribe. Paseah was mentioned as one of the men of Recah (1 Chr 4:12).

2. Ancestor of a family of temple servants who returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian captivity (Ezr 2:49; Neh 7:51).

3. Joiada's father. Joiada, along with Meshullam, repaired the Old Gate of Jerusalem under Nehemiah's direction during the postexilic period (Neh 3:6).

Pashhur, Pashur

1. Forefather of a family of priests who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile (Ezr 2:38; Neh 7:41). He was perhaps also the son of Malkijah and the grandfather of Adaiah the priest. Adaiah served in the sanctuary during the postexilic period (1 Chr 9:12). Six of Pashhur's sons were encouraged by Ezra to divorce their foreign wives (Ezr 10:22).

2. One of the priests who with Nehemiah set his seal on the covenant of Ezra (Neh 10:3).

3. Immer's son and the priest and chief officer of the sanctuary during the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah (597–586 BC). Frustrated with Jeremiah's predictions of doom for Jerusalem, Pashhur beat him and had him put in stocks at the temple's Benjamin Gate. Upon his release, Jeremiah exposed Pashhur's false prophecies and foretold his exile and death in Babylon (Jer 20:1–6).

4. Son of Malkijah and perhaps the grandson of King Zedekiah of Judah (597–586 BC; Jer 21:1; 38:1; cf. 38:6). The king sent Pashhur, with Zephaniah the priest, to Jeremiah, requesting that

he ask the Lord to deal favorably with Judah. It was in his father's cistern that Jeremiah was imprisoned (Jer 38:6).

5. Father of Gedaliah. Gedaliah—with Shephatiah, Jucal, and Pashhur—opposed Jeremiah and attempted to kill him by imprisoning him in Malkijah's cistern (Jer 38:1).

Passion

A term which comes from Latin meaning "suffering." It is used in some translations (such as the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version) in Acts 1:3 to refer to the sufferings of Jesus. Throughout history, Christians have referred to Jesus's sufferings as his Passion.

What Happened During Jesus's Passion?

Each of the four Gospels has what is called a Passion narrative. This is the section recording the sufferings of Jesus on the night of his arrest and the following day leading up to his death.

1. Matthew includes it in chapters 26–27.
2. Mark includes it in chapters 14–15.
3. Luke includes it in chapters 22–23.
4. John includes it in chapters 18–19.

Jesus's Arrest and Trials

Luke gives the most detailed account of the physical pain Jesus experienced while at prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:41–44). John 18:12 tells us that Jesus was then bound and led to the high priest's house, where he was first questioned by Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was the current holder of that office. This questioning is recorded in John 18:19–24.

Annas sent Jesus on to Caiaphas for further examination (John 18:24). At this stage, the soldiers guarding Jesus indulged in some foul play. They beat him and asked him as his eyes were covered, to prophesy who had hit him (Luke 22:63–65). At daybreak, the Jewish Council (called the Sanhedrin) gathered and tried to prove Jesus was guilty. But they could not obtain strong enough evidence against him.

Finally, the high priest asked him a question that led him to make himself look guilty in their eyes. This goes against what is normally described in Jewish law (Mark 14:55–64). By asking a direct question concerning Jesus's role as messiah, they compelled him to commit what they considered to be blasphemy. Blasphemy is typically understood as speaking falsely about God. They had closed their minds to the possibility that Jesus could be the Messiah.

Jesus's Physical Suffering and Death

Matthew 26:67–68 and Mark 14:65 suggest that it was at this point that Jesus was abused by his guards and possibly some members of the council. He was then taken under arrest to Pilate's residence in Jerusalem. Pilate lived in the Praetorium or the garrison headquarters. Pilate appears to have conducted a preliminary examination of Jesus. He found that his hometown was in Galilee. He sent Jesus to Herod as being under Herod's authority. Jesus refused to answer any of Herod's questions, so Herod sent Jesus back to the governor after mocking Jesus (Luke 23:1–12).

Pilate then appears to have wanted to enlist the crowd's sympathy for Jesus and so had him whipped, after which he was dressed in a purple robe. This is possibly the one given to him by Herod (Luke 23:11) and a crown of thorns. The whipping could have been the regular prelude to crucifixion. It may have been an attempt to suggest that he had punished Jesus enough (23:16). Jesus was whipped with a flagellum while his hands were tied to a pillar (Mark 15:15). A flagellum was a leather whip whose thongs were weighted with jagged pieces of bone and lead.

Even after this, Jesus faced more attacks by the soldiers (Matthew 27:27–31; Mark 15:16–20; John 19:3) and then had to stand by while Pilate tried weakly to negotiate with the mob, who by now had been stirred up by his opponents to clamor for Jesus's death (John 19:1–16; cf. Matthew 27:11–26; Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:18–25). It did not work, Pilate sent Jesus to the execution squad.

It is not surprising that after all this ill-treatment, Jesus appears to have been unable to carry the cross to Calvary. He was either supposed to carry the crossbeam only or the entire cross including both beams of wood. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it for him. This is explained in Mark 15:21 and the other Gospel accounts.

Once he reached Calvary, the soldiers quickly nailed him to the cross. Traditionally, this was done by driving a nail through each hand and a longer

nail through both feet together. The cross was then set upright into a socket in the ground. In some cases, the crossbeam carried was connected to the post already standing upright in the ground. Jesus was left to hang there until he died from loss of blood after the whipping or from a ruptured heart caused by the strain on the muscles of the diaphragm. Sometimes the whippings were deadly.

The Mental and Spiritual Suffering of Jesus

Apart from the physical side of the Passion, we must not forget that Jesus also experienced mental agony.

1. His friends betrayed him.
2. His followers abandoned him.
3. There was the further suffering of knowing that all he went through was undeserved. He was completely innocent of all the charges brought against him.

The Jewish people prided themselves on the quality of their religion. The Romans prided themselves on the standards of their law. In a way that seems opposite to what you might expect, it was the misunderstanding of Jewish religion and the misuse of Roman law that enabled Jesus's enemies to kill him.

Most of all, Jesus suffered spiritually knowing that God was going to make "Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21)." This meant he would be separated from God. At a time when many people dying for their faith have felt God's presence strongly, Jesus instead cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34 and parallel passages).

Why Is Jesus's Passion Important to Christians?

The New Testament shows us what the first Christians believed was "good news." This news changed the ancient world. The good news was that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). This was the basic message of several New Testament writers. For example:

- Peter (see Acts 2:22–36; 3:12–21; 10:36–43; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18)
- Paul (see Acts 13:26–39)
- John (see 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Revelation 1:5; 5:9)
- The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 2:9, 17; 9:28; 10:12)

The fact that Jesus was sinless qualified him to take the sins of the whole world upon himself. He did what no human being has ever been able, or will ever be able, to do. He took the consequences of, and punishment for, human sin.

Passion of Paul

The Passion of Paul is a later Latin version of the Martyrdom of Paul, which was part of a larger apocryphal collection called the Acts of Paul. The story tells how Paul brought Patroclus back to life. Patroclus was the cupbearer (servant who poured wine) of Emperor Nero. Patroclus had fallen from a window and died while listening to one of Paul's sermons. After he came back to life, Patroclus declared his new faith in Christ before Nero, who was astonished.

Nero then ordered his soldiers to arrest all the "soldiers of the great king (Christ)," including Paul. The Passion of Paul adds a new detail about the philosopher Seneca, who was said to admire Paul and to have read Paul's writings to Nero.

As Paul was being led to his execution, he borrowed a handkerchief from a woman named Plautilla and promised to return it. After Paul's death, Plautilla showed the soldiers the handkerchief stained with his blood, proving that he had kept his promise.

See also Apocrypha; Paul, the Apostle.

Passion of Peter and Paul

The Passion of Peter and Paul exists in two versions. Both versions claim to be the work of Marcellus, a Roman presbyter (church elder) who reportedly knew Peter. However, this work actually dates from the fifth century AD.

The first version is similar to the Acts of Peter and Paul. It focuses on Paul's journey to Rome. The

second version tells more about the time when Peter and Paul lived in Rome, especially their stay in the home of a relative of Pontius Pilate. Both versions emphasize the close relationship between Peter and Paul and their successful opposition to Simon Magus, a man who falsely claimed to be the Christ. The writings also record their death sentences, though the accounts of their martyrdoms are brief.

See also Apocrypha; Paul, the Apostle; Peter, the Apostle.

Passover

Important Jewish festival celebrating Israel's redemption from Egypt. *See* Feasts and Festivals of Israel; Meals, Significance of.

Pastor

A word literally meaning "shepherd." It is used in both the Old Testament and New Testament in a figurative sense for rulers and leaders. Of the 12 times the word is used in the New Testament as a metaphor for "leader," it is translated as "pastor" only in Ephesians 4:11 (King James Version, American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, New International Version, Today's English Version, New Living Translation).

Pastors and teachers together formed a group that complemented the work of apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The titles "bishop" and "elder" refer to the same office in the New Testament (compare Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7). "Pastor" seems to have the same meaning as "bishop" and "elder," as shown by Jesus being referred to as "the Shepherd and Bishop [or Overseer] of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25, King James Version).

The verb "to shepherd" is used to describe the work of local church leaders (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). Often the congregation is called a flock. It is the pastor's responsibility to build up the body of Christ. The pastor builds up the body of Christ by watching over the congregation (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:7) and opposing false teaching (Acts 20:29–30). More detailed information regarding the duties and responsibilities of pastors is found in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, which have come to be called the Pastoral Letters.

See also Bishop; Deacon, Deaconess; Elder; Presbyter; Shepherd; Spiritual Gifts.

Pastoral Letters

A term used by Bible scholars today to describe the letters 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. In Christian tradition, these three writings have been grouped together since the second century. They are addressed to individuals rather than to churches, but the benediction (or blessing) at the end of each letter assumes a group of recipients. In general, the letters offer advice to their recipients about church order, false doctrine, leadership standards, and pastoral oversight of church life.

See also Paul, The Apostle; Timothy, First Letter to; Timothy, Second Letter to; Titus, Letter to.

Patara

Patara was a seaport of the ancient region of Lycia, now located in modern Turkey. The ancient city was one of the largest and most prosperous of the region. It was a center of trade and business. A temple to Apollo stood in Patara. Remains of a theater and baths are still there. Common wind patterns made Patara a convenient place for ships to begin their voyages to the eastern Mediterranean. The apostle Paul changed ships at Patara on his final journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1–2).

Path

A worn track or road.

Types of Paths in the Bible

"Path" and "pathway" are used to translate a variety of words used in the Bible:

1. a well-trodden and much-used roadway (Genesis 49:17; Psalms 16:11; 139:3; Proverbs 2:8, 19)
2. a thoroughfare or highway (Joel 2:8)
3. a beaten track as across fields, over hills, and through valleys (Job 30:13; Psalms 119:35; Proverbs 3:17)

4. a track or passage in which the idea of flowing along is included (Psalms 77:19; Jeremiah 18:15)
5. a circular path, as in a trench or in a parapet (Psalms 65:11; Proverbs 2:9)
6. a narrow passage, as through a hole (Numbers 22:24).

"Path" is used to translate the Greek words meaning a worn track (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4) and a wheel rut (Hebrews 12:13).

The Bible uses the words "path" or "pathway" to discuss a stretch of ground over which traffic passes. This could be in the form of a crooked mountain path, an unpaved and much-traveled way, or a pavement.

Path as a Symbol

Biblical writers also used "path" and "pathway" symbolically to describe the way human life is lived in relation to God. The idea of a path shows how God directs, enriches, or makes human life poorer. The idea of a path helped writers show human behavior and experiences in action throughout life.

Some symbolic uses of "path" include:

- the path of life (Psalms 16:11)
- the plain (level) path (Psalms 27:11)
- the good path (Proverbs 2:9)
- the path of the wicked (Proverbs 4:14)
- the path of the just (Proverbs 4:18)
- the path of judgment (Isaiah 40:14)
- the right paths (Proverbs 4:11)
- paths of peace (Proverbs 3:17)

Pathros

The region of Upper Egypt, mentioned five times in the Hebrew OT (Is 11:11; Jer 44:1, 15; Ez 29:14; 30:14). Each time it occurs in conjunction with a city in Lower Egypt (Noph = Memphis, or Zoan = Tanis). The Hebrew is Pathros, and the Egyptian is *pa to resy* ("the Southern Land"). Egyptologists believe that the Hebrew form is a corruption of *Pethoris* or *Pethores.* Isaiah 11:11 suggests that Mitsrayim is to be equated with Lower and Middle Egypt, and Pathros is the region south of it up to the border of Cush (i.e., Upper Egypt). According to Ezekiel 29:14, Pathros is the original home of the Egyptians. The prophets spoke about God's judgment on Pathros: "I will lay waste Upper Egypt ["Pathros," mg], set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes" (Ez 30:14, niv). After the exile, Jews migrated to Egypt and some settled in Pathros. Jeremiah warned that God's judgment on Egypt was to come and that they would not escape it: "This word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in Lower Egypt—in Migdol, Tahpanhes and Memphis—and in Upper Egypt [Pathros]: 'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You saw the great disaster I brought on Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. Today they lie deserted and in ruins' " (Jer 44:1–2, niv).

Pathrusites

Inhabitants of Pathros, a region of southern Egypt (Gn 10:14; 1 Chr 1:12). *See* Pathros.

Patience

Patience is the ability to endure much hardship or mistreatment. It is not to lose your temper, get irritated, or seek revenge. It includes:

1. The strength to endure pain without complaining
2. The ability to hold back when severely provoked
3. The self-control to avoid rash actions in adversity

In Hebrew, the common expression for patience is related to the verb "to be long," meaning being slow to get angry or upset. In Greek, two different words were translated as "patience" in the King James Version of the Bible:

1. One word suggests "remaining firm under" tests and trials and is better translated as "endurance" or "steadfastness."
2. The other Greek word is similar to the Hebrew meaning. It refers to patience as "long-spiritedness" or staying calm when provoked to anger.

The greatest example of patience in the Bible is God himself. Many passages describe God, along with other gracious attributes, as "slow to anger." Despite Israel's repeated rebellions, God is shown as forgiving. He is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and full of lovingkindness (Nehemiah 9:17). The psalmist says, "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15; see also Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalms 103:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). The Old Testament also praises the virtue of a patient spirit, especially in Proverbs (Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 25:15; see also Ecclesiastes 7:8).

The New Testament also emphasizes the Lord's patience. It is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience that lead people to repentance (Romans 2:4). God was patient in delaying the Flood during Noah's time. It was while the ark was being built. This gave people more time to repent (1 Peter 3:20). Perhaps the most significant New Testament reference to God's patience is in 2 Peter 3:9. Peter explains that the delay in Christ's return is not due to God's slowness. It is because of his patience that he does not want anyone to perish. Paul also mentions Jesus Christ's patience. He says that Christ showed perfect patience in his dealings with him (1 Timothy 1:16).

Patience, which is a characteristic of God and Jesus Christ, should also be seen in every Christian. Paul prayed for the Colossians, asking that they would show this quality (Colossians 1:11). Patience is:

- One of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)
- A characteristic of love (1 Corinthians 13:4)
- A virtue (Colossians 3:12; see also 2 Timothy 3:10)

Christians are also urged to be patient (1 Thessalonians 5:14). If we are not, we may be treated like the servant in one of Jesus's parables. This servant begged his master, to whom he owed a huge debt, for patience, promising to repay everything. The master was patient and forgave all the debt. But, he found the servant refused to show the same patience to a fellow servant who owed him a small amount. (Matthew 18:26–29)

In some contexts, "patience" also means waiting a long time with hope and expectation. For example, a farmer waits patiently for the crops to grow (James 5:7b). Abraham waited for God to give him the land of Canaan. He died without seeing the promise fulfilled, but he still believed (Hebrews 6:15; 11:39). Finally, all Christians are commanded to be patient until the Lord's return (James 5:7a).

Patmos

Small island in the Aegean Sea, located about 35 miles (56.3 kilometers) west of the city of Miletus off the coast of Asia Minor. Patmos is about ten miles (16.1 kilometers) long and six miles (9.7 kilometers) wide at its northern end, consisting of rocky volcanic hills.

In Revelation 1:9 John says that he was on the island of Patmos "for preaching the word of God and speaking about Jesus" (nlt). He also indicates that he is a fellow participant in their "suffering." The Roman historian Tacitus informs us that the Romans used some of the Aegean islands as places of banishment and exile during the first century (*Annals* 3.68; 4.30; 15.71). Thus the language of the author and the evidence of Tacitus, joined to Christian traditions from the second and third centuries about John's banishment, support the likelihood that Patmos was a place of exile or political confinement.

In a time when the Asian churches were undergoing persecution, John wrote to them from this island. He addressed each of seven churches by means of a letter of encouragement and warning. The series of letters is followed by the author's account of the divinely sent vision of impending judgment, which "must soon take place" (Rv 22:6). Patmos, then, was the location from which this NT writing originated.

See also Revelation, Book of.

Patriarchs, Period of the

The period of time when the biblical fathers of Israel lived. The Bible talks about:

- The patriarchs who lived long lives before the flood (Genesis 1–5)
- Noah (Genesis 6–9)
- A line of patriarchs after the flood (Genesis 10–11)

However, the word usually refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12–36) and also includes Joseph (Genesis 37–50).

When Did the Patriarchs Live?

It is difficult to find the exact date of the patriarchs. The kings mentioned in Genesis 14:1–2 are the only point of reference to identify a date. This chapter refers to historical persons and places, but we cannot identify the kings with certainty. Italian archaeologists at Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) found clay tablets with the names of the "Cities of the Plain" from Genesis 14:2 and the name of one of their kings. However, these tablets date to before 2000 BC and before Abraham. All they show is that the cities existed before Abraham.

The patriarchs lived in the middle Bronze Age, likely early in the second millennium BC. This was the time when the Amorites moved into Palestine from the northwest. The Amorites moved into Palestine in two "waves":

- The first involved a group moving in temporary dwellings (like Abraham's friends Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre) (see Genesis 14:13)
- The second wave was from Syria and involved people moving into the cities (these were "the Amorites") (Exodus 3:8)

The society of the patriarchs had two types:

- The city communities
- The rural communities (or seminomadic tribes) who would move around the cities

Joseph lived in Egypt, but Scripture does not give us the name of this pharaoh.

Where Did the Patriarchs Live?

The patriarchal history covers a wide geographic range, spanning hundreds of miles. Abraham lived in Ur, an old Sumerian city near the Persian Gulf. Then he moves Haran in the northwest, between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers in the north. From there, he moves southwest to Palestine but travels back to Haran twice and twice to Egypt. Even in Palestine, the patriarchs are always moving from place to place. They mostly travel north and south along the mountains, but sometimes they travel to the coast and even to the Transjordan (east of the Jordan River). Some join the city cultures (like Lot in Genesis 13:12), while others move to the desert (like Ishmael in Genesis 25:18 or Esau in 36:6–8).

Why Are the Patriarchs Important?

The patriarchs are very important to God's plan of redemption. The process that leads to the coming of Christ begins with Abraham (John 8:56). Of course, God's plan of salvation begins in the first chapters of Genesis. But God's plan becomes clear with the call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 and continues through the lives of all the patriarchs. The Bible often speaks of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for a reason. This is because the revelation made to the earlier patriarchs is the foundation for everything that follows. In the New Testament, Christians call Abraham their "father" too (Romans 4:16).

See also Abraham; Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament); Isaac; Israel, History of; Jacob #1; Joseph #1.

Patrimony

An inheritance from a father or ancestor (Deuteronomy 18:8).

See Heir; Inheritance.

Patrobas

One of the Christians in Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom 16:14).

Patroclus

Father of Nicanor (2 Macc 8:9), the Syrian general whose 20,000 soldiers were routed by a numerically inferior band led by Judas Maccabeus. Patroclus is mentioned only in connection with his embarrassed and dishonored son.

Pau

A city located in Edom where King Hadad ruled (Genesis 36:39). It was also called "Pai."

Paul, the Apostle

Prominent leader of the first-century church, an apostle to the gentiles, and the author of 13 New Testament letters.

Preview

- Family and Cultural Background
- Education
- Saul the Persecutor
- Conversion and Calling
- Preparation for Ministry
- Sent Out from Antioch
- Traveling with Barnabas
- The Council of Jerusalem
- Further Travel
- Labor in the Gospel
- The Arrest in Jerusalem
- Voyage and Stay in Rome
- Final Years and Martyrdom

Family and Cultural Background

Paul was born around AD 10, a Jew in a family of Pharisees (Acts 23:6) of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5) in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3). Tarsus was a center of commerce and learning that embraced the Hellenistic spirit and Roman politics. It was a city of which he could be proud (21:39). His parents named him Saul, perhaps after the first king of Israel, who was also a Benjaminite (1 Samuel 11:15; Acts 13:21). But Acts 13:9 notes that he "was also called Paul." He uses the Roman name Paul throughout his letters.

Paul received knowledge of the Law and Prophets and the Hebrew and Aramaic languages from religious parents (Acts 21:40; 22:2–3; 23:6; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:5–6). Tarsus, however, was not a Jewish city. Rather, it had a Greek character, being a place where the Greek language was spoken and Greek literature was cultivated. This accounts for Paul's familiarity with Greek (Acts 21:37), the language of the streets and shops of Tarsus.

Jews were brought to Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, in 171 BC to promote business in the region. At that time Paul's ancestors were probably given Roman citizenship. Paul inherited from his father both Tarsisian and Roman citizenship. This would prove to be of great value to Paul in his later life as he traveled with the gospel throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 16:37; 22:25–29; 23:27). Paul may have had several brothers and sisters, but Acts 23:16 mentions only one sister, whose son saved Paul's life.

Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). He may have learned this trade from his father, or he may have selected it as a means of self-support, as was the custom of those in rabbinical training. Tarsus was well known for the goat's-hair cloth called cilicium. By weaving and fashioning this cloth into tents, sails, awnings, and cloaks, Paul gained economic independence during his apostolic ministry (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 28:30; 2 Corinthians 11:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

Education

Although born in Tarsus, Paul testified to the Jews in Jerusalem that he had been brought up in this city and studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). It is not clear when Paul was first brought to Jerusalem, but it is likely that sometime between the ages of 13 and 20 he began his formal rabbinical studies. His teacher, Gamaliel, was the grandson of Hillel, founder of a Pharisaic school whose teachings are still present in Talmudic writings today. This is the same Gamaliel whose wisdom persuaded the Sanhedrin to spare the lives of Peter and the apostles (5:33–40). Certainly, it was while studying under Gamaliel in Hillel's school that Paul began to advance in Judaism beyond many Jews of his own age and became extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Galatians 1:14). Perhaps then also Paul began to experience the struggles with the law he would later describe in Romans 7.

While Paul was studying the Jewish law in Jerusalem, Jesus was working as a carpenter in Nazareth. Then Jesus gathered the disciples who would one day be Paul's coworkers in the gospel. Jesus fulfilled his ministry, and accomplished redemption on the cross (AD 30). Christ's

Paul, the Apostle

resurrection gave birth to the church, which was baptized in the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–13).

Saul the Persecutor

Shortly after these world-changing events, the members of certain synagogues in Jerusalem, including the Cilician synagogue, where Paul was from (Acts 6:9), could not resist the wisdom and spirit (verse 10) of a member of the church in Jerusalem named Stephen (verses 5, 8). They accused him of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin (verses 11–15). After Stephen's eloquent defense (7:1–53), they dragged him out of the city, where he was stoned to death. He became the first Christian martyr. The record does not fully reveal Paul's role in these events. But we know he was present and prominent because the witnesses against Stephen, who were required to throw the first stones in the execution, "laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul [Paul]" (verse 58).

At Stephen's trial, Paul heard Stephen's historical method of defense. Paul later used it himself at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16–41). He witnessed the man with the face of an angel (6:15), full of the Holy Spirit, looking above and proclaiming "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (7:56). Stephen's death initiated the events that would culminate in Paul's conversion and commission as the apostle to the gentiles. But at that time Paul was a leader of the oppressors of the church. He breathed threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord (9:1). He persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it (Galatians 1:13) by imprisoning Christians, both male and female (Acts 22:4), in many cities.

Conversion and Calling

Paul had obtained letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to the synagogues in Damascus authorizing him to arrest the believers there and bring them to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 9:1–2). Paul traveled to Damascus for this purpose. Then, on the outskirts of the city, came the event that was to transform this law-keeping persecutor of Jesus Christ and blasphemous destroyer of the infant church into the chief propagator of the gospel of grace and master builder of the church (1 Corinthians 3:10; 1 Timothy 1:13). This was the occasion of Paul's conversion (around AD 31–33). It was of such revolutionary and lasting importance that three detailed accounts of it are given in the book of Acts (Acts 9:1–19; 22:1–21; 26:1–23). Many references are also given to it in Paul's own writings (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8; Galatians 1:15–16; Ephesians 3:3; Philippians 3:12).

At that time a light from heaven, brighter than the midday sun, shone around Paul and his traveling companions, and they fell to the ground (Acts 26:13–14). Only Paul, however, heard the voice of Jesus instruct him in his commission as a minister and witness to the gentiles (verses 14–18). Temporarily blinded, Paul was led into Damascus (9:8). There, the disciple Ananias and the Christian community forgave Paul. They baptized him, and helped him through the bewildering event of his conversion (verses 10–22). After a short time with the church there, Paul was threatened with death by the Jews to whom he preached Jesus (verses 20–22), but he was protected by the believers and ingeniously delivered from his persecutors (verses 23–25).

Preparation for Ministry

Then began a period of preparation, which lasted about 13 years. During this time, Paul first was in the desert of Arabia for three years. Here was his opportunity to pray and reflect on Stephen's defense to the Sanhedrin, the momentous significance of his conversion, the vision he received of Jesus Christ, and the meaning of all this in the light of Jewish theology. Following this, Paul returned to Damascus and then visited Peter in Jerusalem for 15 days (Galatians 1:17–18).

At first, the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him because they did not believe he was a disciple of Jesus (Acts 9:26). But he was championed by Barnabas and thus accepted by the believers in Jerusalem (verses 27–28). While there, Paul may have heard the oral gospel, a summary of the words and deeds of Jesus, handed down to all converts. This would have included the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23–25), specific words of the Lord (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 7:10; 9:14), the appearances of the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3–8), and the spirit and character of Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:1; Philippians 2:5–8). Paul also preached in Jerusalem, perhaps in the same synagogues in which he had heard Stephen. However, when his life was again threatened by the Jews, the believers sent him away to Tarsus (Acts 9:29–30; Galatians 1:21).

The end of Paul's preparation came when Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for him and bring him to Antioch. By this time Paul had lived for 10 years in

Paul, *the Apostle*

Cilicia. Since his conversion, before being sent to Tarsus, he had proclaimed Jesus (Acts 9:20), speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (verse 27). There is no reason to think he did otherwise while living among the gentiles in Cilicia. In fact, his work may have been so effective that he began to attract attention in Antioch. During these years, Paul probably underwent many of the sufferings mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:24–26. Several scholars think that the ecstatic experience mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:1–9, with its accompanying "thorn in the flesh," also took place before he came to Antioch.

Sent Out from Antioch

The church in Antioch had its origins in the persecution fomented by Paul after the death of Stephen. Until they arrived in Antioch, the scattered believers had only spoken the word to Jews (Acts 11:19). It was here that the gentiles first heard the good news (verse 20), and many became believers (verse 21). It is fitting that Paul, the apostle to the gentiles (Acts 22:21; Romans 11:13), who was as yet unknown by sight to the churches of Judea (Galatians 1:22), should appear in Antioch to formally begin the ministry to which he was called (Acts 26:17–18).

Barnabas and Paul stayed with the church in Antioch for a year. Their work there was so blessed that a new name, Christian, was coined to distinguish the believers in Antioch from gentiles and Jews (Acts 11:26). Hearing of a famine in Judea, the disciples in Antioch determined to send relief to the believers in Judea and did so by Barnabas and Paul (verse 30). Such a gift displayed to the Jewish churches the potency of the gospel among the gentiles. Their mission complete, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch with John Mark (12:25), Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10).

Beginning from the Day of Pentecost, the work in the gospel had been casual and incidental. Contacts were made in the homes, the marketplace, the streets, synagogues, highways, and other similar things. (Acts 3:1; 5:12, 42; 8:26–29; 10:22). But in Antioch the Holy Spirit initiated a determined effort to evangelize a section of the Roman Empire (13:1–3). By the Holy Spirit's instructions, the church separated Barnabas and Paul for this work. With the prayers and encouragement of this church, and with John Mark as their assistant, Barnabas and Paul, sent out by the Holy Spirit, sailed for Cyprus (verse 4).

Traveling with Barnabas

Arriving in Salamis, they preached in the synagogues as they traveled the length of the island to Paphos (Acts 13:5–6). There the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus, wanted to hear the word of God (verse 7). A magician named Elymas Bar-Jesus tried to prevent the proconsul from believing in Jesus but was stricken with temporary blindness by Paul's command (verses 8–11). This was the first manifestation in Paul of the signs of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12). From then on, the name Paul, not Saul, is used in Luke's record of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 13:9), and Paul replaced Barnabas as the leader of the party. So "Paul and his companions" set sail from Paphos and arrived in Perga of Pamphylia (verse 13). John Mark deserted them at Perga and returned to his home in Jerusalem (verse 13). This caused discord (15:39), but Paul and Mark were later reconciled (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Paul's travels with the gospel now continued through the Roman province of Asia, specifically in the southern portion of Galatia, the areas of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. The coastal area where the party landed is a hot region affected by malaria. It is thought that Paul contracted malaria there and so traveled inland through the mountains to the 4,000-foot- (1,219.2-meter-) high tablelands. Such a journey would have been full of dangerous rivers and bandits (2 Corinthians 11:26), but Paul was well cared for by the Galatian highlanders when he arrived (Galatians 4:13–15). He was rewarded with a warm reception to his message (Acts 13:48–49).

Paul and Barnabas were asked to speak at the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:15), and Paul delivered a discourse full of the characteristics of the gospel he would later record in his letters to the churches (verses 16–41). He was invited to speak the next week (verse 42). Nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God (verse 44). This aroused jealousy in the Jews who opposed Paul's words (verse 45), causing the apostles' dramatic turn to the gentiles (verses 46–47). Many gentiles in Antioch believed and spread the word throughout the region, but Paul and Barnabas were forced out and went to Iconium in Lycaonia (verses 48–51).

The success in Antioch was duplicated in Iconium as was the Jews' opposition (Acts 14:1), and the apostles fled from the threat of a stoning to Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia (verses 5–6). In Lystra the signs of an apostle were again seen when Paul

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healed a man who had been crippled since birth (verses 8–10). The idolatrous citizens of the town, however, primed by the popular belief that Jupiter, accompanied by Mercury, had once visited their region, worshiped Paul and Barnabas as these deities (verses 11–13). Even the convincing words of Paul, whom they mistook for Mercury, hardly restrained the crowds from offering a sacrifice (verses 14–18).

It was in Lystra that Paul first encountered the same kind of treatment he had previously inflicted on Christians. The Jews stoned him, dragged him out of the city, and left him for dead (Acts 14:19). Timothy (16:1–3) may have been among the new disciples surrounding Paul as he lay outside the gate (14:20). Timothy was Paul's son in the faith (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Tm 1:2), eyewitness to his suffering (2 Timothy 3:10–11), faithful companion, and fellow worker (Acts 19:22; 20:4; Romans 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2). The next day Barnabas and Paul went on to Derbe (Acts 14:20).

After making many disciples in Derbe, the apostles retraced their steps through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. They strengthened and encouraged the new believers and appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:21–23). Arriving again in Perga, they sailed back to Antioch of Syria. There they reported to the church the wonderful news that God had provided an opportunity of faith for the gentiles (verses 25–27).

The Council of Jerusalem

The Jews had closely followed Paul and Barnabas throughout Galatia. They continued to pursue Paul and Barnabas, seeking to bewitch the gentiles there. The Jews convinced them to desert the grace of Christ and submit to the Jewish law (Galatians 1:6; 3:1). Shortly after the apostles' return to Antioch, Judaizers [Christian Jews who attempted to impose the Jewish way of life on gentile Christians] came from Judea to Antioch, teaching salvation by the law (Acts 15:1). This began the war against the gospel of grace, which Paul preached.

The church in Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas, and others to Jerusalem to settle the controversy of the law versus grace with the apostles and elders there (AD 49, Acts 15:2). Along the way to Jerusalem they spread the news of the conversion of the gentiles. This brought great joy to the believers (verse 3). Such joy was not shared by some in Jerusalem, who in the first meeting of the council said that the gentiles should be ordered to keep the law of Moses (verse 5).

After this meeting, Paul and Barnabas met privately with Peter, John, and James (Galatians 2:1–10). They explained the gospel they had been preaching to the gentiles. These three leaders of the church in Jerusalem saw the grace that had been given to Paul to bring the gospel to the gentiles and extended to him the "right hand of fellowship" [an expression of unity and partnership]. This private meeting seems to have decided the question of compliance to the Jewish law because in the next general meeting Peter said, "We believe it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved" (Acts 15:11). James decided that "we should not cause trouble for the gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). This was a great victory for Paul and Barnabas, and the news was received with rejoicing by the church in Antioch (verses 30–35).

Later, Peter visited Antioch and freely associated with the gentile believers as he had timidly done in Cornelius's house (Acts 10:28). This continued until "certain men came from James." Their presence brought fear to Peter, clouding the light of the gospel of grace, and causing him to separate himself from the gentiles. Peter's action influenced others, including Barnabas, to do the same (Galatians 2:12–13). Paul rose to the challenge of this serious crisis. He confronted Peter publicly and charged him with Judaizing and hypocrisy (verse 14). Paul won the battle and rescued Peter and Barnabas with eloquent words on justification by faith (verses 15–21), but the Judaizers had resumed their war. From this time on, they did not rest. Rather, they tormented and persecuted Paul all over the world. But the apostle did not submit to them for a moment. He was engaged in the fight of his life so that the truth of the gospel might remain with the gentile believers (verse 5).

Further Travel

Paul wanted to visit the new believers and see how they were doing. So he proposed to Barnabas that they return to the cities where they had previously preached about Jesus (Acts 15:36). Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, but Paul would not take him since he had deserted them during their earlier journey (13:13). This sharp disagreement ended Barnabas's association with Paul (15:37–39). Silas, a leader among the brothers in Jerusalem (verse 22), accompanied Paul as he set out by land through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (verses 40–41).

Beginning from Derbe in Galatia, Paul and Silas revisited the churches Paul had established with

Barnabas. While in Lystra, they were joined by Timothy (Acts 16:1–3). The apostles delivered to these young churches the letter drafted by the elders and apostles in Jerusalem concerning the observance of the law (15:23–29), thus strengthening and increasing them (16:4–5).

It is likely that Ephesus, a major city in the Roman province of Asia, was the party's main objective for the advancement of the gospel. But "the Holy Spirit had prevented them from speaking the word in the province of Asia" (Acts 16:6). Then they attempted to turn north and enter the region of Bithynia, "but the Spirit of Jesus would not permit them" (verse 7). In this way they were forced by God to continue straight westward to Troas on the Aegean Sea. There Luke joined them ("we" in verse 10), and Paul had a vision in which he was called out of Asia into Macedonia (verses 8–9). Paul and his party immediately crossed by boat into Europe (verse 11) where they carried the gospel to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth.

Philippi was a Roman colony and military outpost where there were few Jews, so Paul went to a place by the river where the local Jews prayed. He spoke to some women there, notably Lydia, who believed and with her household was baptized (Acts 16:12–15), beginning the first church in Europe. Paul cast a spirit of divination out of a girl in Philippi, and as a result, he and Silas were jailed (verses 16–24). The events of their night in jail made the jailer a believer in God (verses 25–34). He and his family were added to the church in Philippi, which met in Lydia's home (verse 40). When Paul disclosed his Roman citizenship, he was released and was asked to leave the city (verses 35–39).

At Thessalonica, the Jews, aroused to jealousy by the success of Paul's gospel message, raised a mob to search for the apostles. They complained to the city authorities that the people "who have turned the world upside down have now come here" and accused the apostles of "saying that there is another king [besides Caesar], named Jesus" (Acts 17:5–7).

Paul and Silas quickly left Thessalonica by night and arrived in Berea, a city thereafter distinguished by its citizens who eagerly and thoughtfully received the gospel (Acts 17:10–12). The Thessalonian Jews did not rest but trailed Paul to Berea to incite the crowds. The believers then sent Paul away to Athens, while Silas and Timothy stayed behind (verses 13–15).

The Athenians called Paul a babbler but let him express his views before the Areopagus. Paul's speech there was alive with his broad knowledge. He alluded to Greco-Roman philosophy (Acts 17:27), poetry (verse 28), sculpture (verses 25, 29), architecture (verse 24), and religion while proclaiming the existence of an "unknown god" (verse 23). But he was rudely cut short by scoffing and indifference when he mentioned the resurrection (verse 32). Though Paul's words delighted the minds of many, they influenced the will of few. So when he arrived in Corinth, he determined not to proclaim the mystery of God in eloquent words of wisdom so that the believers' faith would not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

In Corinth Paul met Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2–3), Roman Jews with whom he lived and worked as a tentmaker and who would become prominent among the churches (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). He stayed in Corinth 18 months from AD 50 to 51. There he raised up a church (Acts 18:11) on the strength of a vision from God (verses 9–10) and despite the attacks of the Jews (verses 12–17). Paul wrote the first and second letters to the Thessalonians from Corinth to establish the believers in a holy, industrious life (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–12) in hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:15–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and following).

Accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, Paul sailed from Corinth for Syria. He left his fellow workers in Ephesus, sailed to Caesarea, briefly visited Jerusalem, and returned to Antioch (Acts 18:18–22). Paul stayed in Antioch for a while but did not remain absent from the field of his labors for long. Alone, he departed from Antioch, went from place to place in Galatia and Phrygia strengthening all the disciples, and eventually arrived in Ephesus (18:23; 19:1).

Labor in the Gospel

A Jew named Apollos had ministered in Ephesus before Paul's arrival and had recently gone over to Corinth (Acts 18:24–28). There Apollos innocently became the cause of such discord (1 Corinthians 3:3–9) that he left and refused to return even at Paul's request (16:12). Paul's earlier visit to Ephesus (Acts 18:19–20), Apollos's ministry, and the presence of Priscilla and Aquila had prepared Ephesus so that the apostle could preach the gospel of Christ.

Paul began his work in Ephesus by correcting the misconceptions of some ill-informed disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–7). He then spent three months preaching at the local synagogue until members of the congregation "publicly maligned the Way [the Christian faith]" (verse 9). Paul then took the disciples and continued his arguments on the neutral ground of Tyrannus's school (verses 8–9), where Jews and Greeks were free to come. He continued there for two years and "that everyone who lived in the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord" (verse 10).

The work in Ephesus was a great success (Acts 19:10, 20, 26). Paul enjoyed an opportunity for effective work (1 Cor 16:9), bolstered by extraordinary miracles (Acts 19:11–17), a public burning of valuable books of sorcery (verses 18–19), and the assistance of friendly officials from the province of Asia (verse 31). There were also many adversaries (1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:9), especially among the artisans associated with the temple of Diana. Paul's ministry had hurt their trade to the extent that they were incited to riot (Acts 19:23–41). Paul had intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8), but this tumult seems to have hastened his departure (Acts 20:1).

During his stay in Ephesus, the household of Chloe sent word to Paul from Corinth that there were divisions in the church there (1 Corinthians 1:10–13). This report generated a flurry of letters and travels. Paul wrote a letter, which is now lost, to this church (5:9). The church in Corinth wrote a letter (7:1) and sent messengers to Paul (16:17), and Paul sent Timothy to them (4:17; 16:10). Paul then wrote 1 Corinthians (AD 53) and sent it by Titus, who was to meet him in Troas to report the results (2 Corinthians 2:12–13).

After his hasty exit from Ephesus, Paul found an opportunity for the gospel in Troas. But he so longed to hear from Corinth that he continued on into Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2:12–13). There he was finally comforted by Titus (7:5–7) and rejoiced at the news of the Corinthians' repentance, earnestness, longing, and zeal (verses 8–16). From Macedonia Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (AD 54), toured northwest to proclaim the good news of Christ in Illyricum (Romans 15:19), and then turned south for Achaia and his third visit to Corinth (Acts 19:21; 20:1–3; 2 Cor 13:1).

The time and place from which Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians is a topic of controversy. Some date it before the council at Jerusalem, about AD 45. Others say he wrote it from Corinth at this stage in his history. The latter opinion is the choice of this narrative.

A three-month winter stay in Corinth (AD 55–56) produced the Letter to the Romans, which firmly set the benchmark of the gospel for all time. Paul had many personal friends in Rome (Romans 16) and had long intended to visit there (1:10–15). He planned to deliver a collection from the gentile churches to Jerusalem (Acts 20:35; Romans 15:25–26; 1 Corinthians 16:1) and then visit Rome (Acts 19:21) on his way to Spain (Romans 15:23–24).

The Arrest in Jerusalem

Paul's trip from Corinth to Jerusalem was marked by abundant warnings of the danger awaiting him in Jerusalem. The Judaizers' acrimony toward Paul was common talk everywhere, but all alarms went unheeded (Acts 20:22–24, 38; 21:4, 10–15). However, the request for prayer in Romans 15:30–32 shows that Paul knew he might soon need a divine rescue from the unbelievers in Judea.

The travelers, carrying the collection for Jerusalem, journeyed swiftly in order to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). They proceeded by land from Achaia, through Macedonia, to Philippi in time for the Passover (spring AD 56, verse 6). Crossing by sea to Troas, they visited the believers there (verses 7–12). They then sailed through the archipelago [a group of islands] of the eastern Aegean Sea to Miletus (verses 13–16). From Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus, to whom he delivered an impassioned speech containing his own dire warnings for them (verses 17–38).

Parting from them, Paul and his companions set sail to Cos, to Rhodes, and then to Patara. There they changed ships for Phoenicia (Acts 21:1–2). A straight course to Tyre brought them within sight of Cyprus, with its memories of Barnabas and Sergius Paulus (verse 3). "Through the Spirit" the disciples in Tyre "kept telling Paul not to go up to Jerusalem" (verse 4), but he pressed on to Caesarea. There he and his company stayed with Philip, who had formerly served with the martyred Stephen (21:8; compare 6:5). In Caesarea, Paul would not be persuaded by an especially dramatic prophecy of his coming arrest (21:10–14).

In Jerusalem, the group of apostles stayed with Mnason, an early disciple, and were warmly welcomed by the brothers there (Acts 21:15–17). James and the elders of the church praised God when they heard of the things he had done through

Paul among the gentiles (verses 18–20), and when they received the collection from the churches (24:17). They told Paul of his bad reputation among the thousands of Jewish believers in Jerusalem and urged him to set right the Judaizers' misrepresentation that he encouraged Jewish Christians to forsake the Mosaic customs (21:21–24). Acts 21:25 shows the Jerusalem elders understood that the gentiles were under no obligation to Moses. Their concern was for Paul to demonstrate that Jewish believers were free to continue their traditional observances.

Paul had kept the Jewish feasts (Acts 20:6), as had Jesus and the early disciples in Jerusalem. He had also cut his hair in a vow at Cenchreae (18:18), so it was a small matter for him, a Jew, to ceremonially purify himself after becoming a Christian, especially if it would undermine the arguments of the Judaizers. To have refused the elders' request would have lent credence to the Judaizers' charge. The success of this plan is seen in that it was the Jews from Asia, visiting Jerusalem for the Pentecost feast of AD 57, who caused trouble for Paul (21:27–29)—not the Judaizers from Jerusalem.

The whole city was aroused by Paul's persistent persecutors. A violent crowd dragged him out of the temple just as Stephen had once been hauled to his martyrdom. They tried to kill him, but he was rescued by Roman soldiers as the mob cried, "Away with him!"—just as they had done to Jesus (Acts 21:30–36). At this juncture, the educational and cultural diversity of Paul's life came to his rescue. As he was carried for safety to the Roman barracks, he spoke in Greek to the tribune, who had mistaken him for an Egyptian assassin (verses 37–38). Permitted to speak to the crowd, he did so in the Aramaic language then common in Israel (verses 39–40). The hushed crowd eagerly heard Paul's defense until he uttered the word "gentiles." At this, the crowd resumed its threatening and violence, and Paul was brought into the barracks (22:1–24). There the Romans prepared to flog him, until Paul revealed that he was not only a Jew from Tarsus but also a freeborn Roman citizen. The tribune was afraid, since he had bound a Roman citizen. Wanting to know the charges against Paul, he brought him to the Sanhedrin (verses 25–30).

This meeting of the Jewish judiciary was shortly reduced to dissension and violence. Paul resorted to tactics justifiable in such a war and hopelessly divided the Sanhedrin on the subject of the resurrection (Acts 23:1–9). Paul again was rescued, this time from the contending factions of the Jewish leadership, and taken to the barracks, where the Lord encouraged him, promising that he would go to Rome (AD 56, verses 10–11).

In the meantime, 40 Jews plotted to murder Paul. They vowed not to eat or drink until they had killed the apostle (Acts 23:12–15). They almost succeeded, but with the help of the son of Paul's sister (verse 16), the conspiracy was exposed. For safety, Paul was taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea under guard of 470 soldiers and handed over to the custody of Felix the governor (verses 16–35). Inconclusive hearings before Felix (Acts 24), his successor, Festus (25:1–12), and King Agrippa (25:23–26:32) occupied Paul in his two years of imprisonment in Caesarea. Festus, wanting to please the Jews, suggested that Paul be returned to Jerusalem for trial, but Paul knew the murderous intent of his accusers and again utilized his Roman citizenship by making a dramatic appeal to Caesar (25:9–12).

Voyage and Stay in Rome

To plead his case at Caesar's court, Paul and his companions, Aristarchus and Luke, were taken on a dangerous voyage (AD 58, Acts 27:1–28:16). Their passage by ship from Caesarea to Rome is one of the most remarkable on record. Luke's detailed account is a treasure of information on ancient ships, navigation, and seamanship. It is also a beautiful portrait of a heroic and dignified apostle Paul. Paul was the gospel's ambassador in chains (Ephesians 6:20), who with the guidance and assurance of his God (Acts 27:23–26), led the 276 people on board to safety (verse 37).

Luke traces the voyage stage by stage through every crisis, with a change of ship at Myra, a delay at Fair Havens on Crete, and the shipwreck on Malta. Finally, in the spring of AD 59, they arrived at Puteoli, Italy, and made their way to Rome. They were welcomed by the believers along the Appian Way (Acts 28:13–16).

Luke provided a peaceful resolution to the Acts, even though the apostle was an imperial prisoner of Caesar Nero. Paul lived by himself in his own house, chained to a Roman guard (Acts 28:16, 30). There he received the local Jewish leaders—to calm any misgivings they may have had about him and, at the same time, to convince them about Jesus. His efforts had mixed success (verses 17–28). During Paul's two or more years in Rome, the Judaizers seem to have withdrawn, only to be replaced by the peril of Eastern Gnosticism [a type of religious thinking that focuses on hidden and

mystical knowledge, valuing knowledge over faith]. This is seen in Paul's letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians, and to Philemon, all written at this time. It is unlikely that Paul's accusers appeared in Rome to bring formal charges before Caesar, so Paul was probably released in AD 61.

Final Years and Martyrdom

It is here assumed that the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) are truly Paul's work. Only through them can the probable course of events in Paul's final years be traced. Romans 15:28 shows that Paul intended to deliver the collection to Jerusalem and then to "set off to Spain by way of you [Rome]." The arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem not only destroyed these plans but also extracted five precious years from the prime of a most productive life. Although Clement of Rome implied that Paul did fulfill his desire to go to Spain (*Clement to the Corinthians* 5), it is certain that the daily pressure of Paul's anxious care for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28) did not decrease.

If Paul went to Spain, he may have been there when Rome was burned on July 19, AD 64. Tradition says that Paul traveled as far as Britain, but there is no evidence to confirm this. Returning east, he left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5) and traveled through Miletus, south of Ephesus, where he left Trophimus sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Traveling toward Macedonia, Paul visited Timothy in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). On the way, Paul left his cloak and books with Carpus in Troas (2 Timothy 4:13). This indicates that he intended to return there for his possessions. From Macedonia Paul wrote his loving yet apprehensive first letter to Timothy (AD 62–64). He had decided to spend the winter in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), northwest of Corinth on the Adriatic Sea, but was still in Macedonia when he wrote his letter to Titus. This letter is similar to 1 Timothy, yet with a somewhat harsher tone. In it is a final glimpse of the eloquent and zealous Apollos (Titus 3:13), who is still in association with Paul 10 or more years after his first appearance in Ephesus (Acts 18:24).

From here Paul's path is obscure. He may have wintered in Nicopolis, but he did not return to Troas for his winter cloak (2 Timothy 4:13). At some point he was arrested by the Romans, because he spent a winter in Rome's Mamertine Prison, suffering from the cold in that rock cell before he wrote his second letter to Timothy (AD 66–67). He may have been anticipating the coming winter when he requested that Timothy bring his cloak (verses 13, 21). The charges against Paul were possibly related to the burning of Rome (this is unknown). It was, however, now "illegal" to be a Christian since the "new religion" was no longer protected by Roman law as being part of Judaism (which was a legalized, recognized religion by Roman law).

It was dangerous to be associated with Paul at this time. Many deserted him (2 Timothy 4:16), including all his coworkers in Asia (1:15) and Demas, who loved the world (4:10). Only Luke, the physician and author of Luke and Acts, was with him when he wrote his second letter to Timothy (verse 11). Faithful believers still in hiding in Rome were also in contact with the apostle (1:16; 4:19, 21). He told Timothy to come to him in Rome and bring Mark also (4:11). Apparently Timothy did come and was imprisoned (Hebrews 13:23). Paul's request for the books and parchments (2 Timothy 4:13) discloses that he was reading and studying the Scripture to the end.

The apostle Paul had two hearings before Caesar Nero. At his first defense only the Lord stood by him (2 Timothy 4:16). There he not only pleaded his own cause but also that of the gospel, still longing that all the gentiles would hear its message. Perhaps no decision was made, and thus he was "delivered from the mouth of the lion" (verse 17). Though he knew he would soon die, he was not afraid, but was assured that the Lord would give him a crown of righteousness on the last day (verse 8). Finally, the apostle himself recorded his seminal encouragement to all believers: "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all" (verse 22). After this, the Scripture is silent regarding Paul.

Nothing is known of Paul's second hearing but that it resulted in the sentence of capital punishment. History does not record Paul's end. Nero died in the summer of AD 68, so Paul was executed before that date. As a Roman citizen, he must have been spared the lingering torture that had recently been suffered by his fellow martyrs. Tradition says that he was decapitated by the sword of an imperial headsman on the Ostian Road just outside of Rome, and buried nearby. This fulfilled Paul's desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

Paulus, Sergius

See Sergius Paulus.

Pavement

Term occurring ten times in the Bible, usually alluding to the stone floor of the temple(s). Particular interest focuses on the reference in John 19:13 to the pavement on which Jesus stood trial before Pilate. It was at the decisive moment of the Roman phase of the trial of Jesus when "Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated himself on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha" (Jn 19:13, njb). This verse has played an important role in determining the location of Jesus' trial. Until recently scholars located this pavement where Pilate's judgment seat was placed under the present street level in Jerusalem at the site of Herod's fortress Antonia. This enormous stone pavement consists of large blocks of limestone, excavated in the 1930s by Père Vincent. Today, scholars disagree about whether this is the most historically plausible site for the pavement where Jesus was condemned.

Pavilion

The English word pavilion is sometimes used in older Bible translations to describe a shelter or covering. It often translates two Hebrew words: *sukkah* and *sokoh*. These words refer to simple shelters like a booth, tent, hut, or den.

The word *sukkah* is also translated as "shelters" (Genesis 33:17), "tabernacles" (Leviticus 23:34), and "tents" (2 Samuel 11:11). Other translations of *sokoh* are "thicket" (Psalm 10:9), "tent" (76:2), and "den" (Jeremiah 25:38).

In 1 Kings 20:16, some English Bibles use the word "pavilions" to describe the tents of King Ben-hadad and his officials. They were drinking in their tents when King Ahab attacked them. Other translations use "booths," "temporary shelters," "quarters," or simply "tents."

The book of Psalms also uses the idea of a pavilion in a poetic way. In Psalms 27:5 and 31:20, the writer says that the Lord gives special protection. This protection is like a shelter where people can hide from danger. Psalm 18:11 says, "He made darkness His hiding place, and storm clouds a canopy around Him." This verse uses picture language to describe how God hides his presence in dark clouds.

Peace

Total well-being, prosperity, and security associated with God's presence among his people. In the Old Testament, peace is linked with the covenant (a special agreement between God and the Israelites). The presence of peace was conditional. Israel's needed to obey in order to experience peace. In the prophetic writings, true peace is part of the end-time hope of God's salvation. In the New Testament, this longed-for peace is understood as having come in Christ and can be experienced by the believers.

In the Old Testament

The main Old Testament word for "peace" comes from the Hebrew word *shalom.* This word meant many things:

- wholeness
- health
- security
- well-being
- salvation

It could apply to an equally wide range of contexts:

- the state of the individual (Psalms 37:37; Proverbs 3:2; Isaiah 32:17)
- the relationship of person to person (Genesis 34:21; Jos 9:15)
- nation to nation (for example, absence of conflict—Deuteronomy 2:26; Joshua 10:21; 1 Kings 5:12; Psalms 122:6–7)
- the relationship of God and people (Psalms 85:8; Jeremiah 16:5).

The presence of shalom in any of these contexts was not considered the outcome of human effort. Instead, it was a gift or blessing of God (Leviticus 26:6; 1 Kings 2:33; Job 25:2; Psalms 29:11; 85:8; Isaiah 45:7). It is not surprising, therefore, to find "peace" tied closely to the Old Testament notion of covenant.

Shalom was the desired state of harmony and communion between the two covenant partners—God and his people (Numbers 6:26; compare Isaiah 54:10). Peace signified God's blessing in the covenant relationship (Malachi 2:5; compare Numbers 25:12). An absence of peace signified the breakdown of that relationship due to Israel's disobedience and unrighteousness (Jeremiah 16:5, 10–13; compare Psalms 85:9–11; Isaiah 32:17).

Peace in the Prophetic Writings

Shalom becomes a very important word in the prophetic writings. "False" prophets overlooked the conditions for well-being within the covenant relationship. God was loyal to Israel (Psalms 89). They thought this would guarantee political peace forever (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:15; Ezekiel 13:10, 16; Micah 3:5). In the context of this popular but false security, the prophets who lived before the exile to Babylon proclaimed the coming judgment as a loss of shalom. This loss was attributed to Israel's persistent disobedience and unrighteousness (Isaiah 48:18; Jeremiah 14:13–16; 16:5, 10–13; 28; Micah 3:4, 9–12).

The prophets did point beyond the crises to a time when shalom would return, characterized by:

- prosperity and well-being (Isaiah 45:7; Ezekiel 34:25–26)
- absence of conflict (Isaiah 2:2–4; 32:15–20; Ezekiel 34:28–31)
- right relations (Isaiah 11:1–5; Micah 4:1–4; Zechariah 8:9–13)
- restoration of harmony in nature (Isaiah 11:6–9; Ezekiel 47:1–12)
- salvation (Isaiah 52:7; 60:17; Ezekiel 34:30–31; 37:26–28)

Often this expectation of peace in the Old Testament was associated with a messianic figure (God's chosen leader). Isaiah 9:6 identifies the future Messiah (God's chosen leader) as the "Prince of Peace." Moreover, his reign would be one of "peace" not only for Israel but throughout the whole earth (Zechariah 9:9–10). The Old Testament ends with this hope of peace still unrealized in its full sense.

In the New Testament

The Greek term for "peace" used predominantly in the New Testament is *eirene.* This word expanded from its classical Greek connotation of "rest" to include connotations of the Hebrew concept of shalom. Like shalom*, eirene* could be used as a greeting or farewell. The phrase "peace be with you" appears in Luke 10:5, Galatians 6:16, and James 2:16 (compare John 20:19). *Eirene* could also mean an ending of conflict, both between nations (Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20) or between people (Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:3). It could also mean peace at home (compare 1 Corinthians 7:15).

Jesus Brings God's Peace

Jesus includes the Old Testament hope for the peace of God in his ministry. In the "benedictus" (song of praise) of Zechariah, the coming of Jesus as the Messiah is expected to "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:67–79). The angels' message to the shepherds proclaims Jesus as the bringer of God's peace to people (2:14). In other words, as the Messiah, Jesus would bring about God's peaceful rule. The Gospel of John shows that Jesus understood his role this way too. This long-expected peace of God is Jesus's farewell gift to the disciples (John 14:27). Peace is given to them when he breathes his Spirit into them (20:19–22).

The nature of this gift of peace brought by Jesus may be easier to explain by stating what it is not. It is not an end to tension or the absence of warfare. It is not domestic tranquility nor anything like the worldly estimation of peace (Luke 12:51–53; John 14:27; 16:32–33). The presence of peace may counter our expectations by disturbing existing relations. Matthew says peace may sometimes be a dividing "sword" in familial relations (Matthew 10:34–37). Jesus's gift of peace is, in reality, the character and mood of the new covenant of his blood. This covenant reconciles God to people (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20). It also forms a foundation of reconciliation between divergent people (Ephesians 2:14–22).

How Did the Early Church Understand Peace?

The early church understood "peace" to be the final, end-time salvation of God given already through Jesus Christ (compare Phil 4:7–9). This understanding of "peace" altered the content of the common greeting "go in peace" within the Christian community. Paul commonly wrote a "grace and peace" greeting in his letters (1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2, etc.; compare also 1 Peter 1:2; 2 John 1:3; Jude 1:2; Revelation 1:4). This expression is not just a wish for peace that Paul extends to his readers. It is a

reminder of the messianic gifts available in the present time through Christ to the man of faith. In accord with this, Jesus is described as "peace" itself (Ephesians 2:14). God, too, because of his act of reconciliation through Christ, is known as a "God of peace" (Philippians 4:9; Colossians 3:15).

This gift of peace or reconciliation with God made available through Christ, places an ethical demand on the Christian. The gift calls for the exercises of "peace" (as reconciliation between persons) within the church. Peace, as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), is to be the goal of the Christian's dealings with others (Romans 12:18; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14).

Peace Offering

See Offerings and Sacrifices.

Peacock

A peacock is the male of the peafowl species (*Pavo cristatus*). The female is called a peahen. The peacock is known for its bright colors and long tail feathers. Its breast is a shiny metallic blue. Each tail feather has a round "eye" pattern near the tip. When the tail is down, the feathers form a train that can be as long as 1.8 meters (6 feet). The peacock can lift this train into a large fan during courtship. It also shakes the feathers to make a rustling sound. The peahen has duller colors and no long train.

Peacocks in the Bible

Peacocks are mentioned in 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21. Some scholars think these passages may refer instead to Old World monkeys, baboons, or guinea hens from the upper Nile River area. Others believe peacocks were brought to Egypt by the Phoenicians, possibly as early as the time of King Solomon. Solomon's trade ships may have gone as far as India, where peacocks are native.

The Greeks and Romans also knew the peacock. Alexander the Great admired its beauty and did not allow his soldiers to kill it.

Symbolism in Christianity

In early Christian art, the peacock became a symbol of the eternal life promised in the resurrection of Christ. The "eyes" on its feathers came to represent the all-seeing eye of God.

See also Birds.

Pearl

A gem formed within the shell of certain mollusks.

The word appears only once in the Old Testament (Job 28:18). Some think that the "reddish" stone in Lamentations 4:7 refers to a pink pearl from the Red Sea. By the New Testament period, the pearl was:

- Prized jewelry (1 Timothy 2:9)
- An item of trade (Matthew 13:45–46; Revelation 18:12–16)
- An object of high price

Being familiar objects, Jesus used pearls often in his illustrations. A fine pearl was an object of such great value that a man might sell all his accumulated wealth to buy it (Matthew 13:45–46). A pearl (a metaphor for the Lord's word) would not be given to those, like pigs, who did not value it (Matthew 7:6).

See also Stones, Precious.

Pedahel

Pedahel was the son of Ammihud. He came from the tribe of Naphtali. Pedahel was chosen to work together with Joshua and Eleazar (the high priest) to help divide the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River among the tribes of Israel (Numbers 34:28).

Pedahzur

The father of Gamaliel from the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 1:10; 2:20; 7:54, 59; 10:23).

Pedaiah

1. Maternal grandfather of Judah's King Jehoiakim. Pedaiah was from Rumah (2 Kgs 23:36).

2. Jeconiah's third son (1 Chr 3:18–19).

3. Joel's father from the half-tribe of Manasseh (1 Chr 27:20).

4. Parosh's son, who worked with the temple servants in repairing the Jerusalem wall opposite the Water Gate (Neh 3:25).

5. One who stood beside Ezra during the public reading of the Law (Neh 8:4).

6. Kolaiah's son and Joed's father (Neh 11:7). He was a member of Benjamin's tribe and lived in Jerusalem after the return from exile.

7. Levite appointed by Nehemiah as treasurer of the storehouse to distribute grain, wine, and oil to the priests who served in the temple (Neh 13:13).

Pekah

Son of Remaliah and 18th king of Israel. His name means "he has opened [the eyes]." It is an abbreviated form of the name of his predecessor, Pekahiah, "Yahweh has opened [the eyes]." The name has been found on a fragment of an eighth-century-BC wine jar from Hazor stratum V, the level destroyed by Tiglath-pileser in 734 BC. It is thought that this is a reference to Pekah and to a kind of wine. It is likely that the usurper Pekah was so eager to ensure his position as king that he deliberately assumed the name of his predecessor. Moreover, Isaiah refers to him as the "son of Remaliah," almost scornfully, to indicate his nonroyal descent. But when Isaiah refers to his heathen ally, he uses the specific name "Rezin, the king of Syria" (Is 7:4–9; 8:6).

Accession to the Throne

Pekah, an officer of Pekahiah, was the third man in a chariot, apart from the driver and the warrior. He was the shield and armor bearer of the warrior. In time the term came to signify a royal aide-de-camp.

The account of Pekah's murder of Pekahiah has been somewhat obscured because of the difficulty in understanding the terms Argob and Arieh (2 Kgs 15:25). Some translators and commentators have thought these referred to persons, whereas others have held these are place-names. Some scholars radically alter the text here and eliminate the troublesome words by claiming they were a scribal mistake or emendation. A key seems to have been found by comparing them with the Ugaritic. The terms mean "eagle" and "lion," respectively. Thus, Pekah was murdered "near the eagle and the lion." It is suggested that this means he was put to death near the guardian sphinxes of his palace. Such sphinxes were a common motif in ancient eastern palaces and were duplicated on ivory plaques erected in the gateway. This interpretation seems very plausible, since it avoids critical emendation and solves the major problems in the text.

Political Significance

The brilliant Tiglath-pileser III, leading the kingdom of Assyria to prominence, appeared on Israel's border. Menahem deemed it wise to become tributary to him. Apparently Pekahiah, Menahem's successor, could not appease the Assyrians during his short reign. The conciliatory efforts of Menahem and Pekahiah may well have prompted the Syrians to conspire with Pekah, the army officer, to gain control of the throne of Samaria in order to present a united military front against Assyrian encroachment. Once Samaria was under control, the Syrians led by Rezin, Israel ruled by Pekah, and several Transjordanian kingdoms formed a powerful alliance.

In time Pekah and Rezin began to pressure the kingdom of Judah in order to induce it to join their alliance against the impending Assyrian attack. Jotham resisted their invitations and fortified the Judean hill country. Jotham's son, Ahaz, continued his father's policy of noncooperation with the Samaria-Damascus coalition. Pekah and Rezin invaded Judah with the intent of taking Jerusalem and placing "the son of Tabeel" on the throne of Judah in Ahaz's place (Is 7:1–6). He presumably was a son of Uzziah or Jotham by a princess of Tabeel. Although the actual siege of Jerusalem was unsuccessful, Pekah and Rezin inflicted severe casualties upon Ahaz's army. In one day of battle they killed 120,000 men of Judah and carried away 200,000 captives, including women and children. However, the prophet Oded prophesied in Samaria before the army. He urged the leaders of Samaria to return the captives. The leaders heeded the prophetic word and sent the captives back to Jericho (2 Chr 28:8–15).

Rezin's revolt against Assyria brought a quick response from Tiglath-pileser, who laid siege to Damascus in 734 BC. The city fell in 732 BC. Another detachment of the Assyrian army descended on the upper districts of Syria and Samaria. Second Kings 15:29 lists the districts and cities that were overrun. They included Gilead (regions beyond Jordan), Naphtali (regions lying to the west of the lakes of Galilee and Merom), and all Galilee as far south as the plain of Esdraelon and the valley of Jezreel. Isaiah refers to this lost tribal territory (Is 9:1–7). From this Assyrian-controlled

region the messianic ruler would arise and give light to those who lived in a land of darkness (v 2). Thus Pekah's kingdom was reduced to a third of its original size by the Assyrian campaign of 734–732 BC. In 732 a palace conspiracy led by Hoshea plotted the assassination of Pekah. He was put to death in the coup d'état and the throne was usurped by Hoshea.

The author of Kings evaluates the reign of Pekah as follows: "But Pekah did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit" (2 Kgs 15:28, nlt). It is likely that he continued the calf worship at the shrines at Dan and Bethel. The continuation of the apostasy during successive regencies was the cause for the judgment that befell the northern kingdom. Pekah is the last king of Israel given such an evaluation.

Pekahiah

Son of Menahem, king of Israel. Pekahiah (whose name means "Yahweh has opened [his eyes]") was among the 20 kings who ruled Israel from Samaria following its decline consequent to the fracture of the Solomonic monarchy in the tenth century BC. The brief account in the Bible concerning him (2 Kgs 15:22–26) points to the godlessness of his life (v 24). His sin, like that of his father (Menahem), was linked to the false worship of Jeroboam, who built shrines at Dan and Bethel to rival worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Such religious activity threatened the true worship of God by attempting to fuse biblical concepts with the fertility cult of Baal, a movement sharply denounced by the Word of God (1 Kgs 13:1–5). Like many of Israel's kings, Pekahiah ruled briefly, being assassinated in the second year of his reign. The chief instigator of the plot against him, a captain named Pekah, took 50 men of Gilead and killed the king, along with two aides, in the citadel of the royal palace at Samaria. His successor, Pekah, was regrettably as evil as Pekahiah and received the condemnation of Scripture typical of virtually all the Israelite kings: he "did what was evil in the Lord's sight" (2 Kgs 15:28, nlt).

See also Pekah.

Pekod

Place mentioned as the location of an Aramean tribe living in southern Babylonia between Babylon and Elam and more exactly on the eastern bank of the Lower Tigris by modern Kut-el-Amara and the confluence of the Kerkha (Jer 50:21; Ez 23:23). Tiglath-pileser III (745– 727), Sargon II (722–705), and Sennacherib (705–681) subjugated the population and exacted tribute of horses, cattle, and sheep from Pekod.

Pelaiah

1. Elioenai's son and a remote descendant of David (1 Chr 3:24).

2. Levite who helped Ezra explain (or translate) the Law to the people after it was read to them (Neh 8:7; 10:10).

Pelaliah

Forefather of Adaiah, a priest living in Jerusalem during Ezra's day (Neh 11:12).

Pelatiah

1. Hananiah's son, in a list of King Solomon's descendants (1 Chr 3:21).

2. Military leader among the Simeonites who helped destroy an Amalekite remnant at Mt Seir during Hezekiah's reign (1 Chr 4:42).

3. Political leader who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile (Neh 10:22).

4. Benaiah's son and one of the two princes seen by Ezekiel in a vision of judgment, identified by the Spirit of the Lord as one who devises wickedness and gives wicked counsel in the city (Ez 11:1–2, 13).

Peleg

The son of Eber and father of Reu (Genesis 10:25; 11:16–19; 1 Chronicles 1:19, 25; Luke 3:35). During his lifetime, the earth was divided (*Peleg* means "division" or "watercourse"). It is unclear what this division refers to. Suggestions include:

1. The spread of languages after the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)
2. The spread of Noah's descendants
3. The separation of the people of Arphaxad from Joktanide Arabs (Genesis 10:24–29)
4. The division of land by canals (the term is used in this way in Job 29:6; 38:25; Isaiah 30:25; 32:2)

The name's origin is usually traced to the city of Phalga, north of the junction of the Euphrates and Khabur rivers.

See also Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Pelet

1. Jahdai's son from Judah's tribe (1 Chr 2:47).

2. Warrior from Benjamin's tribe who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul. Pelet was one of David's ambidextrous archers and slingers (1 Chr 12:2–3).

Peleth

1. A man from the tribe of Reuben who was the father of On (Numbers 16:1).
2. A man from the tribe of Judah who was the son of Jonathan. He belonged to the Jerahmeelite family group (1 Chronicles 2:33).

Pelethites

The Pelethites were special bodyguards who protected King David. They were loyal mercenaries (paid soldiers who were likely from another country). They stayed with David during difficult political times. The Pelethites are always mentioned together with the Cherethites in the Bible. Scholars believe that both groups come from the Philistines, with Crete as their place of origin. This connection makes sense because Caphtor, which is generally understood to be Crete, was the original home of the Philistines (Amos 9:7).

The Pelethites accompanied David when he had to leave Jerusalem because his son Absalom was trying to take over the kingdom (2 Samuel 15:18). They also fought for David during the rebellion of Sheba (20:7).

Their leader was a man named Benaiah. He supported the claim of King Solomon to become king after David instead of supporting David's other son, Adonijah. The presence of the Pelethites at Solomon's anointing as king helped ensure Adonijah would not succeed (1 Kings 1:38, 44).

It was common during this time for kings to hire soldiers from the Aegean region (the area around Greece and Turkey) to serve as special guards.

Pelican

A pelican is the largest water bird in the world. It is much larger than a swan. The common pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) is usually about 127 centimeters (50 inches) long. Its beak is about 40.6 centimeters (16 inches) long. The top of the beak is hooked at the end, which helps the pelican catch fish. The lower part of the beak has a yellow pouch under the throat. This pouch can hold up to 11.4 liters (3 gallons) of small fish and water.

Pelicans have webbed feet with skin between all four toes. They are strong swimmers and good fliers. Because of their large bodies, long necks, and small heads, they must run along the water and beat their legs against it to take off.

Pelicans often fly and nest in groups. The female lays one to four eggs. Both the male and female care for the young. Most birds feed their young by putting food into their mouths. Pelicans do the opposite. The young push their heads deep into the mother's throat and take partly digested food from her pouch. In ancient times, people thought the young were drinking the mother's blood. This led to the pelican becoming a symbol of Christ's sacrifice and of charity (love and care for others).

The roseate pelican is white, sometimes with a pale pink color. Black feathers grow from the far edge of its wings. The legs, pouch, and skin around the eyes are yellow, and the hook at the end of the beak is red. This bird can grow up to 1.8 meters (6 feet) long and have a wingspan of 2.4 meters (8 feet). During the breeding season, its legs and face turn bright orange or red. Its white feathers become pink because of oil from a gland, which the bird spreads through its feathers while cleaning them.

Pelicans in the Bible

Some scholars are not sure if "pelican" is the correct translation of a Hebrew word in several Bible verses. They think it might refer to an owl, hawk, or vulture. Some Bible translations include the pelican in the list of birds that the law calls unclean (Leviticus 11:18; Deuteronomy 14:17; in the Berean Standard Bible, these verses use list "desert owl" instead of "pelican"). Other verses are also debated by scholars. Some think the desert setting of those verses makes a water bird like the pelican unlikely (compare Psalm 102:6; Isaiah 34:11; Zephaniah 2:14; the Berean Standard Bible again uses "desert owl" in these verses).

However, the roseate pelican lives in rivers, lakes, and marshes in the Holy Land. It may fly as far as 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) out to sea to catch fish, then return to a quiet inland place to rest and digest its food. This could explain why the Bible describes it as a lonely wilderness bird.

See also Birds.

Pella

City located east of the Jordan River in the Decapolis region. There is no reference to this city in the Bible, but records show that it was an important Canaanite city, influenced by Egypt and later by Greece and Rome. During the Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66–70), Pella became a refuge for many Christians and a center for the early church.

Pelonite

A title given to two of David's mighty warriors: Helez and Ahijah (1 Chronicles 11:27, 36; 27:10). No one knows for sure where this place ("Pelon") was located or what the name ("Pelonite") means. Because of this uncertainty, some Bible scholars think "Pelonite" might be a mistake in the copying of ancient texts.

In another list of David's warriors found in 2 Samuel 23:26, Helez is called a "Paltite" (someone from Palt). Also, Ahijah is probably the same person as "Eliam the Gilonite" mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:34. Many scholars believe these names (Paltite and Gilonite) are more accurate than "Pelonite."

Others suggest that Pelonite comes from the town name "Beth-pelet" (see Joshua 15:27; Nehemiah 11:26).

Pelusium

City known for its flax and wine, but also a strategic fortified town on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, situated on the trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia (Ez 30:15–16). Today the site is called Tell Farama and is located about 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) southeast of Port Said. The Hebrew OT uses the old Egyptian name for the town, Sin, meaning "fortress." Some English translations of the OT (kjv) use this English name. When the Greeks controlled Egypt, they renamed the town Pelusium, "the muddy city," apparently confusing the Egyptian name with a similar Egyptian word *sin,* meaning "mud" or "clay." In Ezekiel it is called "the stronghold of Egypt" because it provided a defense against the ever-present danger of attack from the north.

Pen

Writing implement used with ink. *See* Writing.

Pence

The King James Version form of *denarius* in Matthew 18:28, Mark 14:5, Luke 7:41, 10:35, and John 12:5. *See* Coins; Money.

Pencil

A carpenter's outlining tool named in rsv in connection with the manufacture of idols (Is 44:13). Other translations are "line" (kjv), "red chalk" (nasb), "a scriber" (neb), "a marker" (niv).

Peniel

Another form of Penuel. This was the Palestinian city where the patriarch Jacob wrestled with the "man" of God (Genesis 32:30).

See Penuel (Place).

Peninnah

One of Elkanah's two wives, the other and more favored being Hannah (1 Sm 1:2–6). Peninnah's fortune in bearing children was the source of much domestic friction for the childless Hannah, especially at the time of the annual sacrifice at Shiloh. Rabbinic tradition explains Peninnah's taunts as attempts to provoke Hannah into pregnancy, but the biblical record portrays the women as rivals.

Penknife

Iron tool used to sharpen reed pens, cut papyrus, and carve letters in stone. It is mentioned by name only in Jeremiah 36:23 (rsv), but it is referred to elsewhere as a pen or tool of iron (Jb 19:24; Jer 17:1).

Penny

1. The King James Version's translation of *denarius* (Matthew 20:2, 9–10, 13; 22:19; Mark 12:15; Luke 20:24; Revelation 6:6).

2. The Revised Standard Version and New Living Translation word for the Roman *assarion*, equivalent to one-sixteenth of the denarius (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6).

3. The Revised Standard Version and New Living Translation word for the Roman *quadrans*, equivalent to one-fourth of the *assarion* or one sixty-fourth of the *denarius* (Matthew 5:26; Mark 12:42).

See also Coins; Money.

Pentateuch

A word formed by the Greek roots *pente* (which means "five") and *teuchos* (which means "book"). The term is commonly used to refer to the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books were commonly grouped as a single book. This portion of God's word is the foundation the rest of Scripture relies on. It is traditionally attributed to Moses (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:1–2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22). The Pentateuch includes many important stories, including:

- the creation of the universe
- God's interactions with humans in the Garden of Eden
- the creation of a prosperous family for Abraham (the patriarchal stories)
- the formation of the nation Israel

Much of the Pentateuch is made up of laws that guide the religious and everyday life of the nation, where God is considered the king.

See also Deuteronomy, Book of; Exodus, Book of; Genesis, Book of; Leviticus, Book of; Numbers, Book of; Torah.

Pentecost

Pentecost is a word that comes from the Greek word *pentekoste*, which means "fiftieth." It refers to a festival celebrated on the 50th day after Passover. In the Old Testament, this festival is called *Shavu'oth*, or the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10). It is called the Feast of Weeks because it takes place seven weeks after Passover. Other names for this festival include:

- The Feast of Harvest, because of its relationship with harvest season (Exodus 23:16).
- The Day of Firstfruits, because two loaves of freshly ground grain were given to God (Numbers 28:26). (This name should not be confused with the offering of firstfruits at the beginning of the harvest season, mentioned in Leviticus 23:9–14.)

The Feast of Weeks was one of three pilgrimage festivals in the Old Testament. People had to appear before God with gifts and offerings (Exodus 23:14–17). It was mainly a harvest celebration, marking the end of the barley harvest and the start of the wheat harvest. Traditionally, grain harvest lasted from Passover, when the first grain was cut (Deuteronomy 16:9). It ended at Pentecost, which marked its end in mid-June. The Jewish historian Josephus said to Pentecost was called "closing" because it closed the harvest season (Antiquities 3.10.6).

Each year, the priest waved a sheaf of newly harvested grain before God. He did this the day

after the Sabbath during the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is the seven days after Passover. Then the people counted 50 days from this offering until the day after the seventh Sabbath to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:11). On this day, two loaves of bread made from two-tenths of an ephah of flour and baked with yeast were waved before the Lord (Leviticus 23:17). Freewill offerings were encouraged (Deuteronomy 16:10). It was a time of great celebration, and no work was to be done (Leviticus 23:21; Deuteronomy 16:11). The Feast of Weeks in Solomon's time is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 8:13, the only reference to it outside of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament. Ezekiel does not mention it in his calendar for future festivals (Ezekiel 45–46).

The New Testament first mentions Pentecost as the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the followers of Jesus. Many Bible teachers understand this event as marking the beginning of the church (Acts 2:1). Since Pentecost was a required festival, Jewish people gathered from far away to observe it in Jerusalem. This made it a good time for God's work to reach many people. Paul also refers to Pentecost twice when planning his travels. He mentions delaying his visit to the Corinthians until after Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8). Later, he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

See also Feasts and Festivals of Israel.

Penuel (Person)

1. Descendant (possibly son) of Hur and father (in the sense of progenitor) of Gedor from Judah's tribe (1 Chr 4:4).

2. Shashak's son from Benjamin's tribe (1 Chr 8:25).

Penuel (Place)

A name given to the place near the Jabbok River where the patriarch Jacob wrestled all night with God (Genesis 32:31). Another name is, "Peniel" (verse 30).

Gideon destroyed the tower of Penuel when he was a leader during the time of the judges. He killed the men of the city for refusing to join him in war against the Midianites (Judges 8:8–9, 17). Later, King Jeroboam rebuilt the town (1 Kings 12:25). It was near Succoth, east of the Jordan River, though its exact location remains uncertain.

People of God

The people of God is a term for the group of people who believe in God. In the Old Testament, a key part of Israel's faith was that they became the people of God because he chose them to be his special possession (Exodus 6:6–7; 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). This idea is connected to the concept of the covenant between God and Israel (Leviticus 26:9–12). When the Bible talks about the covenant between God and Israel, it means the agreement where God promised to bless and protect the people of Israel, and they promised to follow God's laws and worship only him.

When the prophets preached about God's judgment that could lead to complete destruction, they also shared visions of God rebuilding and recreating his people (Jeremiah 32:37; Hosea 2:1, 23; Ezekiel 11:20; 36:28). After the exile, Judaism developed the idea that only the future Israel, the final community led by the Messiah (God's chosen leader), would truly be the "people of God" in the fullest sense.

The New Testament shows in several passages that the early church understood itself to be this future people of God. The clearest example is found in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people." The expressions "royal priesthood" and "holy nation" come from Exodus 19:6. This verse describes Israel's role as priests to the world, participating in God's reign. The original people of God were to declare His mighty acts (Isaiah 43:20–21). The new people of God must proclaim the one who brought them from darkness to his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

See also Body of Christ.

People of the East

Tribes located east and northeast of Canaan, many of them overtly hostile to the Jews. Genesis 29:1 provides the first reference to these peoples. Jacob, en route to Haran, crossed through territory designated as "the land of the people of the east."

The comprehensiveness of the term is evident in the way it is used to refer to nomads (Ez 25:10) or

Mesopotamians (1 Kgs 4:30). The term also occurs in association with specific tribes, such as the Amalekites (Jgs 6:3), Ammonites (Ez 25:4), Edomites (Is 11:14), Kedarites (Jer 49:28), Midianites (Jgs 6:33), and Moabites (Ez 25:10).

The most distinguished OT personality linked to the term is the patriarch Job, who is called the greatest man among all the people of the east (Jb 1:3). Job's homeland, the land of Uz, was probably in the vicinity of Edom to the southeast of the Dead Sea.

People of the Land

The phrase "people of the land" comes from the Hebrew *'Am-Ha'arets.* In a generic sense, *'Am-Ha'arets* referred to a political or ethnic group of people, like:

- The Hittite sons of Heth (Genesis 23:7)
- The Egyptians (Genesis 42:6)
- The Israelites (Exodus 5:5)
- The nations of Canaan (Numbers 13:28; Nehemiah 9:24)
- The Ammonites (Numbers 21:34)

As Israel grew into a nation, the meaning changed. The term came to mean the common people who were not part of the religious or political leadership (2 Kings 11:14–20; 25:3; 2 Chronicles 33:25; Jeremiah 52:25). After many Jews returned from exile in Babylon, the term took on a new meaning. It described Jews who had married people from other nations. Ezra and his followers usually avoided these mixed-marriage families (Ezra 4:4; 10:2, 11; Nehemiah 10:28–31). Later, rabbinic Judaism called Jews who could not follow the whole law *'Am-Ha'arets*.

Peoples

Another word for "nations" in the Bible.

See Nations.

Peor (Deity)

A shortened form of the name of the Canaanite god called Baal-peor. It may also refer to the place where this false god was worshipped (Numbers 23:28; 25:3, 5).

See Baal-peor; Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Peor (Place)

1. A mountain east of the Jordan River and north of the Dead Sea. This is where King Balak took Balaam in a final attempt to make him curse the Israelites (Numbers 23:28). From this mountain, they could see the Israelite camp at Shittim (24:2). At this location, the Israelites began to have sexual relations with Moabite women and worshiped the false god Baal (25:1–13). We are not certain of the exact location of this mountain. However, the early Christian scholars Eusebius and Jerome wrote that it was located across from Jericho on the way to Heshbon. Because of this, most people believe Peor was near Mount Nebo in the Abarim mountain range.
2. The name of a place mentioned in the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) in Joshua 15:59. This place is not mentioned in the Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. Today, scholars identify Peor with the modern location called Khirbet Faghur, which is southwest of Bethlehem.

Peraea

Another spelling of Perea, a region east of the Jordan River.

See Perea.

Perdition

A term that means eternal destruction or complete ruin. In the New Testament, "perdition" describes the final state of those who reject salvation. The word appears eight times in the King James Version of the Bible. In Philippians 1:28, “perdition” is the opposite of “salvation.” Hebrews 10:39 contrasts it with “preserving their soul.” 2 Peter 3:7 links perdition with "the day of judgment." While 1 Timothy 6:9 speaks of both the present and the future. “The son of destruction” is a label that affirms the destiny of Judas who betrayed Christ (John 17:12). It is also a title of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In Revelation 17:8, 11 perdition designates the final destiny of the beast. Revelation 19:20 and 20:10 identify this place as the “lake of fire,” a place of everlasting torment.

The word “perdition” occurs four times in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament (John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 17:8, 11). It also occurs twice in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 22:5; Psalm 18:4). In the Old Testament, the parallel lines of Hebrew poetry show that perdition means death.

See also Antichrist; Death; Judgment; Lake of Fire.

Perea

A name used in the first century AD by Josephus to refer to the region "beyond the Jordan." Josephus took the word Perea from the Greek for "beyond." The name Perea does not occur in the New Testament except in two early manuscripts:

- the fourth-century manuscript Codex Sinaiticus
- the fifth-century manuscript Codex Washingtonianus

In Codex Washingtonianus, it occurs in Luke 6:17. The name "Perea" is treated as a variation by most editors of the Greek New Testament.

Where Was Perea Located?

The geographical location of the area called Perea is best understood from Josephus’s description in *War of the Jews* (3.3.3). "Now the length of Perea is from Machaerus to Pella, and its breadth from Philadelphia to Jordan; its northern parts are bounded by Pella, as we have already said, as well as its western with Jordan; the land of Moab is its southern border, and its eastern limits reach to Arabia, and Silbonitis, and besides to Philadelphene and Gerasa."

Gadara is called "the metropolis of Perea" by Josephus because it was a "place of strength" and because "many of the citizens of Gadara were rich men" (*War* 4.7.3). This Gadara is not the same as the Gadara of the Decapolis, modern Um Qeis. The Perean Gadar is modern-day Tell Gadura, about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) northwest of modern Amman, Jordan.

The Decapolis is separated from Perea in Matthew 4:25. It is listed instead among the various sections of Palestine from which people came to hear Jesus. Perea is here called the region "beyond the Jordan," and is so designated also in Mark 3:8. In one place Matthew referred to Perea as "the region of Judea beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 19:1).

This is confusing because politically Perea was never a part of Judea. It belonged under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who also controlled Galilee. The parallel passage in Mark 10:1 reads, "the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan." Perhaps Matthew was using the phrase to refer to that part of Perea that, though politically not a part of Judea, was Jewish in population.

In his *Natural History* (AD 77) Pliny spoke of Perea as a place "separated from the *other parts* of Judea by the River Jordan" (5.70). He said the *"rest* of Judea" was divided into 10 local government areas (5.70). These references indicate that Pliny considered Perea to be a part of Judea. This may be a mistaken assumption since Pliny’s knowledge of the immediate area is somewhat questionable. In the same context, he asserts that the Dead Sea is "more than 100 miles long and fully 75 miles wide at its widest part" (*Natural History* 5.72). In reality, it is less than 80.5 kilometers (50 miles) long and only 17.7 kilometers (11 miles) wide.

Why Was Perea an Important Region in Biblical Times?

The area called Perea was well known and often mentioned in the Old Testament by the phrase "beyond the Jordan" (Numbers 22:1; Deuteronomy 1:1, 5). The southern area was occupied by the two Israelite tribes Gad and Reuben (Joshua 1:12–14). Perea extended from the brook Kerith in the north almost to the Arnon River in the south. Old Testament Gilead was located in the same geographical area (Joshua 22:9; Judges 5:17).

Perea seems to have been an important district in the decades before the birth of Christ during the Greek period. Jewish Maccabean leaders controlled it after 124 BC. Under Roman rule, it was given to Herod the Great until his death in 4 BC, when Herod the Great willed it to his son Herod Antipas, along with Galilee. Because the area was beautiful and productive and had trees noted for their medicinal balm, it was always well populated (Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11).

Perea had many significant cities, including Pella, Jabesh-gilead, Succoth, Penuel, and Gerash. Herod Antipas had a fort named Machaerus at the southern end of Perea. This is where Herod imprisoned John the Baptist and had him put to death (see Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.5.2).

It was common for Jews traveling back and forth from Galilee to Judea to cross the Jordan into Perea. By taking this route, they avoided contact with the Samaritans. Before his death, John the Baptist had been baptizing in Bethany beyond the Jordan when he announced Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:28–29). Jesus returned here during his ministry once when he was being severely persecuted (10:40).

Peres

Singular form of Parsin, meaning "divided" (Daniel 5:28). *See* Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin.

Peresh

Son of Maachah and Makir from Manasseh's tribe, and the grandson of Manasseh (1 Chr 7:16).

Perez-uzzah

Another name for the site associated with the threshing floor of Nacon in 1 Chronicles 13:11 and 2 Samuel 6:8.

See Nacon.

Perez, Perezite

Son of Judah. His name comes from a Hebrew word meaning "he who bursts forth." It refers to how he unexpectedly came first from Tamar's womb before his twin brother, Zerah (Genesis 38:29). He fathered two sons, Hezron and Hamul, and became the ancestral head of the Perezite family (Genesis 46:12; Numbers 26:20–21; 1 Chronicles 2:4–5; 4:1). The King James Version and the Apocrypha translate the name as Pharez, Phares, and Pharzite.

Through the children of his son Hezron, he became the ancestor of David and Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:18–22; Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33). This clan was respected in the tribe of Judah. They were blessed by the men of Bethlehem (Ruth 4:12). A descendant named Jashobeam commanded David's captains for the first month of each year (1 Chronicles 27:2–3). Upon the return from captivity in Babylon, 468 Perezites were chosen to live in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 9:4; Nehemiah 11:4–6).

Perfume

Perfumes in the Bible covered a wide range of materials made from ground minerals, vegetable oils, and roots. These were used from ancient times to enhance personal presentation and produce pleasing fragrances for both secular and religious purposes.

Types of Perfumes in the Bible

The Bible mentions many types of perfumes, such as:

- Aloes
- Balm
- Balsam
- Bdellium
- Cassia
- Cinnamon
- Frankincense
- Gum
- Myrrh
- Nard
- Sweet cane
- Spices
- Ointments

Trading of Perfume

Many places traded perfumes:

- Arabia traded frankincense and myrrh.
- India traded aloes and nard.
- Ceylon traded cinnamon.
- Persia traded the spice galbanum.
- Somaliland traded frankincense.

Biblical references to perfume traders include:

- the Arabian (Ishmaelite) merchants who took Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:25),
- the caravans of the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:10), and
- the traders of Sheba and Raamah who brought spices to Tyre (Ezekiel 27:22).

Preparation and Use of Perfumes

The Bible mentions those who prepared perfumes. For example, Bezalel made holy anointing oil and sacred incense for the tabernacle (Exodus 37:29). The holy anointing oil was a mix of myrrh, cinnamon, aromatic cane, and cassia in olive oil (Exodus 30:22–25). After the exile to Babylon, some priests were responsible for mixing perfumes for incense (1 Chronicles 9:30). A perfumer is even mentioned among those who built Nehemiah's wall (Nehemiah 3:8).

Storage of Perfumes

Modern excavations have found various cosmetic vessels and tools, although the Bible says little about these items (Isaiah 3:20; Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37). References to alabaster containers are supported by their use in Egypt and archaeology. Ancient sites in Palestine have revealed many small decorated cosmetic bowls, often made of alabaster, small bottles for scents and oils, and palettes for mixing cosmetics. Some of these items were imported from lands like Egypt.

How Perfumes Were Used

Perfumes had many uses, whether powders or oils. Perfumed oils were used to anoint the body to soothe sun-dried skin (2 Samuel 12:20; Ruth 3:3). King Ahaz once clothed, fed, and anointed men returning from captivity (2 Chronicles 28:15). The rich could afford the "finest oils" (Amos 6:6), though such luxury could be costly (Proverbs 21:17). This is confirmed by evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia, where oils and ointments were lavishly used in royal palaces.

Ointments and oils that gave off pleasing fragrances were commonly used. The Song of Songs often mentions such ointments (Song of Solomon 1:3), some of which are specifically named:

- Spikenard (1:12; 4:13–14)
- Myrrh (1:13; 3:6; 4:6; 5:1, 5, 13)
- Frankincense (3:6; 4:6)
- Spices (5:13; 6:2; 8:14)
- Henna (1:14; 4:13)
- Fragrant powders (3:6)
- Saffron (4:14)
- Calamus
- Cinnamon (4:14)

Other parts of the Bible also reference perfumes and ointments (1 Kings 10:2, 10; 2 Kings 20:13; Proverbs 27:9; Isaiah 3:24).

Perfumes were put on clothes and sprinkled on couches (Psalm 45:8; Song of Solomon 4:11; Proverbs 7:17). They also played a significant role in burial rituals. Perfumes were used in embalming and sprinkled on biers or burned at funerals (Genesis 50:2–3, 26; 2 Chronicles 16:14). Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes to wrap Jesus's body (John 19:39–40). Herod the Great's funeral included 500 slaves carrying spices (Josephus's *Antiquities* 17.8.3).

Perfumes in Worship

Besides personal use, oils, perfumes, and incense were used in worship. Holy anointing oil anointed the tabernacle, its furnishings, and Aaronic priests during their induction (Exodus 30:22–25; Psalm 133). Exodus 30:34–35 provides a detailed recipe for sacred incense, well-known in Israel and the ancient East.

Figurative References to Perfumes

The New Testament contains figurative references to perfumes. Christ gave himself as a fragrant offering to God (Ephesians 5:2). The Philippians' gifts to Paul are described as a fragrant offering (Philippians 4:18). The prayers of the saints are like bowls of incense (Revelation 5:8).

See also Cosmetics; Oil; Ointment; Perfumer.

Perfumer

A perfumer was a person who prepared oils, powders, and mixtures for three uses:

1. Medicine
2. Perfumes
3. Incense used in religious ceremonies

Many plants, when crushed, provided oils or powders that smelled unique.

A perfumer is also known as an "apothecary" (Exodus 30:25, in the King James Version) or a "confectionary" (1 Samuel 8:13, in the King James Version).

See Perfume.

Perga

Perga was an important ancient city located in Pamphylia (a region in what is now southern Turkey). The Greeks likely built this city very early in its history. It became the most important religious city in Pamphylia.

In the second century BC, Roman soldiers defeated and removed a group of Syrian soldiers who controlled the city. After this, Perga was mostly able to govern itself without other nations controlling it.

Paul's Visit to Perga on His Missionary Journeys

On their first missionary journey, Paul and his colleagues passed through the city on their way to Pisidian Antioch. The Book of Acts reports no preaching activity on that occasion. It notes only that John Mark left his companions at Perga and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13–14).

Luke, the author of Acts, would probably have recorded it if Paul had preached during this visit. Why he did not preach is not stated. A renowned temple of Artemis, an Anatolian nature goddess existed near Perga. But from what we know of Paul's actions elsewhere, this would not have stopped him. Indeed, it was more likely to present a challenge to the apostle. Paul may have been ill. Some commentators suggest a possible connection with Galatians 4:13. In that case Barnabas would have likely preached in Paul's place. The lack of preaching in Perga might have coincided with disagreement in the group about outreach to and acceptance of gentiles. In this case, it might be that John Mark left the group because of differences with Paul.

On their journey home, however, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Perga ("spoken the word in Perga"; Acts 14:25–26). Then they left there and proceeded to Attalia, where they took a ship to Antioch of Syria. The results of that preaching are not known, but it is evident that Christianity did not flourish in Perga, as it did in other cities of Asia Minor.

Pergamos, Pergamum

A city just north of the Caicus River, in the southern part of Mysia (western Turkey). Pergamum was one of the most important cultural centers during

***Pergamos**, Pergamum*

the Hellenistic period (the time when Greek culture spread widely, about 323 to 31 BC).

Strabo, an early geographer who lived from 63 BC to around AD 24, said the area around Pergamum was the richest land in Mysia. The Bible only mentions it twice (Revelation 1:11; 2:12; King James Version "Pergamos"). Both times, it refers to Pergamum as one of the seven churches of Asia that John wrote to in the book of Revelation.

Location and Geography of Pergamum

The Romans combined Mysia with two other areas, Lydia and Caria, to form the district of Asia. This district is now the western part of modern Turkey. Pergamum was close to the sea, less than 32 kilometers (20 miles) inland. The city sat on a large hill shaped like a cone, about 305 meters (1,000 feet) high. This hill was about 5 kilometers (3 miles) north of the Caicus River. Two smaller rivers flowed on either side of Pergamum's hill. The Selinus River was on the west side, and the Cetius River was on the east side. Both of these rivers joined the larger Caicus River.

Pergamum's location made it naturally strong and easy to defend. It was also an important religious site with temples. These factors made it a good place to keep wealth safe. Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, stored a huge amount of money in Pergamum. He left 9,000 talents there (a talent was a unit of weight for money, about 34 kilograms or 75 pounds of silver). Later, the kings of Pergamum used this wealth to make their city great and beautiful. People in Pergamum started making coins before 400 BC. However, it did not become a great city until long after Alexander the Great died (in 323 BC).

The Rise of Pergamum as a Powerful City

Pergamum became very impressive and beautiful under King Attalus I. He ruled from 241 to 197 BC and started the Attalid family of kings. Attalus I was rich and successful in war. He defeated the Gauls (a group of people from Europe) who had moved into an area called Galatia in 278 BC.

Attalus I also made a smart political move. He became an ally of Rome, which was becoming very powerful. This alliance helped Attalus I bring more Greek culture to his kingdom.

With his wealth and power, Attalus I made Pergamum beautiful. He built many impressive buildings, including:

- temples
- theaters
- a library
- other public buildings

These improvements made Pergamum one of the most impressive cities of its time.

After Attalus I, his son Eumenes II became king. He ruled from 197 to 159 BC. Under Eumenes II, Pergamum became the most powerful and famous it had ever been.

In 189 BC, Rome gave Eumenes II a big reward. Because Eumenes II had helped Rome in a war in Syria, Rome gave him all the land northwest of the Taurus mountains that used to belong to the Seleucid kingdom. This gift made the kingdom of Pergamum much bigger. It now stretched from the Taurus mountains to the Dardanelles (a narrow strait in northwestern Turkey).

Eumenes II made Pergamum's library even better. He increased its collection to 200,000 books. This made it almost as impressive as the famous library in Alexandria, Egypt.

Religious Importance and Emperor Worship

Eumenes II also built a large altar (a special table for religious ceremonies) for Zeus. Zeus was an important god in Greek religion. This altar stood on a hill 244 meters (800 feet) above the city and could be seen from far away.

Some people think this altar might be what the Bible calls "Satan's throne" in Revelation 2:13. This is because Pergamum was a very important place for non-Christian worship. It was the main center for worshiping four major gods of that time:

- Zeus (the king of gods)
- Athena (the goddess of wisdom)
- Dionysus (the god of wine and parties)
- Asclepius (the god of healing)

However, it may be that Revelation is referring to the fact that Pergamum was the center of emperor worship in Asia at that time.

Pergamum Becomes Part of Rome

The last king of the Attalic dynasty, Attalus III, died without leaving an heir in 133 BC. In his will, he

***Pergamos**, Pergamum*

gave all of his kingdom to Rome. Pergamum and other established Greek cities, however, became self-governing areas. All of these cities were exempt from tribute.

To make governing easier, the Roman consul (a high-ranking Roman official) gave the easternmost territory of Phrygia to Pontus and Cappadocia. So, the newly created Roman province of Asia was smaller than the Pergamene Empire had been. After 120 BC, Phrygia was reclaimed by the Roman senate (upon the death of Mithridates, king of Pontus). However, it was not actually added to Asia until 85 BC. At that time, the area governed by Rome was again similar in size to the old Pergamene kingdom.

Pergamum was built over a long time in three separate areas:

- The upper city on top of the mountain was the northernmost area. This was largely the domain of the royal family, the nobility (upper-class), and the military commanders. This area was where official activities happened.
- The middle city, further south and lower down the mountain, contained the part of the city visited by the common people. This space included sports fields for the youth and temples visited by those with less education. These structures were not controlled directly by the city and the priesthood. All people living in Pergamum could freely use these places.
- The third area, across the Selinus River to the southwest, contained the famous Asclepian of Pergamum. This was a center for the healing arts. It had a medical school where the famous doctor Galen studied. People worshiped the god Asclepius here. His temple was round and looked like the famous Pantheon built in Rome some 20 years before in AD 130. There was also a lovely fountain, theater, pool, medical building, library, and various temples. Some of the remains of these structures are still visible.

Pergamum in the Bible and Early Christianity

Revelation 2:12–15 mentions two groups of people:

- The Nicolaitans (a group within the early Christian church with some questionable practices)
- Those who followed the teachings of Balaam (someone in the Old Testament known for leading people away from God)

This probably refers to the popular worship of two Greek gods, Dionysus and Aphrodite. Many people in Pergamum worshipped these gods. Both Jews and Christians believed this was morally wrong (Josephus's *Antiquities* 14.10.22).

Pliny (*Natural History* 5.30) thought Pergamum was the most important city of Asia. Because of this, it was likely one of the main places where people worshipped the Roman emperor as a god. Revelation mentions the martyrdom of Antipas, "My faithful witness" (Revelation 2:13). This makes sense when we remember that Jews and Christians in Pergamum would not worship the emperor as a god.

Pergamum was well-known for making a special kind of writing material. It was made from the skin of sheep. This material became very popular and was called "parchment," from the Latin word *pergamena.*

Perida

Alternate rendering of Peruda, the ancestor of a family of servants who returned to Jerusalem after the exile (Neh 7:57, nlt mg). *See* Peruda.

Perizzite

The Perizzites were one of several groups living in the land of Palestine before and after the Israelites conquered it (Genesis 15:20; Exodus 3:8, 17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deuteronomy 7:1; 20:17; Joshua 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11; 1 Kings 9:20; 2 Chronicles 8:7; Ezra 9:1; Nehemiah 9:8). The Bible mentions these peoples for different reasons, not just for historical or geographical information.

Sometimes the Bible lists them to show that God would defeat these people when the time was right, no matter how many they were (Genesis 15:20; Exodus 3:8). At other times, they are mentioned to show God's enemies were opposed to Israel as they moved into the land God had promised them (Joshua 9:1; 11:3; 24:11). The Bible also describes them as conquered people forced to work for the Israelites (Joshua 12:8; 1 Kings 9:20). After the Israelites returned from exile, the Perizzites were still seen as a threat to the purity of the community that had recently settled back in their homeland (Ezra 9:1).

A few times, the word "Perizzites" appears together with "Canaanites" (Genesis 13:7; 34:30; Judges 1:4–5). Once, it appears together with "Rephaite" (Joshua 17:15). The name "Pirizzi" also appears once in the ancient tablets of El Amarna.

Scholars are not sure exactly who the Perizzites were. In places where they are mentioned withh "Canaanites" they seem to be one of the main groups living in Canaan. Some scholars suggest that the Perizzites lived in Canaan before the Canaanites did, since they are not listed in Genesis 10. But this cannot be proven.

Others have tried to understand the name as meaning "people who live in unwalled villages." This view is supported by the Hebrew word, *perazoth*, which means "unwalled villages" (Esther 9:19; Ezekiel 38:11; Zechariah 2:4; see also *perazi,* which means “open country,” Deuteronomy 3:5; 1 Samuel 6:18). But since the name appears so often among other peoples whose identity we know, we should be careful about this approach.

ome scholars, instead of seeing the Perizzites as one of the main groups in Canaan, have tried to place them in specific areas:

- near Bethel (compare Genesis 13:7),
- near Shechem (Genesis 34:30), or
- in the territory of Judah (Judges 1:4–5).

But these locations are not near each other. The mention of the Rephaim in Joshua 17:15 has led some to suggest that the Perizzites were from the region east of the Jordan River (Transjordan). But the context and the use of "Rephaim" elsewhere do not support this.

See also Canaan, Canaanite.

Persecution

Infliction of suffering, injury, or death on others because of their identity or beliefs. The Bible begins with an account of the persecution of the righteous by the unrighteous (Gn 4:3–7, “regard for Abel”; Mt 23:35; Heb 11:4). The Wisdom of Solomon (Wisd of Sol 2:12–20) dramatically illustrates the envy and guilt that prompt such persecution. Lot’s experience, likewise, illustrates the suffering involved in refusing to conform to popular behavior (Gn 19:9; 2 Pt 2:7–8). The ill-treatment of Israel in Egypt, like her later oppression by the Philistines, Midianites, and others, had economic and political grounds. For those refusing to accept the royal policy of syncretism, official tolerance of injustice, and pagan immoralities, persecution becomes frequent—from Elijah’s period onward (1

Kgs 19:10). Later prophets, as spokesmen of uncompromising truth and the claims of divine law in the face of social evils, suffered severely at the hands of the ruling classes, so that persecution became, in Jewish eyes, the hallmark of the true prophet (2 Chr 36:15–16; Mt 5:12; 23:29–37; Acts 7:52; Heb 11:32–38).

Daniel's stories illustrate persecution during the exile. On the return under foreign rule, strict Jews sought to preserve the nation's identity and religion amid alien pressures and the compromises of lax Jews anxious for accommodation and prosperity (1 Macc 1:11–15; 2:42–48). The result was the social oppression and harassment that made the repeated pleas for vindication and divine intervention, in such psalms as 10, 69, 140, and 149, painfully relevant in postexilic worship. This persecution reached a horrifying climax of cruelty during the Maccabean age, provoking armed resistance in response (2 Macc 6–7; Heb 11:35–38).

Thus, despite her confidence in God's sovereignty and "protection," Israel learned that right does not always prosper in this world, that faithfulness to truth does not ensure immunity from suffering, sacrifice, or martyrdom.

This acceptance of the high cost of righteousness was inherited by Christianity. Jesus repeatedly warned of persecution, even within households, and urged "armed" preparation for it, promising the Spirit's assistance at judicial examinations (Mt 5:11–12; 10:16–23, 34–36; 23:34; Lk 6:26; 22:35–36). Jesus was deeply angered by the murder of John the Baptist by Herod (Lk 23:9), and he foresaw his own fate. Because he criticized the legalism and nationalism of the Pharisees, and the compromises of the Sadducees to protect their own privileges (Jn 11:47–50), and because he disappointed the militaristic hopes set upon the Messiah by the common people, Jesus knew he would be rejected. His call to discipleship came to include warnings of danger, reviling, slander, accusation, flogging, arraignment before courts, hatred, and death. He frankly invited followers to prepare for his crucifixion, as the only way to life and the kingdom (Mt 16:21–26; 20:17–22; Mk 10:29–30; Jn 15:18–25; 16:1–4). Jesus was killed on the charges of subverting the nation, forbidding payment of taxes to the Romans, and claiming to be king (Lk 23:2).

The first persecution of the church by Jewish authorities was provoked mainly by Peter's accusations concerning the murder of the Messiah. As apostolic influence increased, official action came to include imprisonment and beating (Acts 5:17, 40). The powerful advocacy of the Hellenist Stephen provoked a Jewish mob to stone him (Acts 6–7)—the signal for "a great persecution," scattering most Christians from Jerusalem. The conversion of the archpersecutor Saul of Tarsus marked a resounding victory over opposition, and Herod's sudden death just after attacking the church "to please the Jews" was another (Acts 12:1–3, 20–24).

As Christianity moved into the Gentile world, a new cause of Jewish persecution arose as disturbances began to occur in the synagogues (Acts 13:44–45, 50; 14:1–6, 19; 17:1, 5, 13; 18:4–6, 12). In addition, the healing of the slave girl at Philippi led to the disciples' imprisonment (16:19–24); at Ephesus, the effect of Christian preaching on the trade of idol makers occasioned a dangerous threat, which the authorities averted (19:23–41). Paul averted the plot of more than 40 men who vowed to ambush him and kill him (21:4–36; 23:12–15). And the book of Acts closes with Paul awaiting trial before Caesar (28:30–31).

Throughout this period, persecution of Christians was sporadic, local, and mainly Jewish, provoked by envy of the church's missionary success. Officially, Christianity, as a Jewish sect (Acts 24:5, 14), shared the state's legal recognition won by the Jews. Thus, Paul received Roman protection at Paphos, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and Jerusalem from governors Felix and Festus and their adviser Herod Agrippa, as well as from the centurion conveying him to Rome. This explains Paul's confident appeal to Caesar; an imperial acquittal would ensure Christianity freedom from harassment throughout the empire.

Paul's attitude to persecution included regretful remembrance of his own persecuting days (Acts 22:4; 26:9–11; Gal 1:22–24), deliberate acceptance of risks in obedience to Christ (Acts 20:22–24; 21:13), continual warning that tribulation is inseparable from discipleship (Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 12:12; 1 Thes 3:4), and assurance that in every form of tribulation Christians are more than conquerors (Rom 8:35–37).

Almost certainly, Paul was beheaded during fierce persecution at Rome following the fire for which the Christians were blamed. Christians were often accused of "atheism" (rejecting polytheism), of appealing only to slave classes, of "scandalous" love feasts, and unsociable, austere behavior (cf. Jn 15:19), making them a popular target for blame.

About this time, Peter warned Christians in the East of the danger confronting the church. For a little while, "various trials" only prove the genuineness of faith (1 Pt 1:6). Slander should be answered by blameless living. Honor should be paid to the authorities. Suffering for righteousness should be accepted without fear. Let Christians prepare respectful defenses, with consciences clear of blame. If they suffer for doing right, remember that Christ did too—for them. Thus they must "arm" themselves for suffering (4:1), and not be surprised at persecution as "something strange" (v 12). They are sharing Christ's sufferings. His final word is "Stand fast!"

Mark, too, is thought to have written at this time for the benefit of the suffering Roman church. His Gospel dwells upon Christ's conflict, its causes and forms, and vividly portrays Christ's own heroic death. Like Peter, Mark meets persecution by pointing back to the suffering Lord.

Somewhat later, Christianity was exposed as an "illegal religion," no longer a protected sect of Judaism, by the introduction into synagogue services of a prayer against "Nazarenes," which Christians could not offer. Thereafter, the church was liable to official suppression. Rome readily incorporated old, national religions into state rituals for the sake of imperial unity, but she resisted new, nonconformist movements, especially those with secret meetings (i.e., the Eucharist), as politically dangerous (cf. Acts 17:6–7).

Toward the end of the century, faced with a growing church and political unrest, the state required public "worship" of "the genius of Rome" alongside any other religious rites. In Domitian's reign (AD 81–96) this became worship of the living emperor, with elaborate temples and an official priesthood. When Christians refused, acknowledging Jesus alone as divine Lord, official, and increasingly barbaric, persecution began. It is probable that Revelation reflects this situation (Rv 1:9; 2:13; 6:9; 13; 19:2). So the Bible ends as it began, with the theme of the persecution of the people of God.

See also Suffering; Tribulation.

Perseus

Last king of Macedonia (1 Macc 8:5). Perseus was the illegitimate son of Philip III of Macedonia. He succeeded his father to the throne in 179 BC. In 168 BC Rome defeated Macedonia in the battle of Pydna. Macedonia became a Roman province, and Perseus died in captivity.

Perseverance

Perseverance means continuing to do something even when it is difficult.

Perseverance in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel waited for many years to see God's promises come true. Many believers died before seeing these promises fulfilled (Hebrews 11:1, 13, 21–22, 39). The promise God made to Abraham gave people hope for hundreds of years before they finally lived in the land of Canaan. The Israelites learned an important lesson during their journey through the wilderness. They lost their early excitement, and this kept them from entering the promised land. The people of Israel never forgot this lesson (Hebrews 3:16–19). Prophets (people who spoke for God) always looked beyond failure and hard times. They saw hope for the future, and they helped people keep their faith strong (Jeremiah 32:1–15; Hosea 3:4–5; Joel 2:28–29; Hebrews 2:1–3; Daniel 12:11–13).

Perseverance in the New Testament

The New Testament also encourages believers to keep persevering. The Greek word often used is *proskartereo*, which means "to attend continually or adhere steadfastly" (Mark 3:9; Acts 8:13; 10:7; Romans 13:6). This word is translated as "devoted," "continued," "constant," and "steadfast."

Perseverance in Faith

The Bible teaches that we should keep going and not give up in many areas of our faith:

- In prayer (Luke 18:1–8; Colossians 4:2)
- In doing good things (Romans 2:7; Galatians 6:9)
- In learning about Christianity (Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 3:14)
- In difficult times (2 Thessalonians 1:4)
- In grace (Acts 13:43; 2 Corinthians 6:1)
- In faith (Acts 14:22; Colossians 1:23)
- In divine love (John 15:9; Jude 1:21)
- In standing firm (1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15)
- In abiding in Christ (John 15:4–10; 1 John 2:28)
- In running with patience (Hebrews 6:12; 12:1)
- In not falling away (Hebrews 3:12; 4:1–10)
- In being zealous to confirm our call and election (2 Peter 1:10)

Examples of Failing to Persevere

Some people failed to persevere, such as:

- Judas (John 6:71)
- Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)
- Hymenaeus (2 Timothy 2:17)

Warnings About Lack of Perseverance

We should not ignore the possibility of:

- "neglecting so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)
- being "disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27)
- "falling" while we think we are "standing" (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- committing apostasy by turning away from God completely (Hebrews 6:1–8)

Importance of Perseverance

For, as Jesus said, “The one who perseveres to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22; 24:13). This emphasis is not accidental. It reflects the pressures of pagan society, the danger of persecution, emotional reactions after initial spiritual experiences, and the misunderstanding of "instant salvation." Christians must understand that endurance is key to inheriting eternal salvation (Luke 21:19; Romans 5:3; Colossians 1:11).

God's Role in Perseverance

However, perseverance is not solely dependent on human effort. In the Old Testament, God's redeeming purpose is unwavering, and His covenant stands firm, though it needs renewal (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Divine love (*hesed* in Hebrew) means changeless loyalty. God will never fail or forsake His people for His own name’s sake.

The New Testament promises that Christ will raise his followers on the last day, and no one can take them from his or the Father’s hand. Christ will keep us from falling, and God is faithful, working in us for his good purpose. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can handle. Nothing in heaven or on earth can separate us from God’s love. We are already sealed by the Holy Spirit as a promise of eternal salvation and are protected by God's power for a future salvation that will be revealed.

The Bible teaches that believers should keep going in their faith but also assures them of their salvation. This can seem like a contradiction and has led to many debates. However, this tension is often understood better through personal spiritual experience rather than just by thinking about it.

See also Assurance; Backsliding.

Persia, Persians

Persia, Persians

Country lying just to the east of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and covering virtually the same territory as present-day Iran. It was known in ancient times by various forms of Fars or Pars, which came down to us as Persia. It continued to be known as Persia until 1935, when its name was changed to Iran. The official modern language of the country is Persian, an Indo-European language written in Arabic characters.

Preview

- Geography and Climate
- History
- Persia and the Bible

Geography and Climate

Persia served as a geographical link between inner Asia and the plateau of Asia Minor. It has been described as a triangle set between two depressions, the Persian Gulf on the south and the Caspian Sea to the north. The sides of the triangle are made up of mountain ranges that enclose an area of desert. On the west the Zagros Mountains run northwest-southeast, with many fertile valleys that are suitable for agriculture. Severe summer heat requires that animals be taken to cooler elevations during that season.

On the north is the Elburz range, with Mt Demavend reaching a height of more than 19,000 feet (5,791.2 meters). The most heavily populated area of Persia is Azerbaijan, which, because of routes leading from various northern points, was one of the most accessible parts of the country and therefore had to be protected by strong fortifications.

Farther east, the Elburz becomes the mountains of Khorasan, which also afford easy passage into the country. This district, which has been called the "granary of Iran," has been susceptible to foreign invasion over the centuries. On the south, the third side of the triangle, is another mountain range, the Makran. Within these ranges is a saline depression, the southern part of which has been regarded as more arid than the Gobi Desert.

One of the important sections of the country was actually an extension of the Mesopotamian plain; this was known in ancient times as Susiana and now is called Khuzistan. Here the capital, Susa, was situated. Adjoining it to the north is a mountain spur that was the location of Luristan, famous for its bronzes. Another plain, near the Caspian Sea, is tropical in climate; because of heavy rainfall, it produces an abundance and variety of food.

Lacking a river like the Nile or the Tigris-Euphrates system, and having no regular seasonal rains as in Palestine, the agriculture of Persia is dependent on irrigation. Rainfall varies dramatically from one region to another and the climate differs markedly with the topography.

In antiquity the lower mountains were heavily forested with many kinds of trees sought for building by the Sumerian kings of Mesopotamia. Alabaster, marble, lapis lazuli, carnelian, and turquoise were used from early times. Iron, copper, tin, and lead were found here. In modern times the oil resources of Iran have been widely exploited.

History

The Medes (a term often used synonymously with Persians, since the two are so closely related) are a people about whom relatively little is known. They were pictured in Assyrian reliefs. It was the Median Cyaxares who teamed up with the Babylonian Nabopolassar to bring about the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BC.

In the seventh century BC, a small kingdom of Persians was established at Parsumash under Achaemenes, after whom the great Persian dynasty was named. Teispes (675–640 BC), the son and successor of Achaemenes, was under the domination of the Medes, who were gathering forces to overthrow Assyria. Trouble for the Medes freed Teispes from their control, and the weakness of Elam enabled him to gain the province of Parsa (modern Fars). The Assyrians under Ashurbanipal destroyed the nation of Elam and came into contact with the Persians under Cyrus I, son of Teispes.

Cambyses, son of Cyrus, married the daughter of the Median king Astyages; their son, Cyrus II the Great (559–530 BC), built a great palace complex for himself at Pasargadae. The Babylonian king, Nabonidus, allied himself with Cyrus against the Medes. Cyrus fought and defeated his grandfather, Astyages, and made the Median capital, Ecbatana, "place of assembly" (Hamadan), his own capital and set up his archives there (cf. Ezr 6:2).

Cyrus, and later Darius, exhibited an attitude of benevolence and generosity toward defeated enemies, a policy that sometimes worked to the disadvantage of the Persians. A capable military leader, Cyrus invaded Asia Minor and defeated Croesus, king of Lydia, and brought the Greek cities

Persia, Persians

of the area into subjection. He then solidified his eastern frontier. In 539 BC he captured Babylon with virtually no resistance and decreed that the exiled Jews could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:1–4).

The son of Cyrus, Cambyses II (529–522 BC), conquered Egypt. Upon his suicide, the empire nearly disintegrated. Cambyses was succeeded by Darius I the Great (521–486 BC), the son of Hystaspis, satrap of Parthia. Darius put down the internal revolts and consolidated the empire. For efficient administration of his vast empire, he created 20 provinces or satrapies, each under a satrap or "protector of the kingdom." Other offices were instituted to check on the activities of the satraps. Darius changed the principal capital from Pasargadae to Persepolis, where his building activities were continued by later Achaemenid kings to make a tremendous palace complex. He was a follower of Zoroaster and a worshiper of Ahura Mazda, as were Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

The early victory of Darius over the rebels is commemorated on the famous rock of Bisitun (Behistun). This memorial took the form of reliefs and a long cuneiform inscription in three languages: Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian. A copy of these records was made by Henry C. Rawlinson in 1855 at considerable risk, for the monument was difficult to approach, situated some 500 feet (152.4 meters) above the plain. This accomplishment played a large part in the deciphering of languages in the cuneiform script. During the later part of Darius's reign, he suffered defeat at the hands of the Greeks at Marathon (491 BC). Upon his death, Darius was buried in a rock-cut tomb at Naqsh-i-Rustam, a short distance northeast of Persepolis. This was a memorial consisting of reliefs and a trilingual inscription that lauds his person and reign. Later kings were buried in tombs cut in the same cliff.

Darius was succeeded by his son Khshayarsha, better known as Xerxes (485–465 BC). An inscription at Persepolis lists the nations subject to him at the time of his accession and confirms his devotion to Ahura Mazda. During his rule, the Persian fleet was defeated at Salamis (480 BC).

Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Artakhshathra, 464–424 BC) was followed by Darius II (423–405), Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–359), Artaxerxes III Ochus (358–338), Arses (337–336), and finally Darius III (335–331).

The loss of the empire has been attributed to the cowardice of Darius III, whose armies were defeated by Alexander the Great at Issus in 333 BC and ultimately at Gaugamela, near modern Erbil (Arbela) in 331 BC. Upon the death of Alexander in 323 BC, Persia became the lot of Seleucus, one of his generals. Persian sources say little of the period between Darius III and the beginnings of Sassanian rule in the early third century AD.

Persia and the Bible

The biblical references to Persia occur in the later period of OT history and in the writings of the prophets who ministered during that time. The earliest mention is the reference to Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28–45:1, a passage that has confounded scholars who have felt that the prophecy could not be so precise. This predictive prophecy was given to Isaiah by God more than 150 years before Cyrus captured Babylon and decreed the return of the captive Jews to Jerusalem.

The chronological notations in Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Haggai, and Esther enable us to set chronological markers with some degree of certainty. The first year of Cyrus's reign over Babylon (Ezr 1:1) may be fixed at 538 BC. The rebuilding of the temple met with opposition from enemies of the Jews in the time of Cyrus and Darius (Ezr 4).

It was at this time that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews and urged the completion of the temple. Haggai 1:1 places the message of that prophet on the first day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius I. That translates into August 29, 520 BC. Similarly, Zechariah 1:1 is dated to the eighth month of the year, that is, October/November 520 BC. The letter that was sent to Darius concerning the decree for rebuilding the temple (Ezr 5:6–17) brought about a search of the royal archives that Cyrus had set up at Ecbatana (cf. 6:1–2). The finding of the decree of Cyrus enabled the Jews to complete the temple project, which was finished on March 12, 515 BC (the third day of the month Adar in the sixth year of Darius, Ezr 6:15).

The work of Nehemiah occurred in the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Nehemiah's request that he be allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall was made in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1, April/May 445 BC). This building project also met with strong opposition. The date is generally confirmed by a letter from the 17th year of Darius II (408 BC) and

found among the Elephantine papyri in Egypt. Two personal names found in Nehemiah also occur in this letter: the sons of Sanballat, Nehemiah's most virulent enemy (cf. Neh 2:19; 4:1–8), and Johanan the grandson of Eliashib, who was high priest at Jerusalem when Nehemiah arrived there (3:1). Another letter among these papyri grants Persian authority to the Jews at Elephantine to celebrate the Passover according to their custom.

The book of Esther is set in the time of King Ahasuerus, who is Xerxes, referred to in Ezra 4:6 between Darius and Artaxerxes. The Hebrew Ahasuerus represents Khshayarsha, whom the Greeks called Xerxes. On the other hand, the Septuagint has Artaxerxes, and Josephus names Artaxerxes as the king mentioned in the book of Esther. Esther provides a number of details of the life and customs of Persian royalty.

Persia also figures in the prophecies of Ezekiel, where Persia is named among the armies of Tyre (Ez 27:10). It is also listed as an ally of Gog in the invasion of Israel (38:5). The recorded history in Daniel refers to Persia (Dn 10:1), as do the prophecies of that book (8:20; 11:2).

See also Postexilic Period; Medes, Media, Median.

Persis

Christian woman in Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom 16:12).

Peruda

Head of a family of Solomon's servants (Ezr 2:55); alternately called Perida in Nehemiah 7:57. His descendants formed part of the remnant of Israel that returned to Jerusalem after the exile (1 Esd 5:33).

Pestilence

A variation of a Hebrew word for a deadly plague that spreads easily. Pestilence is never portrayed in the Bible as a random event. It is always regarded as a judgment or punishment sent by God.

Pestilence in the Old Testament

Pestilence was a punishment for Israel's neglect of its covenant (Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 28:21). This is the reason for the frequent use of the word by both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These prophets were prosecuting God's covenant lawsuit against his people. The sentence had been determined, and they announced that its infliction was impending. For this reason, pestilence almost always occurs as part of a list of plagues, such as the formula "sword, famine, and pestilence" used throughout Jeremiah's prophecy in some translations (Jeremiah 14:12 and other verses). Pestilence punishes sin. So, it does not strike everyone. The one who remains faithful will be protected from its effects (Psalm 91:1–3). The enemies of Israel could also be objects of this form of judgment (Psalm 78:50; Ezekiel 28:23; 38:22).

Differences Between Pestilence and Plague

Pestilence is not identical to plague in the Old Testament. "Plague" often means diseases like:

- Bubonic plague
- Measles
- Smallpox

"Pestilence" may refer to:

- Cholera
- Typhus
- Typhoid
- Dysentery

These diseases often afflicted a city under siege. There is some overlap in the terms, however. Seventy thousand Israelites died after David's census. This shows the severity of divine punishment (2 Samuel 24:13–15).

Pestilence in the New Testament

The Greek word *loimos* occurs three times in the New Testament. In Acts 24:5, Tertullus used this term as an offensive description of Paul: "We have found this man to be a pestilence." Jesus predicted that the destruction of the temple would be preceded by several judgments, including pestilence or plague (Luke 21:11).

See also Disease; Plague.

Peter, First Letter of

First of two general epistles authored by Peter.

Preview

- Author
- Destination, Origin, Date
- Background
- Purpose and Theological Teaching
- Content

Author

The author says he is the apostle Peter (1 Pt 1:1), a witness of Christ's sufferings (5:1)—thus one of the original apostles chosen by Jesus (Mk 3:14–19) as an authoritative spokesman. Also known as Simon and Cephas, Peter probably saw and felt Jesus' last hours of suffering more keenly than any of the other apostles (14:54) because he had denied Jesus three times (vv 66–72). In 1 Peter the sufferings of Jesus are mentioned at least four times (1 Pt 1:11; 2:23; 4:1; 5:1).

Peter was known as the apostle to the Jews, just as Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7). Since Peter was a traveling missionary (1 Cor 1:12; 9:5), he could have actually visited the Asia Minor churches to whom this letter was sent.

That Peter had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry may help account for the strong influence of Jesus' teaching in 1 Peter. Except for James, 1 Peter probably echoes more of Jesus' words than any other NT letter. The chart below presents similarities between Peter's words and Jesus' words in the Gospels:

Some scholars think the Greek of this letter is too good to have been written by a former fisherman whose native language was Aramaic; that the doctrine is too much like Paul's to have been written by an apostle whose position was different from Paul's; and that someone wrote the letter after Peter's death and used his name to give apostolic weight to it.

Other scholars answer that if the author wanted to give authority to a letter whose teaching resembles Paul's, he would have used Paul's name, not Peter's; that most Galileans probably learned Greek as well as Aramaic early in life; and that there is no evidence that the teaching of Peter and Paul fundamentally differed. When Paul rebuked Peter (Gal 2:11–14), it was due to a temporary lapse in conduct, not a basic disagreement in teaching. Besides, some key doctrines of Paul are missing from 1 Peter (e.g., justification), and those similar to Paul's were the common possession of all the early churches. We may reasonably conclude that the apostle Peter authored this letter. However, it seems quite clear that Silas (otherwise know as Silvanus) helped Peter write this epistle (1 Pt 5:12), which means (1) he functioned as an amanuensis (secretary) for Peter, (2) he translated Peter's letter (from Aramaic to Greek) as Peter dictated it, or (3) he composed a letter based on Peter's thoughts.

Destination, Origin, Date

The people to whom 1 Peter is addressed lived in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These Roman provinces covered all but the southernmost part of Asia Minor, the bulk of modern Turkey.

Christianity may have been brought back by pilgrim Jews converted in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:9). More likely, these churches included some founded by Paul on his first and second missionary journeys, and others by unknown missionaries. Peter does not explicitly include himself among "those who preached to you" (1 Pt 1:12).

Whether the readers were Christian Jews or converted pagan Gentiles is not known. First Peter 1:1 reads: "to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the lands of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia" (nlt). That the readers are in some sense exiles is confirmed by 1:17 and 2:11. These verses could refer to a literal exile of Jews outside of Palestine or to a spiritual exile of all believers on earth because their true home is in heaven. No one denies that there was (and is) a literal Jewish dispersion (Diaspora). Peter, viewing the church as the true Israel (cf. Rom 2:29; Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3), may simply have transferred the language of exile from the nation Israel onto the church. The phrase used by Peter in 1 Peter 2:11 is almost identical to the one in Hebrews 11:13 (cf. Gn 23:4; Ps 39:12).

Against the view that construes the dispersion of 1 Peter 1:1 as Christians (Jew and Gentile), rather than Jews only, one may argue that Peter was specifically the apostle to the Jews (Gal 2:7) and that the use of so much OT in 1 Peter demands a Jewish readership. But there is evidence that Peter did not restrict his ministry to Jews (1 Cor 1:12; Gal 2:12), and the use of the OT is not surprising even if the readers were not Jews, because so many Gentile God-fearers (like Cornelius, Acts 10:2) were familiar with the OT.

Whether the readers were Jews or mainly Gentiles is decided by several texts that reflect the pagan background of the readers. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:10 that his readers were once "not a people," a reference to Hosea 2:23 (cf. Rom 9:25). Then in 1 Peter 4:3 Peter describes their past "immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols" (nlt). This does not describe unbelieving Jews, whose problem was not gross immorality but hypocrisy and legalism. Thus the recipients of this letter must have included many Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, characterized as aliens and strangers in the world.

Most scholars think 1 Peter was written from Rome. The clue is found in 5:13: "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings" (niv). Babylon (which had come to symbolize a big, powerful, evil city) was substituted as a kind of code name for Rome in much early Christian literature (e.g., Rv 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21; cf. Sibyllene 5:143, 159).

The date of 1 Peter is probably AD 64 or 65 (see next section).

Background

While other NT writings refer now and then to Christian suffering, 1 Peter is preoccupied with it. How Christians should conduct themselves when abused is often discussed (1 Pt 1:3–7; 2:12, 20–23; 3:13–17; 4:12–19; 5:9–10). Official state persecution cannot be clearly affirmed; abuses seem to be the common lot of all Christians everywhere (5:9). Cruel masters may sometimes abuse their Christian servants (2:18–20); Christian wives may have to endure harsh, unbelieving husbands (3:1–6); and in general, people are on the lookout to revile Christians as wrongdoers (2:12; 3:9, 16; 4:15–16).

Even though no official state persecution is in view, the letter apparently indicates that there is something worse on the horizon (4:12–19). Peter seems to sense that the present tension between believers and their society could flare into something much worse.

Early church tradition says that Peter was crucified in Rome during Nero's persecution, and there is no good reason to doubt it. Moreover, since 1 Peter was written from Rome, and since 4:12 and 17 imply an impending crisis like the one that struck the Christians in Rome in AD 65, we may suppose that this letter was written not long before Nero began to oppress the Christians in Rome. According to the historian Tacitus, Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome, in order to squelch the rumor that he himself had done it (so that he could build a greater city). His relentless persecution of Christians had not yet broken out when 1 Peter was written (cf. 2:14; 3:13), but Peter may have seen it coming and may have wanted to prepare the churches outside Rome, should the holocaust reach them, too. Nero's persecution apparently did not affect the Christians in the provinces outside Rome, but that does not diminish the value of Peter's letter, because mostly it deals with how Christians should relate to their society and how they should respond when abuse and suffering come.

If this is a correct picture of the background of 1 Peter, its date would be the early to mid 60s, since the fire of Rome broke out on July 19, AD 64, and the persecution occurred later that year or in the spring of 65.

Purpose and Theological Teaching

The main purpose of 1 Peter is to exhort Christians to conduct themselves properly among the community of believers (3:8; 5:1–7), but especially in non-Christian society (2:12), testifying clearly to their hope in Christ (3:1, 15) for God's glory. The letter aims to help Christians understand and endure the abuses that often come from relationships with non-Christians (1:6–7; 2:12, 18–25; 3:9, 14–17; 4:1–5, 12–19; 5:8–10).

Peter's exhortation is based on the good news of God's salvation through the death, resurrection, and second coming of Christ. God is merciful (1:3; 2:10), "the God of all grace" (4:10; 5:12), and there is hope in grace's ultimate display at Christ's coming (1:13). God foreknew and determined (1:2, 20; 2:8) a plan of redemption by which to create a holy people for his own possession (2:9–10). Accordingly, Christ was sent into the world to accomplish this redemption for the sake of God's elect (1:20). Although he was "chosen and precious" to God, he was "rejected by men" (2:4) who did not believe him (v 7). But his sufferings (1:11; 4:1, 13; 5:1) were not a meaningless tragedy; they were for the sake of his people (2:21, 24; 3:18), to redeem them with his precious blood from their empty way of life (1:18–19).

Put to death in the flesh, he was "made alive by the Spirit" (3:18), raised from the dead and glorified (1:21; 2:7), and holds the place of authority at God's right hand (3:22). Further still, we must try to explain the link between the good news of God's

saving activity and our good conduct. The good news must be proclaimed if it is to change anybody's life. This proclamation happens in the power of God's Holy Spirit (1:12). It is not merely a "newscast" but is "the living and abiding word of God" (1:23; cf. 4:11), by which God calls his people into being and summons them "out of darkness and into his wonderful light" (2:9; cf. 1:15), "to his eternal glory in Christ" (5:10). This change is described in 1 Peter as a "new birth" (1:3, 23); what distinguishes a newborn person is the "living hope" that he has in Christ (1:3, 13).

This hope, grounded in Christ's resurrection and his sure return, transforms behavior (1:13–15). No longer will we have to seek satisfaction and fulfillment in harmful, unloving ways, but rather by entrusting our souls to a faithful Creator (4:19; 5:7), we can endure unjust suffering patiently (2:20), not return evil for evil (3:9), and seek to extend the mercy of God to others in doing good (2:12, 15; 3:11, 16; 4:19).

Lively Christian hope does not lead us *out* of non-Christian society but rather changes our behavior *in* it. Christians are addressed as citizens of the state (2:13–17), as slaves of cruel masters (vv 18–25), and as wives of unbelieving husbands (3:1–6). By living as new and hopeful persons *in* the institutions of society, others see our good deeds and give glory to our Father in heaven (2:12; cf. Mt 5:16).

Content

1:1–2

This section describes God's election of his people, which is often translated using three prepositional phrases.

First, it is "according to the foreknowledge of God" (niv). This means more than God's knowing ahead of time whom he would elect. As in 1:20, foreknowledge probably also includes God's purpose (cf. Am 3:2; Acts 2:23; Rom 8:28–30; 11:2; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9).

Second, the election is "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (nasb). Election involves the Spirit's effectual work in making a person obedient to the gospel (see Rom 1:5). In Ephesians 1:4 election is described as "before the foundation of the world" (kjv).

Third, our election is "for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood" (rsv). The latter probably refers to the moral effect of Christ's death in purifying our conscience and our behavior as we trust in him (see Heb 9:13–14).

Thus, the elect people of God have their origin in the eternal, purposed foreknowledge of God; owe their call and conversion to the work of the Holy Spirit; and have as their goal in life obedience to God (cf. 1 Pt 1:14).

1:3–12

This section describes how tremendously valuable salvation is—a vast inheritance, absolutely perfect, never diminishing in beauty or worth (v 4), the goal of our faith (v 9), the basis of inexpressible joy (vv 6–8). Searched into and desired by the holy prophets of old, it is so amazing that even angels desire to peer into it (vv 10–12).

It originates in the great mercy of God and was made available to people through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (v 3). Even though a *future* inheritance is ready to be revealed in the last time (v 5), it offers many *present* spiritual benefits for those who trust in Christ. One of them is the promise of God's present power to cause the believer to persevere in faith (v 5). This does not mean Christians escape hardship; it may be necessary that they suffer (v 6). If so, they should not grumble but see suffering as a refining fire for their good, because it burns away false dependencies and leaves only the pure gold of genuine faith (v 7). So suffering may be an important preparation for the full experience of salvation, since it is faith alone that will be blessed in the end.

Faith is not the same as sight, for believers have never seen Jesus, yet they trust him and love him (v 8). There are good grounds for hope (3:15), founded mainly on the resurrection of Jesus (1:3)—a real historical event.

1:13–25

Peter now gives a command: hope fully in the grace coming to you at the revelation of Christ (v 13), and lead a new life of obedience to God (vv 14–15). Hope is an intense desire for something and a confidence that it will come. So Peter was commanding the churches to *desire* Christ strongly and be assured of his glory and his coming. Thus, believers must use their minds and keep clearheaded (sober) about what is truly valuable in life (v 13). Full hope in Christ always results in holiness of life. If we delight in being God's children

(v 14), we will surely imitate our Father (vv 15–16; cf. Lv 19:2).

But there is another motivation for good conduct: fear of God, who judges each person according to his or her works (1 Pt 1:17). While Peter motivates with fear, he also assures us that we have been redeemed from our futile conduct with the precious blood of Christ (vv 18–19). We are saved by faith, not by good works. Probably Peter means us to fear God's displeasure with unbelief. When the letter says he will judge our works, it probably means that he will look for evidences of obedient, loving conduct, which is the sure sign of hope and faith. If we are lacking in this, fear of his judgment should drive us back to God's mercy, where we can have peace and joy, which in turn lead to love.

This love is commanded toward believers in verse 22. Hope is not mentioned in verses 22–25, but it is implied when Peter says we are born anew through the *abiding* Word of God. Since "the word of the Lord abides forever" (v 25 = Is 40:6–8), those whose life depends on it will abide forever.

2:1–10

This passage is filled with OT quotations and imagery, as shown in the following chart:

Verses 9 and 10 indicate that Peter considered the Christian church a new Israel. He probably saw the experience of the church in the world as that of an *exile* like the Jews in Babylonian exile (1:1, 17; 2:11), and considered conversion as a kind of *exodus* out of the darkness of an old futile life into God's light, like the Jewish exodus out of Egypt.

Verses 6–8 show that Jesus is a precious jewel for some but a stumbling stone for unbelievers. Behind that stands God's inscrutable predestination (v 8). Those who trust him are chosen (v 9; cf. 1:1) as a royal priesthood (see below on 2:5), as a nation having God's own holy character (cf. 1:14–15), and as a people cherished as God's special possession. All of this is not due to our merit but to God's mercy (v 10).

Verses 1–3 are again a command—to desire the kindness of Christ that we have tasted through the milk of the Word and so to grow stronger in faith or to hope fully in the grace of Christ.

Verses 4–5 portray a complex, mixed metaphor that pictures Christ as a living stone and the church both as a spiritual house of stones and as a priesthood. The church is, on the one hand, a dwelling place for God (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21–22), and on the other, a group of ministers in that dwelling who offer God the sacrifices of obedience (cf. Rom 12:1–2).

2:11–12

This is the central concern of the letter. Since Christians are exiles in this world, they must not share the same desires as unbelievers. Such fleshly desires are ephemeral and destroy the soul that follows them. Instead, God's new people should devote themselves to good deeds, even though people may slander them, for this will ultimately cause people to glorify God. The sequence, again, is changed desires, changed behavior, God glorified (cf. Mt 5:16).

2:13–17

Christians should show proper respect to everyone (vv 13–14). That Christ died for sinners is a very humbling truth that forbids Christians to be arrogant or to think that they do not owe others love (cf. Rom 13:8–10). Rather, they are adjured to count others better than themselves (Mk 10:44; Phil 2:3).

Peter declares, then, that believers should be subject to the king and to the civil authorities under him. They should positively devote themselves to doing good so that those who say Christianity makes no difference in life will be silenced.

However, subjection to the state is not absolute, for Christians are first and foremost slaves of God. It is out of freedom that they acknowledge the propriety of a God-ordained state to preserve orderly life. Because Christians serve God first, and the king is merely God's creature, subjection to him is a subjection for the Lord's sake, not the king's sake.

2:18–25

Christian slaves have consciences oriented toward and shaped by God (v 19). They also have experienced his grace and are here told to rely on it by enduring unjust suffering patiently. They are not to strike back: they were called to live this way because Jesus suffered *for them* and because he suffered *as an example.* Verses 21–23 describe the example. Verses 24–25 describe Christ's redemption and its effects. That is, Jesus not only modeled the life of nonretaliation but also enabled his followers to live this way by dying *for* them that they might live for righteousness (v 24). Only when Christians are secure and content in the hope

Christ achieved *for them* can they have the freedom and inclination to follow his costly example. When believers are tempted to take vengeance into their own hands, they should recall that even Jesus entrusted himself to God, who judges justly (v 23; cf. Rom 12:19–20).

3:1–7

Here are six verses for wives and one for husbands. How shall a believing wife win her unbelieving husband (v 1)? Peter warns against preoccupation with making the body more attractive (v 3). Instead, he stresses the adornment of the heart with a meek and tranquil spirit (v 4), accompanied by pure, loving conduct (v 2), which may win the husband "without talk" (v 1). This is not a call to mindless subservience but to poise, to free and confident service in love. The wife is not to be afraid even of an abusive husband (v 6). But how? By following Sarah's example of *hoping* in God (v 5). So it is again said that hope transforms life and enables believers to be subject to others. The wife is bound first to the Lord and only secondarily to her husband. Like the slave, the Christian wife will use her God-oriented conscience (2:16) to decide when, for Christ's sake, she cannot follow the lead of her husband.

Husbands are admonished in verse 7 to bring their relationships to their wives into conformity with natural and revealed truth. The *natural* truth is that women are physically weaker. This does not mean that they are inferior mentally or emotionally. It is a simple statement of observed fact: women's bodies are not as strong as men's. In a culture without all kinds of automatic devices, physical strength was much more crucial for survival and comfort than it is today. So the man is urged to use his superior strength for the sake of his wife. The *revealed* truth is that the wife is an "equal partner in God's gift of new life," to be honored and respected.

3:8–12

This concludes the section 2:13–3:12 and admonishes the whole church first to love the brotherhood (3:8) and then to love the hostile outsider (vv 9–12). Verse 9 recalls Jesus' behavior and his commands (Lk 6:27–36). Not only are Christians to endure abuse patiently (1 Pt 2:19–20), they are also to react positively and "bless" those who revile them (3:9). To bless means to wish them well and turn the wish into a prayer. Believers' real desire for their enemies is that they be converted and come to share in the blessing that the Christian will inherit (vv 1, 9). Psalm 34:12–16 is brought in to support the logic of verse 9. If Christians want to inherit the blessing of salvation (1:4–5; 3:9), they must bless those who revile them. This does not mean they *earn* their salvation but that salvation is the goal of faith (1:9), and true faith always makes a person loving.

3:13–17

Generally speaking, when Christians do good, they will not be harmed for it (v 13). Nevertheless, it may be God's will that Christians suffer for doing good (v 17) and that is far better than suffering for doing evil. It is better not only because they ought never do evil but also because they are "blessed" when they suffer for righteousness' sake (v 14; cf. 4:14; Mt 5:10–12). So instead of being afraid of people, believers should fear displeasing Christ and be at peace in his faithfulness (cf. 1 Pt 3:14–15 with Is 8:12–13). Thus, their consciences will be clear and believers will be freed so that when they explain the reason for their hope, even their demeanor will bear witness to its truth (cf. 1 Pt 3:15 with 1:3). The Christians' abusers may be put to shame (v 16) and be won over (3:1) and give glory to God (2:12).

3:18–22

Similar to 2:21–25 and 1:18–21, this unit affirms Peter's call for patient suffering. Since Christ died once for all for mankind's sins and thus freed everyone from guilt and opened a way into the fellowship of the merciful God, believers should be able to bear unjust suffering meekly. Refusing to bear undeserved suffering would be a mark of unbelief in the all-faithful Creator (4:19) who cares for his children and wants to bear their anxieties for them (5:7).

Just as in the days of Noah, only a few were saved (cf. 3:1, 20; 4:17), so now only a few were being saved in Peter's hostile generation, through baptism (3:18–21). Peter defined very carefully in what sense he meant that baptism saves—not by the cleansing function of the water, but rather by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the pledge of a good conscience toward God (v 21).

4:1–6

Christians should live according to the will of God (cf. 1:14; 2:1–2, 11–12, 15). This will mean a break with the behavior of their unbelieving friends and will probably result in being slandered (4:4). But

this should not cause believers to avenge themselves, for God will take care of judgment (v 5).

Believers have this command (v 1): "So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning" (nlt). Some have taken this to mean that through a process of suffering we are increasingly sanctified; however, if suffering here refers to dying (as the parallel with 3:18 and the "therefore" of 4:1 suggest), then probably verse 1 is to be understood along the lines of Romans 6:6, 10–11.

First Peter 4:6 is difficult. Some think it refers to the same preaching referred to in 3:19. Another, perhaps preferable, interpretation is that there is no preaching to the dead here but rather a preaching of the gospel to those who subsequently died. That is, those who heard the gospel, believed, and then died did not hear the gospel in vain. For the purpose of the preaching was that, while from a merely human standpoint these believers have been judged in the flesh (i.e., have died), from the divine standpoint they live in the Spirit. The purpose of verse 6 is thus a great encouragement to live by God's will, even when former friends scorn the Christian hope by pointing out that even Christians die.

4:7–11

Activity among believers in the church is again the theme here. Peter saw contemporary events as the beginning of the end (vv 7, 17). This gave an earnestness to his exhortation that believers keep their minds clear and sober for prayer.

By steadily drawing upon God in prayer, Christians find the help they need to love each other and to overlook many offensive things (cf. Eph 4:1–3). This love should manifest itself in joyful hospitality, especially important in times of persecution (1 Pt 4:9), and should move believers to use all their varied gifts and talents to build each other up in faith (v 10). Two examples are given: speaking and ministering (the work of the preacher and the work of the deacon). Most important in speaking and ministering is to recognize what the goal of these gifts is and how to reach that goal. The goal is "that in all things God may be praised" (v 11). This may be done by recognizing that he gives the strength for service and the words for edifying speech.

4:12–19

Here the situation of suffering and bearing reproach for being Christians is again in view. The prospect of a "painful trial" (v 12) is impending (cf. 1:6–7). Peter saw these sufferings (probably from hostile associates rather than official state persecution) as God's judgment on the world, beginning with the church (vv 17–18; cf. Prv 11:31). But God's judgment on the church is not punitive but purgative (1 Pt 4:14; cf. 1:6–7).

Peter gives a reminder that suffering is a normal Christian experience (v 19; cf. 3:14; Acts 14:22; 1 Thes 3:3) and that Christ himself was so mistreated (1 Pt 2:21–25; Mt 10:25). Christians are encouraged to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator (1 Pt 4:19), to rejoice (v 13), and to persevere in doing good (v 19), thereby glorifying God (v 16). When believers respond to suffering in this way, they are blessed (v 14), for God manifests himself to them in an intimate and reassuring way.

5:1–7

Again (as in 3:8; 4:7–11) Peter treats relations within the church. He tells the elders how to be good shepherds of the flock (5:1–4), the younger people how to treat their elders (v 5), and everyone how to be humble toward each other.

Peter reminds believers that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the lowly (v 5; cf. Mt 23:12; Jas 4:6), whom he will exalt in the age to come (1 Pt 5:6; cf. Lk 14:11; 18:14; Jas 4:10). Most important, God invites his people to throw all their anxieties on him because he cares for them (1 Pt 5:7; cf. Ps 55:22; Mt 6:25–30).

The young people who are thus made humble will be subject to their elders and respect them (1 Pt 5:5). The elders who are thus made humble will not lord it over the flock (v 3) or be greedy or begrudging in their service (v 2), but will lead the flock by a humble example.

5:8–11

Peter returns to his concern with suffering. Suffering is the universal lot of believers (v 9; cf. 4:12). Although in one sense willed by God (1:6; 3:17; 4:19), it is used by Satan to try to destroy their faith. So Peter appeals to the church to be wakeful and sober (5:8; cf. 1:13; 4:7) so that they can resist the lion by faith.

5:12–14

In conclusion, Peter describes his "brief" writing as an exhortation and a testimony concerning the true grace of God. So the letter is not a call for hard labor for God; rather, it is a call to recognize, enjoy, and live by the hard labor that God graciously has exerted and will exert for his children. As was noted above, the letter was written by Silas (Greek Silvanus, probably the same person as in Acts 16:25; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1). It was written from Rome, and greetings were sent from Mark (probably the Gospel writer and former missionary companion of Paul—Acts 13:13; 15:37; 2 Tm 4:11) and the whole church. Peter's last word is to invoke peace upon the churches and to urge them to keep the affection warm among themselves.

See also Suffering; Peter, the Apostle; Spirits in Prison.

Peter, Second Letter of

The second, general epistle authored by Peter.

Preview

- Author
- Date, Origin, Destination
- Background
- Purpose and Theological Teaching
- Content

Author

The author is clearly identified in 1:1 as Simon Peter, one of the 12 apostles chosen by Jesus. However, two things should be noted. First, its style differs markedly from that of 1 Peter. Second, because 2 Peter is obviously a later work (see Date below) and incorporates Jude in abstract, it is possible that a trusted coworker (e.g., John Mark) put together Peter's final concerns, incorporating an abstract of Jude's epistle after Peter's death. Thus, 2 Peter is the final words of Peter, a type of posthumous testament directing the church in the postapostolic age. It is also possible that Peter was the author behind this work, but not the writer, as was suggested in the section on "Author" for the First Epistle. As such, the epistle could have been prepared by someone other than Silas (as was done for Peter's first epistle) and therefore would explain the difference in style between the two epistles. Furthermore, the actual written document may have been published posthumously.

Date, Origin, Destination

Tradition tells us that Peter was martyred about AD 64 in Rome. If that is so, this work was probably written in Rome before AD 70 (before his last teaching was forgotten) and after AD 60 (the earliest date when Peter might have known Paul's letters). Furthermore, it was written after Jude, for 2 Peter 2 incorporates a shortened form of Jude. The Roman place of origin also accounts for 1 Clement's apparent knowledge of 2 Peter in AD 96, the earliest use of the letter. If 3:1 refers to the same churches mentioned in 1 Peter, then the letter is destined for northeastern Asia Minor. The group of churches includes some to which Paul wrote letters (3:15). But the churches could just as well be all the churches, to whom Peter was sending a general message.

Background

In a context of many attractive libertine cults, the church was constantly in danger from teachers promoting immorality. Corinth certainly had similar problems, and Romans 6 may show that Paul was aware of a like misuse of his teaching that had reached Rome. Paul's declaration that Christians are free from the law (see Gal 3–5) always carried the danger that instead of yielding to the Spirit, people would yield to their fallen desires, ignoring Paul's warning that those who did such things would not inherit the kingdom of God. This tendency in the early church seems to lie behind 2 Peter.

Purpose and Theological Teaching

As 1:12–15 makes clear, the letter is a testament, a final reminder of truth written in the face of the divisions caused by false teachers. It is one final attempt to stabilize the church.

Three main theological themes stand out: (1) a call to Christian virtue and faithfulness and to the apostolic tradition on which the church had been founded; (2) a basing of this call on the exalted status of Jesus Christ and his return in judgment, making all other goals of life irrelevant; and (3) an apocalyptic denunciation of those who had compromised with the world and were therefore living with a sub-Christian ethic.

Content

Greeting (1:1–2)

The greeting stresses the authority both of Peter and of his teaching by using the title "apostle," and solidarity with his readers by including the word "servant" and mentioning "a faith of equal standing" with respect to the readers.

Call to Virtue (1:3–21)

God has already acted to call Christians to himself. He has, by sovereign grace, given them all that is needed to truly live in a godly manner. And he has set fantastic promises before them. They must not allow themselves to be caught again in the moral morass of the world, for it was God's purpose in saving them to enable them to escape from this trap. Instead, they should become like Christ ("participate in the divine nature") and must therefore grow in Christian virtue. If they fail in this growth, they miss God's promises, but zealousness to move forward will confirm their election and their future in heaven (1:3–11).

Since Peter was about to die, as Jesus predicted (cf. Jn 21:18–19), he wanted to give his readers a final word of encouragement. Peter's encouragement was important for two reasons. First, he was truly an eyewitness of Christ's glory (i.e., the Transfiguration, an event that must have deeply impressed Peter, but is cited here because it revealed the glory, power, and authority of Jesus and bound the OT and NT together). Unlike the false teachers, his tradition is based on what God really did, not on mere speculation. Second, his experience confirms OT prophecy. Like Peter and his followers in the apostolic tradition, the OT prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Spirit alone gives the true interpretation, and the idiosyncratic interpretations of the false teachers are therefore wrong (2 Pt 1:12–21).

Denunciation of False Teachers (2:1–22)

Christians need to be encouraged to stand firm in virtue because there have always been false teachers in the church who twist the OT Scriptures to support their own behavior. One cannot be sure exactly who these teachers were, but some of their actions are clear. First, they were libertine in their morals, probably twisting Paul's teaching on freedom from the law to support their actions (cf. 3:15; 1 Cor 6:12–20 shows a similar problem in Corinth). Second, they were forming groups loyal to themselves, exploiting these people and leading them into sin (cf. 1 Cor 1–3 for another example of building splinter groups). Third, they were teaching about angelic and demonic powers, some of which they were cursing, which revealed a general disrespect for authority (2 Pt 2:10; cf. Col 2:8). Fourth, while ultimately sectarian, they were still celebrating the Lord's Supper (which at that time was still a common meal, as it would be for another century) with the church and thus defiling the whole celebration (2 Pt 2:13).

Peter's great concern is that these people are sectarian. ("Destructive heresies" refers to groups split from the church, not to doctrinal differences, which is the meaning "heresy" took centuries later.) These teachers formed groups marked by their immoral behavior. They denied the authority of Christ, even though he once bought them out of sin. They denied Christ by rejecting his clear teaching against greed and immorality, and led others in their wake, making the whole Christian faith disreputable before the world. Their motivation was greed, and their predicted destiny was judgment, although it might not be apparent to those unfamiliar with the Scriptures.

This judgment is sure, as OT examples of the judgment of immoral persons (along with the salvation of the righteous) show: for example, of angels (Gn 6:1–4), of the people of Noah's day (vv 5–22), and of Sodom (chs 18–19). In each case God delivered the few righteous individuals, even though he severely judged the evil majority; this encouraged the readers to be righteous like Noah and Lot. Furthermore, the readers might identify with Lot in their own distress at the immorality going on in their church (2 Pt 2:4–10; cf. Jude 1:6–7).

Like those judged in the OT, these false teachers were both proud and ignorant, cursing spiritual powers they did not really understand (probably demonic powers, for Peter was following Jude, who drew on a tradition from the Assumption of Moses). Even angels, who know far more than these teachers do and are more powerful, are not so disrespectful. Even Satan is to be spoken of with respect, according to Scripture. The teachers were not only proud but were also immoral and greedy, even at the Lord's Table ("reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you," 2 Pt 2:13). They claimed to teach freedom but were themselves ensnared in desire, so their words were empty. Their teaching seemed impressive, but it was all sound and wind. Because they had returned to evil after experiencing freedom from sin in

Peter, the Apostle

Christ, they became worse off than if they had never heard the gospel. They were like dogs (cf. Prv 26:11) or like pigs (2:11–22; cf. Jude 1:8–13).

Warning of Coming Judgment (3:1–16)

Both the OT and Jesus himself speak of coming judgment. The false teachers may scoff at the idea, but the story of Noah shows that God does eventually judge. God judged the world in Genesis by water (the very water from which he once separated land in Gn 1); he will judge again, but this time by fire (2 Pt 3:1–7).

Judgment has not yet fallen, because God is wonderfully patient; time does not have the same meaning for him as for humans. The scoffing of the false teachers simply reveals their ignorance of God. And they also do not know God's motives for his seeming delay—that is, that God wants to forgive people, not condemn them. He takes no pleasure in sending people to hell but wills that everyone be saved; not everyone, however, will accept God's offer, and eventually his judgment will come and the universe will be burned. All that is now visible is transitory (3:8–10).

Therefore, Christians ought to live holy lives, preparing for the new and permanent world God has promised them, instead of indulging in the desires of this temporary, perishing world as the false teachers do (3:11–16; cf. Jude 1:20–21).

Closing (3:17–18)

In closing, Peter exhorts Christians to be on guard against false teaching. Instead of copying the life of the false teachers, they are to imitate the life of Jesus. A doxology to Christ ends the letter.

See also Peter, The Apostle.

Peter, the Apostle

One of the 12 disciples; rose to prominence both among the disciples during Jesus' ministry and among the apostles afterwards.

There are actually four forms of Peter's name in the New Testament: the Hebrew translated into Greek, "Simeon" to "Simon," and the Aramaic translated into Greek, "Cephas" to "Petros" (meaning "rock"). His given name was Simeon bar-Jonah (Mt 16:17; cf. Jn 1:42), "Simon the son of John," which was common Semitic nomenclature. It is most likely that "Simon" was not merely the Greek equivalent of "Simeon" but that, having his home in bilingual Galilee, "Simon" was the alternate form he used in dealings with Gentiles. In fact, it was quite common for a cosmopolitan Jew to employ three forms of his name depending on the occasion: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The double name "Simon Peter" (or "Simon called Peter") demonstrates that the second name was a later addition, similar to "Jesus, the Christ." The number of times that the Aramaic equivalent "Cephas" is used (once in John, four times each in Galatians and 1 Corinthians), as well as its translation into the Greek (not common with proper names), indicates the importance of the secondary name. Both Aramaic and Greek forms mean "the rock," an obvious indication of Peter's stature in the early church (see below on Mt 16:18). It is obvious that he was called "Simon" throughout Jesus' ministry but came to be known as "Peter" more and more in the apostolic age.

Preview

- Peter's Background
- Peter's Conversion and Call
- Peter's Place among the Twelve
- Peter the Rock
- Peter the Apostle
- Peter's Future Ministry

Peter's Background

Peter was raised in bilingual Galilee. John 1:44 says that the home of Andrew (his brother) and Peter was Bethsaida, the whereabouts of which is difficult to place archaeologically. The only site about which we know is east of the Jordan in the district called Gaulanitis. Yet John 12:21 places Bethsaida in Galilee; however, it is possible that John is reflecting the popular use of the term "Galilee" rather than the legally correct one. Peter and Andrew had a fishing business centered in Capernaum (Mk 1:21, 29) and perhaps were partners with James and John (Lk 5:10). It is also likely that they intermittently continued in their business while disciples, as indicated in the fishing scene in John 21:1–8.

One difficulty with this is the series of statements saying, "We have left all and followed You" (Mt 19:27; Mk 10:28; Lk 18:28, nkjv). The majority of interpreters have given this an absolute sense of "sold" or "left" their business. However, Luke 18:28 occurs in the context of leaving their homes but obviously is not meant in an absolute sense. It

seems most likely that the disciples did leave the practice of their fishing businesses to follow Christ, but kept the tools of their trade and returned to their trades when necessary.

They certainly did not abandon their families, as evidenced by Peter, who returned to his home at the end of each tour. The New Testament tells us that Peter was married. In Mark 1:29–31 Jesus heals his mother-in-law, who perhaps was living with Peter. In fact, it is possible that his home became Jesus' headquarters in Galilee. (Matthew 8:14 may indicate that Jesus dwelt there.) First Corinthians 9:5 says that Peter, along with the other married apostles, often took his wife with him on his missionary journeys. Later tradition speaks of his children (Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* 2.6.52) and says that Peter was present at the martyrdom of his wife (Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 3.30.2).

Peter's Conversion and Call

Peter's brother, Andrew, was a disciple of John the Baptist, according to John 1:35–40. This follows the witness of John in 1:29–34 and is the second stage of John's discipleship drama in chapter one—i.e., after bearing witness he now sends his own followers to Jesus. Andrew and the unnamed disciple (perhaps Philip as in Jn 1:43 or the "beloved disciple," whom many identify with John himself) then "follow" Jesus (a term used often in John for discipleship). The next day Andrew follows the Baptist's example and finds his brother Simon, saying, "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41, nkjv). Peter's conversion is presupposed in John 1:42, where Simon is brought to Jesus by Andrew and there given a new name.

There are three separate episodes in the Gospels in which Simon is called, and these overlap with three episodes in which he is given the name "Cephas" ("Peter," which means "rock") by Jesus. John locates the event in Judea where John the Baptist was baptizing. The synoptic Gospels have two different scenes. The first call takes place at the Sea of Galilee (Mk 1:16–20; Mt 4:18–22). Jesus is walking along the shore and sees Peter and Andrew along with James and John casting their nets into the sea. At this time he calls them to become "fishers of men." Luke then expands this into a fishing scene (Lk 5:1–11), in which the disciples have fished all night and caught nothing but at the command of Jesus lower their nets and catch an amount of fish so great that the boat starts to sink. The episode concludes exactly like the Markan abbreviated form: Jesus says that from now on they will "catch men," and as a result they leave everything and follow him.

The second synoptic episode involving Peter's call (and his new name) is the official choice of the Twelve upon the mountain (Mk 3:13–19 and parallels); in the list of the names we have "Simon he surnamed Peter." The final occurrence dealing with Peter's new name is found in Matthew 16:17–19, in connection with Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.

It is somewhat difficult to harmonize these episodes properly. Were there three different episodes in which Simon was called (Jn 1:42; Mk 1:20; 3:16) and three separate incidents in which he was given the name Cephas/Peter (Jn 1:42; Mk 3:16; Mt 16:18)? It is attractive to a broad spectrum of academia to assume that one single event, which happened at some indeterminate time toward the beginning of Jesus' ministry, was later expanded into these diverse traditions. However, a closer examination of the Gospel data does not necessitate such a conclusion. John 1:35–42 is not an institutional scene that connotes an official call. Rather, it describes the first encounter with Jesus and realization regarding his significance. The "renaming" is in the future tense and looks to a later event. Moreover, John deliberately omits most of the crisis events in Jesus' life (the baptism, the choice of the Twelve, the Transfiguration, the words of institution at the Last Supper, Gethsemane) and replaces them with highly theological scenes that teach the spiritual significance of the events. This is what he has done here.

The same is true of the first synoptic call, i.e., the fishing scene. Again, there is no hint of official ordination to office here but rather a proleptic or prophetic hint of future ministry. This is especially true of the highly theological scene in Luke, which promises abundant results. Again in all three accounts the future tense is employed: "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew and Mark), "You will catch men" (Luke, nkjv). The call in Mark 1:20 and Matthew 4:21 and their reaction (leaving all behind and following Jesus) is the opening gambit that is finalized in the actual institutional scene in Mark 3:13–19 and parallels. The wording does not indicate that these two episodes are doublets, for the actual appointment of the disciples occurs in the second passage. We must differentiate between the original call to one segment (who became the

Peter, *the Apostle*

so-called "inner circle" of the Twelve) and the final choice of all the disciples.

Peter's Place among the Twelve

The prominence of Simon Peter in the Gospels and Acts cannot be disputed. While some have attempted to attribute this to his leadership role in the later church, there is no basis for that in the text of the NT. From the very beginning Simon attained preeminence above the others. In the lists of the Twelve just mentioned, Simon's name always appears first, and in Matthew 10:2 it introduces his name as "the first." Moreover, the Twelve are often designated "Peter and those with him" (Mk 1:36; Lk 9:32; 8:45, nkjv).

Throughout the accounts Peter acted and spoke on behalf of the other disciples. At the Transfiguration it is Peter who wanted to erect tents (Mk 9:5), and he alone had sufficient faith to attempt walking on the water (Mt 14:28–31). It is Peter who asks the Lord to explain his teaching on forgiveness (Mt 18:21) and parables (Mt 15:15; Lk 12:41) and who speaks the disciples' minds in Matthew 19:27, "Behold, we have left everything and followed you; what's in it for us?" (paraphrased). The collectors of the temple tax come to Peter as leader of the group (Mt 17:24). As a member of the inner circle (with James and John, possibly Andrew in Mk 13:3) he was often alone with Jesus (at the raising of Jairus's daughter, Mk 5:37 and parallels; at the Transfiguration, Mk 9:2 and parallels; at Gethsemane, Mk 14:33 and Mt 26:37). Jesus asks Peter and John to prepare the Passover meal in Luke 22:8, and in Mark 14:37 (and Mt 26:40) he directs his rebuke to Peter as representing the others ("Could ye not watch with me one hour?"). Finally, the message of the angel at the tomb as recorded in Mark 16:7 said, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter." Certainly Peter held a very special place among the Twelve.

This was especially evident in the Caesarea Philippi episode (Mk 8:27–33 and parallels). It was Peter whose confession became the high point of the Gospel accounts, "Thou art the Christ" (Luke adds "of God"; Matthew, "the Son of the living God"). After Jesus then spoke of the suffering of the Son of Man, Peter rebuked him, and in Mark's description Jesus then turned, gazed at all the disciples, and said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (v 33, kjv). This was obviously directed at them all through Peter.

The portrait of Peter that comes through all four accounts pictures him as impulsive, often rash; he is the first to act and speak his mind and was typified by his enthusiasm for everything in which he had a part. At the sight of Jesus walking on the water, Peter asked that the Lord command him to do the same and then immediately leaped out of the boat and began doing just that. At the Transfiguration, while the others were awed into silence by the appearance of Moses and Elijah, Peter the man of action said, "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles" (Mt 17:4, kjv). Mark and Luke both add here that Peter did not know what he was saying. Peter's unguarded and unthinking tendency to protest Jesus' statements is seen not only at Caesarea Philippi but also at the foot-washing scene in John 13:4–11 when he said first, "You shall never ever wash my feet"; and then after Jesus' strong retort, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me," he reversed himself completely, stating, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and head" (13:8–9, nkjv). Finally, in the account of the race to the tomb (Jn 20:2–10), the beloved disciple, reaching the tomb first, paused while Peter immediately and impulsively entered it. Peter was certainly one who "rushed in where angels fear to tread." However, this very trait aligns him with all of us and may be one of the major reasons why he becomes the representative disciple throughout the Gospels.

Peter the Rock

The key to the significance of Simon Peter is obviously the controversial addendum to the Caesarea Philippi episode, found only in Matthew 16:17–19, Jesus' testimonial to Peter. There are several crucial aspects of this saying. The most important for this study is verse 18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (kjv). There have been many interpretations of this down through history: (1) It refers to Peter as the "rock" or first bishop of the church. This was the Roman Catholic interpretation from the third century on and was employed as a prooftext for apostolic succession, but it is not hinted at anywhere in the context or even in the epistles: it was not a first-century concept. (2) The majority of Protestants since the Reformation have taken this to be a reference to Peter's statement of faith rather than to Peter himself; but this neglects the wordplay, which is even more pronounced in Aramaic, which has only one form for "Cephas" (rock). (3) An alternative has been to take "this rock" as a reference to Jesus

Peter, *the Apostle*

himself, but that is fanciful and is hardly in the context. In conclusion, "this rock" is almost certainly a reference to Peter, but it must be understood in two ways. First, Peter was to become the foundation upon which Christ would build his church, a position clearly attested to in Acts. This does not mean that Peter had an authority above the other apostles. Paul's rebuke of Peter in Galatians 2:11–14 demonstrates that he was not above them, and at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 it is James who has the position of leadership. Second, Peter is seen here not merely as an individual but as the representative of the disciples. This view is coming to increasing prominence today. It recognized the Jewish concept of "corporate identity" in which the leader was identified with the corporate body (e.g., the king or high priest representing the nation before God). This concept is also in keeping with Matthew 18:18–20, which passes on the same authority to the church as is here given to Peter. In this view Peter as the rock becomes the first of the building blocks upon which Christ, the chief cornerstone (to continue the metaphor), will build his church (see Eph 2:19–20).

Two other aspects are worthy of note here. First, verse 18 says, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The "gates of hell" is a common Jewish euphemism for death's inevitable and irrevocable power. Jesus is saying that Satan will not be triumphant over the church, and his sphere of operations, death, will be defeated (cf. 1 Cor 15:26, 54–55). The church would undergo persecution and martyrdom, but the church would be triumphant.

Second, verse 19 promises, "I will give unto thee [singular] the keys of the kingdom," another statement used of apostolic succession by the medieval church. Again, this must be understood in light of corporate identity; Peter, as the preeminent figure in the early church, here embodies the community in his leadership. The "keys of the kingdom" are in direct contrast to the "gates of hell" (cf. Rv 1:18, "the keys of hell and death" and Rv 3:7, the "key of David"), and this follows the imagery of the building seen in the rock upon which Christ will build his church. Here Peter is given the keys that will unlock the power of the kingdom in building God's community, the church. The future tense ("will give") undoubtedly points to the postresurrection period, when that power was unleashed and the church erected.

Peter the Apostle

Two events led to the new Peter who fills the pages of Acts: his reinstatement described in John 21:15–17 and the resurrection appearance of the Lord, which is never described but alluded to in Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5. His denial was certainly proof that he was not yet able to assume his predicted position as the rock of the church. Both Luke and Paul seem to state that the risen Lord appeared to Simon Peter before the others, which would be fitting in light of his preeminence in the early church. During the Palestinian era, the fifteen-year period prior to the Gentile mission, Peter was the leading figure. The others mentioned in Acts 1–12 are all secondary to Peter, the dominant director of church policy. These include John, who is with Peter in the temple (3:1), the prison (4:13), and Samaria (8:14); Stephen, who was one of the Seven and whose revolutionary preaching led to his martyrdom (chs 6–7); Philip, another of the Seven who proclaimed the gospel in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch (ch 8); Barnabas, who set an example of communal sharing (4:36–37) and was an official delegate to Antioch (11:20–30); Paul, a miraculous convert and witness (9:1–30; 11:25–30; 12:25); and James, who became the first apostolic martyr (12:2). It is Peter who proposes the choice of the 12th disciple (1:15–17), who proclaims the gospel at Pentecost (2:14–40), who utters the healing word (3:6), and who defends the gospel before the Sanhedrin (4:8–12, 19–20; 5:29–32). The episode regarding Ananias and Sapphira is particularly poignant, for here Peter functions as the avenging messenger of God; nowhere is his authority more evident. We would also note his authority in the scene at Samaria concerning the attempt of Simon the Sorcerer to buy the charismatic power (8:18–24). Again, it is Peter whose influence commands the situation. In these two incidents we certainly see the "binding and loosing" jurisdiction (cf. Mt 16:19) exhibited in Peter.

Yet Peter and the church still came under the strictures of their Jewish heritage. The evidence points to a Jewish proselyte self-consciousness on the part of the early church. They viewed themselves as the righteous remnant, living in the age of Messianic fulfillment, but still interpreted themselves in a Jewish sense and conducted their evangelism in the proselyte form of Jewish particularism (i.e., Gentiles could only be converted through Judaism). Two events altered this. First, the Hellenistic Jewish branch of the church rebelled against the Hebrew Christians, which resulted in

Peter, the Apostle

the appointment of the seven deacons and a change in the orthodox policy of the Palestinian church. Second, this then led to a new preaching ministry, first by Stephen, whose insights ended in his martyrdom and the dispersal of the Hellenistic branch in chapter 8; then by Philip and others, who extended the gospel even further, to the Samaritans and God-fearers. As a further result, Peter and John came to Samaria (8:14), the next significant step toward the Gentile mission. Thus ended the centrality of Jerusalem in the unfolding story.

The two miracles of Peter, at Lydda (the paralytic) and Joppa (raising the dead woman) in Acts 9:32–42, are probably intended to parallel similar miracles of Jesus in Luke's first work (Lk 5:18–26; 8:49–56). This is part of a major theme in Acts whereby Jesus' life and ministry are paralleled and continued in the work of the Spirit through the church. Again Peter is seen in a representative role.

The new relationships are extended in two further scenes. First, Peter stays with "Simon, a tanner," in Joppa, an unclean trade; no pious Jew would knowingly have social contact with such a one. Even more important, God teaches Peter through a dream (10:10–16) that the old dichotomy between clean and unclean has been broken. This then leads Peter to the home of an uncircumcised Gentile, the most serious social taboo for the Jew, and subsequent events force Peter to admit Gentiles into the church without the necessity of Jewish proselyte requirements. The serious consequences of this are seen in the debate that ensued in Jerusalem (Acts 11:2–3) and later at the council (Acts 15:1–21). The centrality of this event is demonstrated in the extent to which Luke reproduces Peter's speech, which seems to be a repetition of chapter 10 but is meant to highlight this crucial episode. Often forgotten in the significance of this for the early church is the fact that for Luke the Gentile mission begins with Peter, not Paul. He is the one upon whom the salvific act of God descends; and as the leader of the church, he was the first important witness to it.

The persecution of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1–4) was likely due to the furor caused by this free intercourse with Gentiles; and it ended the period of Peter's leadership in Jerusalem. The Jewish people were greatly offended by the new Christian push; and according to Luke in Acts, the idyllic period of popularity, in which the common people supported the church, effectively ceased at this time. Peter's miraculous release and the dramatic scene at Mary's house typified the special place of Peter, but the momentum shifts. Peter is forced to flee Jerusalem, and in the interim James arises to leadership (Acts 12:17); at the Jerusalem council it is the latter who has the chair and presents the council's decision (Acts 15:6–29).

The exact relationship between Peter and the other disciples, especially with the so-called pillars—James and John—and the apostle Paul, cannot be ascertained. The evidence is too vague. Many have thought that indeed there were no truly universal leaders, for the early church was too diverse. However, that is unlikely, and Luke's portrayal in Acts parallels Paul's statement in Galatians 2:8 that Peter was the apostle par excellence to the "circumcised" and Paul to the "Gentiles." They were the universal leaders, while James became the local leader of the Jerusalem eldership. However, neither Peter nor Paul had dominical status similar to that of later popes (i.e., neither was the absolute spokesman of the church and above criticism). So-called emissaries from James could have such an influence on Peter that he would hypocritically change his behavior before Gentiles (Gal 2:12), and Paul could rebuke Peter publicly for doing so (Gal 2:11–14). Paul never claimed authority over the other disciples and even sought their approval and "the right hands of fellowship" for his ministry to the Gentiles (Gal 2:1–10).

Peter's Future Ministry

We have very little hard evidence for Peter's other movements. It seems as though Peter gradually turned from leadership to missionary work. However, this is an oversimplification. It is most likely that, following the similar pattern of Paul, he combined the two. The presence of a "Cephas party" at Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22) may indicate that Peter had spent some time there. This is made even more likely when Paul uses Peter as the main example for taking one's wife on missionary expeditions (1 Cor 9:5). The "Cephas party" probably consisted of those who were converted under his ministry; it is probable that they were Jewish Christians and opposed the "Paul party" on Jewish-Gentile debates reflected elsewhere in 1 Corinthians.

The First Epistle of Peter was sent to churches in northern Asia Minor—the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The problem here is that there is no hint that Peter had been there and no personal notations in the epistle to demonstrate his acquaintance with these

churches. However, it does show that he was very interested in them. In fact, some believe that the reason why Paul was not allowed into this district according to Acts 16:7–8 was that Peter was already ministering there. In short, the question of Peter's involvement in Asia Minor must remain an open one.

There is no final NT evidence that Peter went to Rome. First Peter 5:13 says that the epistle was sent from "Babylon," and it is doubtful that this was the literal Babylon, because there is no tradition that Peter ever went there, and Babylon was sparsely populated back then. It is probably a cryptic symbol for Rome, the "Babylon of the West." It is most likely that the "Babylon" of Revelation 14:8 and 16:19 is also a symbol of Rome. This would fit the strong tradition in the early church that indeed Peter did minister there.

There are four early external witnesses concerning Peter's death. John 21:18 mentions only the martyrdom of Peter but does not give any hint as to the place. First Clement was written at the end of the first century and reports the martyrdom of Peter and Paul among others. While 1 Clement 5:4 testifies only to the fact and not the place of Peter's martyrdom, a study of two aspects favors Rome—the reference to a "great multitude" of martyrdoms, which best fits the Neronian persecution, and the phrase "glorious example among us," which shows that the people of Clement's own church (Rome) were involved. Ignatius's letter to the Romans (4:3) also testifies generally to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, and again the context favors Rome as the place. He says, "I did not command you as did Peter and Paul," which shows that they had ministries in Rome. The Ascension of Isaiah 4:2–3, a Jewish Christian work of the same period, speaks of Beliar (probably Nero) who martyrs "one of the Twelve," almost certainly Peter. Therefore the earliest evidence does not explicitly point to Rome as the place of Peter's death, but that is the most likely hypothesis.

Definite statements to that effect appear toward the end of the second century. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in a letter dated c. 170 (preserved in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.8) says that Peter and Paul taught together in Italy. At the end of that century Irenaeus says (in *Against Heresies* 2.1–3) that Peter and Paul preached in Rome, and Tertullian in the same general period adds that Peter was martyred "like . . . the Lord" (*Scorpiace* 15). Clement of Alexandria and Origen both allude to Peter's presence in Rome, and the latter adds the belief that he was "crucified head-downwards" (Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 2.15.2; 3.1.2). The tradition that Peter was crucified may be supported in John 21:18: "when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall . . . carry thee wither thou wouldest not" (kjv).

The fact that Paul's Epistle to the Romans (c. 55–57) does not mention Peter tells us that he could not have gone there earlier than that. If 1 Peter was written during the Neronian persecution, as those who hold to Petrine authorship believe, he must have gone there sometime in the late 50s or early 60s. Of course, the extent of his ministry in Rome also cannot be known. Some indeed have posited that he had little or no extensive stay in Rome. The facts, as they can be recovered, point to certain tentative conclusions. Peter did have some type of ministry in Rome, though the extent of it cannot be known. However, it is doubtful, in light of the early testimony to his preaching ministry there, that he was merely passing through Rome when caught in Nero's pogrom. Therefore he most likely spent the last years of his ministry in Rome and there suffered martyrdom under Nero, perhaps by crucifixion.

Simon Peter, along with Paul, was the leading figure in the early church. His impact has been tragically dimmed by the acrimonious debates of Roman Catholic– Protestant circles, but the biblical evidence is clear. He was the leading disciple of Jesus and indeed the "rock" who provided the foundation for the church. As the representative disciple, his enthusiasm and even his weaknesses have made him the supreme example of the developing disciple, one who, through the power of the risen Lord, rose above his faults to become a towering figure on the church scene.

Peter's Letter to Philip

Peter's Letter to Philip is part of the Christian Gnostic texts found in 1947 at Nag Hammadi. It probably dates from the late second or early third century. The letter's name comes from a beginning section where the apostle Peter says he sent the letter to the apostle Philip.

The letter is written in the form of a dialogue, a style common in Gnostic literature. The main part of the writing is a series of questions from the apostles to the risen Lord and his answers. These questions are used as a way to teach Gnostic beliefs about the world's structure, revealed by the

"Divine Light." This "Light" is Christ, the heavenly redeemer.

See also Apocrypha; Peter, the Apostle; Philip.

Pethahiah

1. Levite and ancestor of one of the postexilic priestly families (1 Chr 24:16).

2. Levite who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile (Ezr 10:23).

3. Levite who assisted Ezra at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh 9:5).

4. Meshezabel's son from Judah's tribe, who served as an adviser to the Persian king (Neh 11:24).

Pethor

The hometown of Balaam (Numbers 22:5). Pethor is in Upper Mesopotamia where the Sajur and the Euphrates rivers join. Deuteronomy 23:4 says that Balaam, the son of Beor, came from Pethor of Mesopotamia.

The inscriptions of King Shalmaneser III, who ruled from 859–824 BC, identify Pethor with *Pi-it/ti-ru* as a site on the Sajur River. The Hittite inscriptions (Syrians or Arameans) knew the city as Pethor. The area was first ruled by the Assyrians, and then later by the Arameans. Later, Shalmaneser recaptured it and resettled it with Assyrians.

Pethuel

The father of the prophet Joel (Joel 1:1).

Petra

The capital of the Nabateans, who first appeared in history in 312 BC. The Nabateans were of Arabic origin, though their ancestry is uncertain. They occupied the old land of Edom and made Petra their capital. Petra lay in an impressive valley about 1,000 yards (914.4 meters) wide among the mountains of western Edom. It was approximately 60 miles (96.5 kilometers) north of Aqaba. The only access to the valley is through a narrow gorge called the Siq. On all sides, massive cliffs of reddish sandstone arise.

Today, ruins remain of many temples, houses, tombs, and other structures hewn out of reddish sandstone. A Roman basilica (used for meetings and business) and theater (where people watched plays and other performances) are still visible. The place was occupied during Roman times. It later had a Christian church and a bishop. Petra was abandoned and its buildings started to fall apart during the days of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century AD.

See also Nabataeans, Nabateans.

Peullethai, Peulthai

Obed-edom's son, who was a Levite gatekeeper in the sanctuary during David's reign (1 Chr 26:5).

Phalec

The King James Version spelling of Peleg, a descendant of Shem and an ancestor of Jesus, in Luke 3:35.

See Peleg.

Phallu

The King James Version spelling of Pallu, the second son of Reuben (Genesis 46:9).

See Pallu, Palluite.

Phalti

KJV spelling of Palti, Laish's son, in 1 Samuel 25:44. *See* Palti #2.

Phaltiel

An alternate spelling used in the King James Version for the name Paltiel. This refers to the son of Laish mentioned in 2 Samuel 3:15. Phaltiel is another name for Palti.

See Palti #2.

Phanuel

The father of Anna. the prophetess. Anna was a prophetess who thanked God and spoke about Jesus when he was brought to the temple as a baby (Luke 2:36).

Pharaoh

A pharaoh was the ruler over Egypt, also known as "the King of Upper and Lower Egypt." He lived in a palace called the “great house,” which was the symbol of his authority. The Egyptian word for the palace was applied to the kings themselves during the New Kingdom, a period from about 1550 to 1070 BC. As king, the pharaoh represented the rule of the gods over Egypt. During the 18th and 19th dynasties, people often used the term "pharaoh" without giving the actual name of the ruler.

The Title of Pharaoh

The title of pharaoh was not an official title. It was a common way to refer to the king. In the Old Testament, this title was used for rulers who lived in different time periods. They belonged to various royal families called dynasties. Using just the royal title without the name was enough for people who lived during that time or who knew the pharaoh. Today, it is often hard to know exactly which pharaoh ruled at any given time.

In the Old Testament, the title pharaoh appears:

- by itself (Genesis 12:15),
- with the additional description “king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:8), and
- sometimes with the name of the pharaoh, such as Neco (2 Kings 23:29).

The Role and Authority of the Pharaoh

The pharaoh was seen as a representative of the gods Ra and Amon on earth. These rulers maintained the divine order in Egypt and supported the temples. The pharaoh's position as both civil and religious leader gave him special authority. Unlike kings in neighboring nations, the Egyptian king's power was not easily threatened by rebellion.

Pharaohs During the Patriarchal Period and the Exodus

It is hard to identify which pharaohs ruled during the time of the patriarchs. Abraham and Joseph dealt with the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom and the second intermediate period. Also, the name of the pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites and ruled during the exodus is not clear. Those who favor an early exodus date think Thutmose III is the pharaoh who began the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1:8). In this view Amenhotep II, who ruled after Thutmose's death in 1440 BC, is the pharaoh of the exodus (Exodus 2:23).

Another view is that the oppression began under the 18th dynasty and lasted until the 19th dynasty. In this view, Ramses II is the pharaoh of the exodus, who would have ruled around 1290 BC.

Pharaohs During Israel's United Kingdom

During Israel's united kingdom, Israel’s position as a powerful kingdom grew. David subdued the nations on Israel’s border zones. During the time that Joab took Edom, an Edomite prince named Hadad, fled to Egypt to find protection at pharaoh’s court. The 21st dynasty ruled Egypt during David's time. Pharaoh Siamun may have welcomed Hadad as a weapon against Israel's growing power (1 Kings 11:14–22). Pharaoh Siamun may also be the pharaoh who invaded the Philistines. He conquered Gezer to give it to Solomon as a dowry at the marriage of his daughter to him (1 Kings 3:1–2). When Israel's unity collapsed, Pharaoh Shishak (Shishong I) of the 22d dynasty campaigned against Judah and Israel. He took much booty with him (1 Kings 14:25–26).

Later Pharaohs and Prophecy

Pharaoh Neco defeated the Judean forces at Megiddo, killing King Josiah in action (2 Kings 23:29). Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, hoped that Egypt would help him. This is when Pharaoh Hophra of the 26th dynasty ruled. The prophet Ezekiel spoke harshly against the king of Egypt: "This is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt… Egypt will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the nations. For I will diminish Egypt so that it will never again rule over the nations." (Ezekiel 29:3, 15). Under Persian rule, the power of the Pharaohs grew weaker, fulfilling what the prophets had said.

See also Egypt, Egyptian.

Pharaoh Hophra

Fourth king of the 26th dynasty (Egypt), he ruled 589–570 BC (Jer 44:30). *See* Hophra.

Pharaoh Necho, Pharaoh Nechoh, Pharaoh Neco, Pharaoh Necoh

Alternate names for Neco, pharaoh of the 26th dynasty (Egypt), who ruled 609–594 BC (2 Kgs 23:29). *See* Necho, Nechoh, Neco, Necoh.

Pharaoh's Daughter

1. An Egyptian princess who rescued the infant Moses and adopted him as her own son (Exodus 2:5–10; Acts 7:21; Hebrews 11:24). If we accept an early date for the exodus (when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt), this foster mother of Moses could have been Hatshepsut. Some scholars who accept a later date for the exodus believe the pharaoh of the oppression was Ramses II. If so, this princess may have been the daughter of Seti I or a later 18th dynasty pharaoh. She was likely born to a concubine from a royal harem near the region of Goshen.
2. An Egyptian princess, one of the two wives of Mered (a descendant of Caleb) who gave birth to three children (1 Chronicles 4:17). Her name, Bithiah (meaning "daughter of the Lord"), implies that she was converted to the worship of Israel's God. It is not known which pharaoh was her father.
3. A princess whom Solomon married to form an alliance with Egypt. Her father was probably Siamun, who ruled from 978 to 959 BC. He gave to Solomon the town of Gezer as a marriage gift (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 11:1). Solomon built her a palace in Jerusalem because he would not have her live in David's house (1 Kings 7:8; 9:24; 2 Chronicles 8:11).

Phares, Pharez

KJV forms of Perez, Judah's elder son by Tamar. *See* Perez, Perezite.

Pharisees

Religious sect active in Palestine during the NT period. The Pharisees are consistently depicted in the Gospels as Jesus' antagonists. It is commonly held that the Pharisees represented mainstream Judaism early in the first century and that they were characterized by a variety of morally objectionable features. Accordingly, most Bible dictionaries and similar works of reference depict the Pharisees as greedy, hypocritical, lacking a sense of justice, overly concerned with fulfilling the literal details of the law, and insensitive to the spiritual significance of the OT. These and other characteristics are furthermore viewed as giving shape to Judaism more generally.

There are several problems with this common perception of Pharisaic Judaism. In the first place, the Gospels themselves give some important information that appears inconsistent with this view. Second, the primary documents of rabbinic Judaism (such as the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrashim) are positive and praiseworthy. Third, it has become increasingly clear, especially since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that prior to AD 70 the Pharisees constituted only a small movement in a highly diversified society; whatever their popularity and influence, they can hardly be taken as representative of Judaism in general.

Origin

The origins of the Pharisees are obscure. According to Jewish tradition, Pharisaic (= rabbinic) Judaism can be traced back to Ezra and the beginnings of the

scribal movement in the fifth century BC. At the opposite extreme, a few scholars argue that, since there are no explicit references to the Pharisees in historical documents prior to the second century BC, Pharisaism appeared suddenly after the Maccabean revolt (167 BC). Many specialists take the position that perhaps as early as the third century BC one can find evidence of an incipient form of Pharisaism (as in The Wisdom of Joshua [Jesus] ben Sirach, also known as Ecclesiasticus). It may well be, moreover, that the intellectual pursuits associated with the work of the scribes did have something to do with the development of the Pharisees. It is also probable that prior to the Maccabean revolt some distinctive Pharisaic concerns appeared in connection with the development of the Hasidim ("the faithful ones"—traditionalists who opposed Greek influence in Jewish society).

According to a popular and reasonable interpretation, the Hasidim became disillusioned with the Maccabean rulers, whose conduct violated Jewish sensibilities in several respects. Some of the Hasidim separated themselves from the nation and developed into nonconformist sects, such as that of the Essenes. Those who remained tried to exert their influence on Jewish life and developed into the sect of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees no doubt played a significant role in Jewish affairs during the next century, even though at times they had little political clout. By NT times, they were widely recognized as religious leaders. Josephus, who tells us that he belonged to this sect, wrote toward the end of the first century AD that the Pharisees were "extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practicing the highest ideal both in their way of living and in their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees" (*Antiquities* 18.15). We cannot determine whether this description applies to the period before AD 70, but the evidence of the Gospels themselves confirms it to some extent. For example, the parable of the publican and the Pharisee (Lk 18:9–14), while it condemns the Pharisee, makes sense only if we appreciate the role reversal it announces: the wicked publican, not the one generally regarded as righteous, goes home justified.

Basic Characteristics

It is not possible to give an accurate characterization of the Pharisees, since scholars disagree sharply concerning their fundamental distinctiveness. Some stress the notion of "separateness," partly on the basis of the supposed etymology of the name (from Hebrew parush, "separated one," though other suggestions have been made). A more carefully nuanced viewpoint calls attention to the Pharisees' concern with ritual purity (cf. Mk 7:1–4). Some of the evidence indicates that the Pharisees wished to apply the priestly rituals to the people generally (this factor may help to explain the relative ease with which the Pharisees adapted to the absence of the temple and its sacrifices after AD 70). Still another position sees the Pharisees as the scholar class. The close connection between them and the scribes (experts in the law) gives credence to this view, as does the fact that much of the later rabbinic literature reflects an intellectual pursuit, particularly in its detailed logical argumentations regarding the meaning and application of the Torah.

These various approaches are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, there appears to be widespread agreement about one theological conviction that was foundational to Pharisaism, namely, their commitment to the notion of a twofold law: the written Torah (the OT, principally the Pentateuch) and the oral Torah (the traditions handed down through many generations of rabbis). This is certainly one feature that distinguished them from the Sadducees (cf. Josephus's *Antiquities* 13.297–98). The latter accepted only the authority of the books of Moses and argued strongly that the importance that the Pharisees attached to oral traditions represented an unjustifiable innovation. These traditions, which sought to regulate the lives of the people before God, became more and more detailed over the course of time and were eventually brought together and written down as a single document, the Mishnah (dated c. AD 210). Somewhere in its development the view arose that the oral law itself had been given by God to Moses and thus shared divine authority with the Scriptures.

A careful look at the NT helps in understanding that this feature more than anything else explains the nature of the conflict between the Pharisaic viewpoint and the message of the gospel. The apostle Paul, for example, stresses the distinctiveness of his apostolic preaching by contrasting it to "the traditions of the fathers,"

which he zealously pursued in his youth (Gal 1:14). Especially instructive is the key passage in Mark 7, where it is written that the Pharisees complained to Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" (v 5, niv). Christ's reply counters their criticism with a serious indictment: "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. . . . Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down" (vv 8, 13 ; cf. Mt 15:1–6).

The importance the Pharisees attributed to their interpretations of the law compromised the authority of God's own revelation. To make matters worse, the genius of those interpretations was to distort the doctrine of grace by relaxing the divine standards. The very example used by Jesus in Mark 7:10–12 indicates that a rabbinic regulation—the Corban—made it possible for people to ignore the fifth commandment and feel justified in so doing.

The Pharisaic regulations were numerous and aggravating, but at least they could be fulfilled. Those who followed scrupulously the rabbinic traditions were in danger of concluding that their conduct satisfied God's demands (cf. Paul's description of his own preconversion attitude, Phil 3:6). And a muted sense of one's sin goes hand in hand with a false sense of spiritual security; the need to depend on God's mercy no longer appears crucial. This is, of course, the point of the parable of the publican and the Pharisee (Lk 18:9–14). In contrast, Jesus calls for a much higher righteousness than that of the Pharisees: "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt 5:48; cf. v 20).

See also Essenes; Jew; Judaism; Sadducees; Talmud; Torah; Tradition; Tradition, Oral.

Pharosh

KJV spelling of Parosh, the ancestor of a postexilic family, in Ezra 8:3. *See* Parosh.

Pharpar

One of two rivers named by Naaman as in or near Damascus (2 Kgs 5:12). Its exact identity is uncertain. One tradition identifies it with the Taura, one of seven waterways branching off the Barada River, which flows through Damascus. Another identifies it with the Awaj, a river originating in the eastern foothills of Mt Hermon and flowing south of Damascus. In its early going, its course is steep and swift. The Awaj swells during the spring because of the melting of the snows on Mt Hermon, and subsides as the heat of the summer sets in. The river accounts for the good productivity of the southern Damascan plain and flows much more rapidly than the sluggish Jordan.

Pharzite

The King James Version form of Perezite. A Perezite is any member of the family of Perez (Numbers 26:20).

See Perez, Perezite.

Phaseah

KJV spelling of Paseah, the head of a family of temple servants, in Nehemiah 7:51. *See* Paseah #2.

Phasiron

Victims of a raid by Jonathan (1 Macc 9:66). The tribe, situated near Bethbasi, is otherwise unknown.

Phebe

KJV spelling of Phoebe, a Christian woman, in Romans 16:1. *See* Phoebe.

Phenice

1. The King James Version form of Phoenicia. Phoenicia was a region on the eastern Mediterranean coast north of Palestine (Acts 11:19 and 15:3). This region was known for its trading cities and seafaring people. *See* Phoenicia, Phoenicians.
2. The King James Version form of Phoenix. Phoenix was a harbor along the southern coastline of Crete (Acts 27:12). *See* Phoenix.

Phenicia

The King James Version spelling of Phoenicia in Acts 21:2. This refers to an ancient region along the Mediterranean coast in what is now Lebanon and parts of Syria.

See Phoenicia, Phoenicians.

Phichol, Phicol

The leader of Abimelech's army. He was present when Abimelech made peace agreements with Abraham and later with Isaac (Genesis 21:22, 32; 26:26). The presence of an army commander should have indicated that Abraham was vulnerable. But, the enemies acknowledged the superior power of the God of Abraham. So, they sought to live with him in peace.

Philadelphia

1. City of the Decapolis, not specifically mentioned in any NT writing. It was located on the plateau about 25 miles (40.2 kilometers) east of the Jordan River. In 63 BC Palestine came under Roman domination. Pompey, the Roman general who conquered the region, reorganized the territory. He established a league of 10 self-governing cities or city-states. Most of these were located on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Philadelphia was the southernmost, and Damascus the northernmost, of the 10. In the Gospels this territory is referred to as the Decapolis.

See also Decapolis.

2. City in western Asia Minor. It was one of the seven Asian cities to which the author of the book of Revelation addressed letters, mentioned in 1:11 and 3:7–13.

This city was founded about 140 BC by Attalus II of the city of Pergamum. Attalus II was also known as "Philadelphus"; the name of the city was derived from this royal nickname. He intended that it would serve as a center for the spread of Greek culture throughout the region, especially to the people of Phrygia. Situated on a fertile plain, it was rich with vineyards and wine production. Asian Philadelphia was heavily damaged by an earthquake in the year AD 17. For the purpose of rebuilding, it was granted disaster aid by the Roman emperor Tiberius.

When John wrote from Patmos near the end of the first century, the churches of western Asia were undergoing persecution. The church in Philadelphia was one of them. This church was enduring the persecution faithfully, and the letter to it (Rv 3:7–13) contains no words of reproach or warning. Instead, Jesus gave them encouragement and precious promises.

Some years later, the Christian bishop and martyr Ignatius of Antioch also wrote a letter to the church in Philadelphia. He expressed appreciation for his recent visit with them, and encouraged them in Christian unity.

Philemon (Person)

Philemon was a Christian known only from the letter the apostle Paul wrote to him. The New Testament does not mention him anywhere else.

Colossians 4:17 lists Archippus, a man of Colossae, along with Philemon in Philemon 1:2. Archippus may have been the son of Philemon. Although Paul had never visited Colossae, it is clear he knew Philemon well (Colossians 2:1). Paul called him "our beloved co-worker" (Philemon 1:1). Perhaps Philemon had worked with Paul during Paul's three-year mission in Ephesus (Acts 19:8–10; 20:31).

Paul knew he could appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, who was Philemon's runaway slave. The letter to Philemon focuses on Paul's request that Philemon accept Onesimus back, not just as a slave, but as a Christian brother.

See also Philemon, Letter to.

Philetus

A false teacher who worked with Hymenaeus. They taught people wrong ideas about the resurrection of believers. They believed this rising from death had already happened (2 Timothy 2:17; compare verse 11).

See also Hymenaeus.

Philip

1. An apostle of Jesus. Philip's name is fifth in each of the lists of the twelve after the two pairs of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, and James and John (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14). John the apostle writes that when John the Baptist spoke about Jesus, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" two of his disciples began to follow Jesus. One of these two was Andrew, who then declared to his brother Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah," and brought him to Jesus. (The other unnamed disciple was quite probably John himself, the writer of this account.)
On the next day Jesus went to Galilee and there found Philip and called him: "Follow me." John adds that Philip was from Bethsaida. Philip in turn found Nathanael and told him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." Philip invited Nathanael, who had doubts that any good could come out of Nazareth, to come and see for himself (John 1:35–51). This story shows that Philip was one of the first to follow Jesus and that he quickly began to tell others to do the same.
Like the other apostles, Philip still had much to learn about the person and the power of Christ. When Jesus fed the 5,000, Jesus asked Philip a question to test him: "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" Confused, Philip replied that even 200 denarii (a large sum, roughly half a year's wages) would not buy a small portion of bread for each person (John 6:5–7). The miracle that followed taught him the Lord of all creation was able to feed a large crowd of people.
Philip's next appearance is in Jerusalem after Christ's triumphal entry into the city. "Some Greeks" (Greek-speaking non-Jews) approached him with the request "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip told

Andrew, and together they bring them to Jesus (12:20–22). This indicates that Philip was a person whom others found easy to approach, and also that he spoke Greek.

On the night before he was arrested, Jesus met with his followers in a room upstairs (the upper room). During this meeting, Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." Jesus used this moment to teach Philip more. Philip was very devoted to God. He may have hoped that Jesus would show him something amazing about God. This was similar to when Moses asked to see God's glory in Exodus 33:18. But Jesus taught him that he himself, the incarnate Son, is the all-sufficient revelation of the Father to humanity (John 14:8–10).

There is a tendency to confuse Philip the apostle with Philip the evangelist (#2 below). It is likely that Philip preached in various areas before he settled in Hierapolis, a city of the Roman province of Asia until his death. Whether he died of natural causes or was martyred (killed for his faith) is unknown.

See also Apostle, Apostleship.

2. A Hellenistic Jew (who spoke Greek and followed Greek customs). He became a follower of Christ. Philip was one of seven men chosen to oversee the ministry of help to the poor widows of the Christian community in Jerusalem.
Including Philip, all of the men had Greek names. One of them, Nicolaus, was a proselyte (not a Jew by birth).
Whether or not they were thought of as deacons in the technical sense is not absolutely clear from the account.
This event has been generally accepted as the creation of a special group of helpers in the church, called deacons (Acts 6:1–7). Of the seven, Stephen and Philip are the only ones of whom we have any further record in the New Testament. They are described as men with good reputations, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom (verse 3).
That Philip became known as "the evangelist" is clear from Acts 21:8.
This title was well deserved.
Jerusalem Christians were scattered when Saul of Tarsus persecuted them.
At the same time, Philip went to Samaria and proclaimed the gospel with such power there that a great number of people joyfully turned to Christ (Acts 8:1–8).
God called Philip to leave Samaria and go to the desert southern part of the country. Philip's ministry was powerful and successful. Because of this, it might seem strange and foolish to leave and go somewhere else. But Philip listened and obeyed God.
In the desert there was no crowd, but one important Ethiopian court official who had visited Jerusalem and was now returning to Africa. Philip realized God had a good reason for sending him there. The Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53, the great gospel chapter of the Old Testament.
Philip gave him the good news that this prophecy was about Jesus Christ.

The Ethiopian believed and was baptized. He went on his way rejoicing (verses 25–40). The conversion of this one person meant Philip was the first to proclaim the gospel to a gentile and that the gospel was taken by the Ethiopian to the continent of Africa.
Jews at that time felt very proud of their own people. They treated the Samaritans as less important. The Samaritans were a mixed group of Jews and non-Jews. Jews also thought non-Jewish people (called gentiles) were not ritually clean. But Philip was different. He happily told both Samaritans and the Ethiopian about Jesus. Philip's actions showed that the good news about Jesus was for everyone, no matter where they came from or what group they belonged to. His work proves that God's love through Jesus is freely offered to all people.
Philip later lived in Caesarea on the coast. He show hospitality to Paul and Luke when they were on the way to Jerusalem at the end of the apostle's third missionary journey. Luke tells us that Philip had four unmarried daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:8–9). Not long after this, when Paul was in custody in Caesarea for two years, the kindness and friendship of Philip must have meant much to him (23:31–35; 24:23, 27).

3. Son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra and half-brother of Antipas, whose mother was Malthace. He is called Herod in Luke 3:1. Antipas was tetrarch (governor) of Perea and Galilee from 4 BC to AD 39. Philip was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (and certain other territories) to the northeast of Galilee for 37 years, from 4 BC to AD 33. His wife was his niece Salome, who danced for Herod in exchange for the head of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3–12; Mark 6:17–29).
   See also Herod, Herodian Family.
4. Son of Herod the Great and Mariamne and husband of Salome's mother, Herodias. Herodias left him to become the mistress of his half-brother Herod Antipas. It was for this immoral relationship that John the Baptist rebuked Herod and was later imprisoned and beheaded (Matthew 14:3–12; Mark 6:17–29; Luke 3:19–20).

Philippi

Minor village of Thrace (known in the ancient world as "The Springs") until about 357 BC, when the father of Alexander the Great, Philip II of Macedon, conquered the site and rebuilt it. He gave the village his name ("Philip's City"), fortified it as a military stronghold in subduing the area, and exploited the nearby gold mines. Two hundred years later, in the Roman era, it became a main city of one of the four Roman districts into which Macedonia was divided. But because it was about 10 miles (16.1 kilometers) inland from the port of Neapolis, its growth was limited. Nearby Amphipolis (southwest) was the center of Roman government.

Philippi gained worldwide fame in 42 BC as the site where the imperial armies of Antony and Octavian defeated the republican generals Brutus and Cassius (the assassins of Julius Caesar). The victory opened the way for the emergence of the Roman Empire under the rule of Octavian (Augustus).

Veterans from the war of 42 BC and other battles commonly settled in Philippi. When Paul came to

the city, it still reflected its Latin military heritage. Situated on the Ignatian Way, it was one stop on that great military highway connecting the Adriatic with the Aegean. It possessed distinct civic pride since it was a Roman colony (enjoying numerous privileges, such as tax exemptions), promoted Latin as its official language, and hosted numerous Roman citizens. Its government was modeled on the municipal constitution of Rome (its leader bearing Roman titles throughout), and the people lived as if they were indeed located in Italy. As Luke records in Acts 16:21, the citizens viewed themselves as Romans.

Paul visited the city on his second missionary tour and years later wrote one letter to the church. The account of Acts gives detailed attention to Paul's visit. The narrative regularly refers to the city's Roman heritage: not only does Paul successfully employ his Roman citizenship in his defense (Acts 16:37), but the city magistrates bear the dignified Latin title *praetor* (given in its Greek translation, *strategos*—verses 20–22, 38—and which English Bibles translate "magistrate"). There appears to have been a small Jewish community here. The church began with believing Jewish women who met outside the city because there was no synagogue. Later, they convened in the home of an important woman convert named Lydia (verses 14–15, 40).

Some have suggested that Luke may have had a special interest in Philippi, demonstrated by his careful attention to the city and by the "we" sections of the book of Acts. The first "we" section (when Luke joins Paul) begins and ends at Philippi (Acts 16:10, 40). This suggests that Luke stayed behind in the city after Paul's departure. Then on the third tour Luke joins Paul again when the apostle passes through Philippi (20:6).

Philippians, Letter to the

One of the letters Paul wrote while in prison.

Preview

Author

Philippians is similar to 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon because Paul shared authorship with Timothy. Timothy's name appears at the start of these letters, but he likely only acted as Paul's secretary.

Date and Origin

Paul wrote from prison (Philippians 1:12–13), but we do not know where he was held. Rome is the most likely location, dating around AD 62. However, some think the journeys mentioned in Philippians 4:14 and 2:25–26 make Rome unlikely. The Philippians heard Paul was in prison and sent a gift with Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus then heard in Rome that the Philippians knew he was ill. Because of this, some suggest Ephesus around AD 55, or Caesarea around AD 58 instead. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:33–35), but the greeting "from the household of Caesar" is hard to explain if written there. Ephesus is close enough to Philippi for frequent communication, but Acts does not record an imprisonment there. We would have to assume Luke's account in Acts 19 is incomplete and that Paul was in protective custody during the riot (see especially Acts 19:30–31). However, such an imprisonment likely would not make Paul wonder if his time "to depart and be with Christ" had come (Philippians 1:23). At the time of writing, he was clearly facing a serious charge.

The traditional location, Rome, seems the most suitable. Paul was imprisoned there for at least two years (Acts 28:30), and it took about three weeks to travel from Rome to Philippi.

Background

Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12), a rare privilege for cities outside Italy. About 90 years before the gospel arrived there in around AD 50, many Roman soldiers settled in the city, expanding it significantly. Their commanding officers facilitated this settlement. As a result, Philippi gained its status as a colony, meaning its citizens were treated as if they lived in Italy, with a fully Roman administration. Paul refers to this status in Philippians 3:20, teaching that Christians are citizens of a heavenly city while living elsewhere. Philippi was a wealthy and bustling place, a major center in Macedonia. It was home to followers of many religions from both the east and west. There was a strong Jewish community and many pagans.

Theological Themes

Paul's imprisonment is central to the letter's message, not just background information. During his imprisonment, he experienced the humility he mentions in Philippians 4:12, using the same word found in 2:8 to describe Christ's self-humbling unto death. The pattern of Jesus's ministry described in the "hymn" of Philippians 2:6–11—humiliation followed by glorification—reflects Paul's life and the vision he shares with the Philippians. Alongside humiliation and suffering, joy is another major theme of the letter. True joy emerges from suffering and self-sacrifice. In fact, Philippians could be called "The Epistle of Joy." Other important themes include the gospel, the Day of the Lord, and a comparison of Paul's Jewish past with his current Christian experience (Philippians 3:4–16), in addition to the famous "hymn" in Philippians 2.

Content

Greeting and Opening Prayer (1:1–11)

In the first paragraph of his letter, Paul introduces the main themes he will focus on. His personal warmth toward the Philippians is clear: "I have you in my heart...I long for all of you" (Philippians 1:7–8). This idea of love and suffering supports the entire letter. It is also notable that the letter starts and ends with the themes of "grace" and "the saints" (Philippians 1:1–2; 4:21–23). The grace of Christ, which reaches out to sinful people and changes them, separating them from the world, is a key focus for Paul. "The saints" are those who, touched by this grace, are transformed in heart and mind, allowing their love to grow in knowledge and insight (Philippians 1:9).

Two important themes appear here. The Greek word *phroneo*, meaning "to think," is used more in Philippians than in any other letter by Paul, appearing nine times compared to seven in Romans. Unfortunately, English translations do not consistently translate it, making it hard for readers to notice its repetition and the focus on using the mind correctly. For Paul, this is crucial: how we think is central to the Christian life. In these opening verses, he makes it clear that the love he feels for the Philippians reflects the Christian way of thinking about them (Philippians 1:7: "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you"). This naturally leads to another focus—growth. The "Christian mind" does not develop overnight. Paul prays that this mind will grow, giving the Philippians discernment that will transform their character and prepare them for "the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10–11; see also 1:6).

In this opening prayer, we see a focus on the gospel and fellowship. Paul thanks the Philippians for their partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5; see also 1:7). He also introduces the important theme of joy (Philippians 1:4). These three elements are crucial to the entire letter.

Paul and His Imprisonment: Christ Exalted (1:12–26)

Paul writes about his situation to highlight the core of his message. When he says, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21), he means more than just spending every moment in fellowship with the Lord and serving him. He also means that he shows Christ through his own life and experiences. Later, he will say, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice" (Philippians 4:9). Few Christian ministers would make such a claim today. Yet Paul believed that, as an apostle of Christ, he had the privilege not only to speak for Christ but also to live out Christ's life in his own actions, even if it meant suffering and humiliation.

There are two main challenges here:

1. It is difficult to understand the situation Paul mentions in Philippians 1:12–18. The church in Rome, if that is his location, was divided about his imprisonment. Some believers were actually glad he was in jail. His imprisonment seemed to motivate them to preach their own version of the gospel. Instead of being upset, Paul was happy. "What then is the issue?" he asks (Philippians 1:8). Whether by friend or foe, Christ was being proclaimed in a new way because of his imprisonment (Philippians 1:14). Paul usually defended the purity of the Word, so these rivals were likely not heretics.

2. The other historical challenge involves Philippians 1:19–26. At first, Paul seems unsure about the outcome of his imprisonment (Philippians 1:19–21). Then, he suggests he can choose between life and death (Philippians 1:22). Finally, he tells the Philippians he is confident he will stay alive (Philippians 1:25). The best explanation is that Paul believed the holy spirit personally assured him that his imprisonment would not lead to his execution.

His attitude about his own death is very moving. He expected rescue, whether through life or death (Philippians 1:19–20), and had strong confidence that dying is "far better" (Philippians 1:23) because it means being "with Christ." This section ends joyfully.

The Life Worthy of the Gospel (1:27–2:18)

This section ends with "joy," just like the last one, and its main message is in the opening call of Philippians 1:27. Paul wanted the Philippians to have no gap between what they say and do, where the gospel they believe is the gospel they live. The section is divided into four parts, titled as follows:

1. Living worthily in a challenging world (Philippians 1:27–30)
2. Living worthily in Christian fellowship (Philippians 2:1–4)
3. The gospel that inspires us (Philippians 2:5–11)
4. Priorities for lives worthy of the gospel (Philippians 2:12–18)

Paul did not want the Philippians to think he was worse off than they were. He wrote, "since you are encountering the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have" (Philippians 1:30). Suffering in a hostile world is part of being a Christian disciple. If we believe in a gospel about someone who, though equal with God, left heaven's glory and faced not just incarnation but also a terrible death (Philippians 2:6–8), then we should see suffering not as a burden but as a privilege. "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29).

Believers need unity to face the world's hostility. They must stand together, fighting for the good news (Philippians 1:27). Believing in one gospel creates a united front against the world, not just a defensive one. The theme of unity continues in Philippians 2, where Paul discusses life within the fellowship (2:1–4). He suggests that external unity is impossible without true unity in love, spirit, and purpose (Philippians 2:2), regardless of their situation. This unity requires tenderness and compassion among them (Philippians 2:1). The progression in Philippians 2:1 peaks with this idea, leading to the famous "hymn" in Philippians 2:6–11. Such tenderness will only thrive if they believe in the gospel celebrated in the hymn.

It is impossible to know if Philippians 2:6–11 was a real hymn sung in early Christian worship. Paul's language has a hymnic quality, but it is not poetic. Many scholars believe Paul did not write these verses himself but quoted a well-known piece of liturgy. What is certain is that his language style changes, and he expresses unique ideas here.

The hymn fits perfectly with its context and is the heart of the entire letter. It shows how imprisonment and deliverance, along with suffering and joy, mirror Jesus's own experiences. Jesus died and rose, was humbled, and then glorified.

Two Worthy Examples and Friends (2:19–30)

Paul writes about his situation and plans, but this section is more than just practical details. He explains why he sent the letter with Epaphroditus instead of Timothy. He uses them as examples of living by the gospel, which he had just discussed. Timothy "genuinely cares about your welfare" (Philippians 2:20) because he seeks Jesus Christ's interests, not his own (2:21). He lives the gospel and is committed to its work (Philippians 2:22). Epaphroditus is similar but in a different way. His connection with Jesus shows in his illness and the pain of being apart from others. Like Jesus, he risked his life (Philippians 2:30) and was restored to life (2:27). Now, he will return to the Philippians, and their shared joy will further demonstrate the gospel.

Pressing Forward and Standing Firm (3:1–4:1)

This section starts and ends with joy (Philippians 3:1; 4:1)—not by accident. The path of the cross that Paul describes is also a path of joy (see Hebrews 12:2). It also begins and ends with the

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phrase “my brothers,” which is intentional. Paul writes about himself, suggesting that his experience is typical. He encourages readers to expect and seek the same pattern in their lives. He wrote, “Join one another in following my example, brothers, and carefully observe those who walk according to the pattern we set for you” (Philippians 3:17). After presenting Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples in Philippians 2:19–30, Paul now uses himself as an example.

The tone changes dramatically in Philippians 3:2 as Paul warns the Philippians about "those dogs," likely the same as those he calls "your enemies" in Philippians 1:28. Earlier, he focused on the Philippians' inner strength against them, without specifying who they were. Now, he examines them closely to show the Philippians that the Christian life requires a complete reversal of their opponents' values.

They were likely Jews, similar to those in Acts 17:5, who opposed Paul's work in Thessalonica. They believed they were God's chosen people, but Paul saw this as relying on human effort (Philippians 3:4). They thought righteousness came from strict obedience to God's law in every aspect of life. However, Paul argued this was seeking personal righteousness (Philippians 3:9), unrelated to the righteousness God offers. Paul passionately insisted that the true way to be God's people is through self-denial. He considered everything he once valued as a Jew to be worthless (Philippians 3:8), a loss for Christ's sake (3:7). The only way to achieve righteousness is through faith in Christ (3:9). Christians must become like Christ in his death to experience the power of his resurrection (3:10). For Paul, dying with Christ meant not only enduring imprisonment and other hardships for Christ but also giving up all the valued aspects of his Jewish heritage.

Thinking, Rejoicing, Sharing (4:2–23)

The tone changes suddenly at both Philippians 4:2 and at 4:10. Some scholars think an editor compiled Philippians from different letters. However, when Paul addresses Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2, he does not change the subject. The connection to the last section is similar to the link between Philippians 1:27–30 and the first paragraph in Philippians 2. How can Christians stand strong against enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18) if they are divided? If there is only one gospel, disharmony among Christians means the gospel is not fully effective. Therefore, Euodia and Syntyche are urged "to agree with each other in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2). They are reminded of their past unity when they worked together for the gospel (Philippians 4:3).

Paul encourages them to agree, but this does not mean they must have the same opinions on everything. It means they should share a common love for Christ and the gospel. In the rest of the letter, Paul explains what this unity means in practice—both what it should mean and what it has meant for the Philippians. Using the mind is important, and in Philippians 4:4–9, Paul describes the Christian life. He emphasizes careful and intelligent prayer (Philippians 4:6–7) and focusing the mind on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable" (Philippians 4:8). This focus will lead to a life filled with peace and joy, no matter the circumstances.

Paul thanks the Philippian church for their unity and support, despite some disharmony. They showed their unity with Paul by sending a gift through Epaphroditus. Paul writes, "you have done well to share in my affliction" (Philippians 4:14). This reminds us of the hymn in Philippians 2:6–11. The gospel tells of the one who came from heaven to bear our burdens, leading to mutual sharing. Paul shows a positive attitude towards his situation: "I know how to be humbled [the same word as in Philippians 2:8] and how to abound" (Philippians 4:12). Being united with Christ, we do not worry about our needs. Instead, we share in whatever challenges or successes he provides, trusting that God will meet all our needs "according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19).

See also Paul, The Apostle; Philippi.

Philistia, Philistines

Small country situated in southwestern Palestine, along the Mediterranean coast (also called “Palestina” in kjv, Ex 15:14; Is 14:29–31); Aegean people who settled on the maritime plain of Canaan.

Preview

- Territory
- The People
- Government
- Religion and Ritual Objects

***Philistia**, Philistines*

• The Philistines and Israel

Territory

Strictly speaking, Philistia is that part of the maritime plain that is called the plain of Philistia, extending from the Wadi el-Arish (River of Egypt) in the south some 70 miles (112.6 kilometers) north to the Nahr el-Aujah, five miles (8 kilometers) north of Joppa. Near Gaza the plain reaches its greatest width, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers). There are sand dunes near the shore, but most of the area is very fertile and produces an abundance of grain (cf. Jgs 15:1–5) and fruit.

The main highway between the East and Egypt lay along the coast. This was of commercial advantage for the Philistines, but it left them open to foreign invasion. God did not lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan by this shortest route through the land of the Philistines, because he did not want them to encounter fierce fighting from the Philistines (or perhaps from an Egyptian garrison stationed there) so soon (Ex 13:17). Apparently, the Philistines had little to fear from the Egyptians, for some scholars think that the Egyptians had a hand in locating the Philistines in Palestine.

From this constricted area the Philistines soon felt a necessity to expand. The passes through the Shephelah provided natural access to the hill country of Israel. They established outposts in Israelite territory, and at the time of the battle in which Saul and his sons were killed, the Philistines exercised control over the city of Beth-shan (1 Sm 31:10).

The People

The Bible states that the Philistines came from Caphtor (Dt 2:23; Jer 47:4; Am 9:7), which is generally regarded as Crete, although some scholars place it in Asia Minor. The attire of the Philistines, as shown at Medinet Habu, is like that of Cretans, especially the headdress. The name of the Cherethites has been equated with Cretans, for the names have the same consonantal base: *c, r,* and *t.* The Cherethites were apparently a Philistine subgroup who lived in the Negev not far from Ziklag, David's home among the Philistines (cf. 1 Sm 30:14). The Cherethites and the Pelethites were among David's bodyguards, along with 600 Gittites (men from Gath) (cf. 2 Sm 15:19; 20:7, 23; 1 Chr 18:17).

The name Philistines is recognizable in several languages. In Hebrew they are known as the Pelishtim, which has been translated into English as Philistines. In the Egyptian sources they are listed among the Sea Peoples and are called the *Peleset* or *Peleste.* They are best known for their part in the invasion of Egypt by the Sea Peoples, who were vanquished by Ramses III in a land and sea battle in the Delta. Detailed scenes of this fighting are shown in deep-sunk relief on the north exterior wall of the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, opposite Luxor. These depictions give some idea of the attire and armament of the Philistines, who are easily identified by their headdress, which was made of feathers (or reeds?).

These people settled along the coast of Palestine after their defeat by Ramses, but it is possible that some stayed in Canaan on their way to Egypt. Possibly an earlier migration to Palestine occurred, perhaps before the time of the patriarchs.

Government

Philistia had no single ruler over their entire land; the cities were independent, so they operated as city-states. The heads of these cities were not called kings but were spoken of in the Bible as "lords" or "rulers" (e.g., 1 Sm 5:11; 6:12; 29:2), and there were five of them, corresponding to the five major cities that comprised the Philistine Pentapolis: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron (1 Sm 6:17; cf. Jer 25:20). The people had a voice in matters that related to them—for example, the return of the ark of the covenant (1 Sm 5:6–12)—but the great decisions were made by majority vote of the five lords. While David and his men were living at Ziklag, for example, the Philistines planned a big military campaign against Israel. David was subject to Achish, king of Gath, who asked David to join forces with the Philistines against Israel. David agreed to this, but when the Philistine lords found that David was present, they complained and voted him out (ch 29).

Religion and Ritual Objects

Whatever gods the Philistines brought with them seem to have been abandoned relatively early in favor of Canaanite deities. A primary Philistine god mentioned in the Bible is Dagon, a grain god. Temples to Dagon have been found at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) and Mari. The Bible refers to a temple of Dagon at Gaza (Jgs 16:23–30) and another at Ashdod (1 Sm 5:1–5).

Philistia, Philistines

The Philistines and Israel

The various forms of "Philistine" and "Philistia" appear almost 300 times in the OT, mostly in the books of Judges and Samuel. The earliest occurrence is in Genesis 10:14, where it is said that the Philistines came from the Casluhim, an unidentified people related to the Caphtorim (cf. 1 Chr 1:12).

Both Abraham and Isaac had contacts with the Philistines at Gerar, in parallel incidents involving their wives (Gn 20; 26). Here, however, the Philistines are not on the coast but at Gerar and as far east as Beersheba (26:33). In both references the king of Gerar is called Abimelech—a good Semitic name. It has been suggested that the Philistines of that time had earlier migrated from Crete, but this has not been demonstrated.

After the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the Philistines began to exercise superiority over the Israelites. An aggressive and militant people, the Philistines had the advantage of superior weapons, for they used iron and exercised a monopoly on iron making in the area. Their control over Israel allowed them to prohibit blacksmithing in Israel, forcing the Israelites to go to the Philistines even for sharpening tools (1 Sm 13:19–22). The Israelites were so poorly armed that only Saul and Jonathan had a sword or a spear (v 22). Facilities for smelting iron have been found at Ashdod, Tell Qasile, Tell Jemmeh, and Tel Mor.

The Medinet Habu reliefs show the Philistines armed with spears and long, straight swords, with large, round shields for protection. They had three-man chariots with six spoked wheels, and they transported people by means of solid two-wheel carts pulled by four oxen. Their ships were rigged with a square sail, like those of the Egyptians, and had a duck-shaped prow, which possibly was used for ramming enemy vessels.

Apostasy came early in Israel, and the Lord used the Philistines to chasten his people. Shamgar delivered Israel by killing 600 Philistines with an ox goad (Jgs 3:31). The account of Samson has many touches of Philistine life (13:1–16:31). This record demonstrates that there was intermarriage between Israelites and Philistines, contrary to the OT law.

Warfare between Israel and the Philistines is reported in 1 Samuel 4:1, when the Israelites were camped at Ebenezer and the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines won that round and captured the ark of the covenant (1 Sm 4:17), which they returned after seven months because the Lord sent plagues upon them (5:1–6:21). Later, when Samuel had become leader, the Philistines attacked Israel at Mizpah, but God gave the victory to Israel. On this occasion Samuel set up a memorial stone and named it Ebenezer ("Stone of Help," 7:12). The Philistines did not invade Israel again during the lifetime of Samuel, and Israel recovered cities that had been taken by the Philistines (v 14).

The greatest activity of the Philistines in Israelite territory came during the reign of Saul, Israel's first king. More than 80 references to the Philistines are related to that period. The Philistines established outposts or garrisons in various parts of Israel (cf. 1 Sm 10:5; 13:3). Jonathan defeated the garrison at Geba (13:3); his exploit related in 1 Samuel 14:1–15 led to a rout of the Philistines.

A confrontation of the Philistine and Israelite armies took place in the valley of Elah, where the Philistines challenged Israel to provide an opponent to meet their champion, Goliath, in single combat (1 Sm 17:1–11). The young shepherd David killed Goliath; David became a hero, but Saul's jealousy made David a hunted man. In the course of dodging Saul's army, David's men rescued the town of Keilah from the Philistines (23:1–5). Eventually David sought political asylum with Achish, king of Gath, who gave him the town of Ziklag, from which David made raids in the Negev (ch 27).

When the Philistines were preparing for war against Israel, Achish asked David to join the Philistine forces, and David agreed. The lords of the Philistines voted down this participation, for they feared that David would turn against them (1 Sm 28:1–2; 29). In the ensuing battle Saul and his sons were killed on Mt Gilboa by the Philistines (31:1–7). The Philistines cut off Saul's head, placed his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth in Beth-shan, and hung his body on the wall of that city (vv 8–11).

When the Philistines learned that David had become king, they made an effort to destroy him, but he defeated them "from Geba to Gezer" (2 Sm 5:17–25). David broke the Philistine power, and although they again attempted war against Israel, they met with no success (21:15–21).

Uzziah warred against the Philistines; he broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod and built cities in Philistia (2 Chr 26:6–7). In the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines invaded the Shephelah and the Negev and captured a number of cities (28:18). Hezekiah fought against the Philistines as far as Gaza (2 Kgs 18:8).

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References to the Philistines in the Prophets are relatively few, although Jeremiah devotes a short chapter to the Philistines (Jer 47). The Philistines were gradually assimilated into Canaanite culture and they disappeared from the pages of the Bible and from secular history, leaving the name Palestine as a monument to their presence.

Philo, Judaeus

Philo Judaeus, or Philo of Alexandria, was a Jewish philosopher who lived from around 25 BC to AD 40. He was one of the first to try to combine Jewish religious beliefs with Greek ways of thinking.

Who Was Philo?

Philo came from an important family in Alexandria. He learned about both the Jewish faith and Greek ideas during his education. We do not know much about his life, but we do know that in AD 40, he led a group of Jewish representatives to Rome to meet with Emperor Caligula.

At that time, there was growing tension between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria. The Jewish community there was growing larger and becoming more successful in business, especially in selling wheat. This made some Greeks angry and jealous. In AD 42, the Greeks started riots and forced the Jewish people to leave certain parts of the city.

Because of these events, Philo wrote two books defending the Jewish people. One book was called *Against Flaccus* (about the governor of Alexandria) and the other was called *Embassy to Caligula* (about his meeting with the emperor in Rome)."

How Did Philo Bring Together Jewish and Greek Thinking?

The Jewish people in Alexandria were strongly influenced by Greek culture. They even read their holy writings in Greek instead of Hebrew. This Greek translation was called the Septuagint.

Even though these Jews lived among Greeks and followed some Greek customs, they kept their traditional Jewish beliefs. Philo was like this, too. He carefully followed God's law (found in the first five books of the Bible) and believed it was God's perfect message. He thought this law was important for everyone, both Jews and non-Jews.

At the same time, Philo's way of thinking was very Greek. He probably did not know much Hebrew (the original language of Jewish scripture). Instead, he learned from Greek teachers. When Philo read the Bible, he mainly studied the Old Testament, especially its first five books. He read these in Greek rather than Hebrew. Philo believed God had guided the translation of these books into Greek, so he did not need to look at the Hebrew version.

To understand Philo's work, one must recognize that there are two reasons to accept Greek culture:

1. Jews living in Greek areas needed to understand Greek ways of life to survive.
2. The Jewish faith was meant to reach out to other people. The ancient Jewish prophets had said that Israel should be a light to teach non-Jewish people about God.

From his studies, Philo found many true ideas in Greek philosophy. He wanted to show how these Greek ideas could work together with the truth he found in the Bible. This was a big challenge for him. He needed to figure out how to accept new ideas while staying true to his faith. This is similar to how some Christians today try to understand how modern science fits with their religious beliefs.

How Did Philo Interpret the Scripture?

Philo had a special way of reading the Bible that helped him connect its teachings with Greek ideas. This way of reading is called allegory. When using allegory, readers look for deeper meanings hidden in the stories. Many people before Philo had used this method, and many others used it after him.

Using allegory, Philo could read the book of Genesis in a new way. Instead of seeing it as just old stories about what happened long ago (which is how Greeks might have seen it), he saw it as stories about how all people search for God and try to live better lives.

Philo believed Moses wrote these stories in a special way. He said that God had taught Moses, and Moses had also learned the best ideas from philosophy. Unlike other teachers who just made up stories, Moses could help people see important ideas through his writing.

When Philo read the Bible this way, he found deeper spiritual meanings in its stories and rules.

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These deeper meanings matched many of the true things he had learned from Greek thinkers.

When Philo thought about God, he was careful to compare Greek ideas with what the Bible taught. If Greek ideas did not match the Bible's teaching, he rejected them.

The Bible does not say much about how God made the world or what the world is made of. Because of this, Philo felt free to use ideas from Greek philosophers to help explain these things. Philo believed that both the Bible's teachings and the true parts of Greek philosophy came from God. In ancient Greek philosophy, Logos referred to a universal principle of order, logic, and knowledge that holds the world together. The human mind is made in the image of the divine Logos, and so it has some capacity to receive and discover truths about realities beyond what we can know by our senses.

What Did Philo Teach About God and How the World Was Made?

Of all the Greek thinkers, Philo thought Plato's ideas about God were closest to the truth. He agreed with Plato about several things:

God existed forever before he made the world. Even after making the world, God stayed separate from it and greater than it. The world cannot live or move by itself - it needs God to give it life and keep it moving. When God does this, the world works perfectly.

Philo believed God takes care of everything he created. The Greeks called this care "providence," but they thought it just meant God keeps nature working in its usual way. Philo saw it differently. He believed God cares about each individual thing he made. He thought God could even change how nature usually works if he wanted to.

God is one, but he made many different things. God never changes and does not need anything. God does not even the world he made. God created everything because he is good and wanted to share his goodness.

Moses wrote that God made the world in six days. But Philo thought God actually made everything at the same time. He believed the story of six days just helps us understand that God created everything in an organized way.

Philo taught that God made the world from nothing. There was nothing there before God created. God used all the available material when he made the world, which is why Philo believed there is only one world. God created the world because he wanted to, and Philo thought this might mean the world will last forever.

Philo noticed that the Greek philosopher Plato had similar ideas about God creating the world. He thought Plato must have learned these ideas from Moses's writings.

What Did Philo Say About the Logos?

When Philo developed his ideas about the Logos, he both used and changed some ideas from Greek philosophers. Plato had taught that there were perfect ideas that had always existed. He said that when God made the world, he looked at these perfect ideas as a pattern. But Philo disagreed with part of this teaching. He believed that only God had existed forever.

Philo found a way to combine these different ideas. He taught that the perfect ideas had always existed, but only as thoughts in God's mind. These thoughts only became a complete pattern when God decided to make the physical world we can see. For Philo, these perfect ideas existed only in God's mind, and God used them as a pattern when making our world.

Philo believed that the Logos was extremely important. It was more than just the tool God used to make the world we can see. He tried to explain the Logos in several important ways. Philo called the Logos "the idea of ideas." He saw it as the first-begotten Son of the uncreated Father and even called it a "second God." He believed the Logos was the perfect model for how human minds should work.

The Logos, according to Philo, had a special role. It was like a power that keeps everything God made working together. It helps people understand God's messages, acting like a bridge between God and the world God created. Like a priest, it carries people's prayers to God. Philo believed the Logos was present when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and that it lived inside Moses to guide him.

While some people wondered if the Logos was the same as God, Philo said it was only a picture or image of God. He did not think of the Logos as a person. Even today, it is hard to understand exactly what Philo thought the Logos was or how it related to God.

Many Christian writers later used some of Philo's ideas about the Logos. The author of the Gospel of

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John was especially important in this. In the beginning of his Gospel, John calls the Logos "the Word" and says God used it to create the world (see John 1:1–4).

We do not know much about where these ideas about the Logos first came from. We do know that other Jewish people who lived in Greek areas during Philo's time also talked about the Logos. When we look at how Philo used this idea, it seems he was more influenced by Greek philosophy than by the Bible's teachings.

What Did Philo Believe About How Humans Were Created?

Philo had other interesting ideas about how God created things. He believed the stars and planets were living beings with minds that could never do evil. However, he thought humans were different. Humans could be both good and bad, wise and foolish.

Philo believed God made all good things by himself. But since humans could be both good and bad, he thought they must have been made by lesser divine beings helping God. This is why we are told by Moses that God said, “Let Us make man” (Genesis 1:26). The word "us" was important to Philo.

Philo saw two separate steps in how humans were created. In the first step, God made an idea or pattern of what humans should be. This pattern was not physical. It had no body and wasn't male or female. It could never be corrupted or destroyed (Genesis 1:26). In the second step, as described in Genesis 2:7, "God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils."

This created the first physical human being, with a body and soul, who could die. Humans were now either male or female. Philo believed that when the first man and woman saw each other, they felt desire. This led to physical pleasure, which Philo saw as the beginning of doing wrong things and breaking God's laws.

Philo did not think we should take the story of the garden of Eden literally. He did not believe there were ever real trees of life or knowledge or that such trees would ever exist. Instead, he saw them as symbols:

- The tree of life represents respect and love for God
- The tree of knowledge represents understanding right from wrong

How Did Philo Think People Should Connect with God?

Philo's ideas show that he saw the world as split into two parts. He believed spiritual things were good and physical things were bad. These ideas come from the ideas of Plato, a way of thinking called Platonism. Philo tried to find these ideas in the Old Testament. Because of this way of thinking, Philo agreed with another group of Greek thinkers called the Stoics. They taught that only what is good for the soul matters. Philo believed God gave us the world to use for a while, not to own forever.

Philo taught that to grow closer to God, people needed to stop paying attention to the physical world around them. He generally believed people should deny themselves physical pleasures to focus on spiritual things.

The only temple worthy of God is a pure soul. Philo thought true faith comes from how we feel and think inside, not from the religious activities we do on the outside. The soul is like Abraham or like the Israelites wandering in the desert. Through spiritual self-discipline, the soul comes to realize that the body is a major obstacle to perfection.

The goal of this spirituality is to draw near to God, who has drawn the mind to himself. God is knowable by the mind. However, God is unknowable in himself. We can know only that he is, not what he is.

Philo believed that as people try to become better, they eventually learn something important: they cannot become perfect by themselves. They learn that being good is a gift from God. When people understand their own limits, they begin to truly know God and realize how much they need God's help.

How Did Philo's Ideas Affect Later Religious Teachers?

The Jewish historian Josephus used some of Philo's ideas in his writings. However, Philo had his greatest influence on early Christian writers and teachers. Over the next 200 years, the type of Jewish thinking that combined Greek and Jewish ideas (which Philo represented) became less

important. Instead, the teachings of Jewish rabbis became the main form of Judaism.

However, Christians in the years 100–300 AD found many of Philo's ideas helpful. His writings were so important that people translated them into different languages, including Latin (the language of Rome) and Armenian. Several important early Christian teachers (called "church fathers") used Philo's ideas in their own work. These included Clement and Origen, who wrote in Greek, and Ambrose, who wrote in Latin.

Philologus

Early Christian acquaintance or friend of the apostle Paul to whom he sent greetings (Rom 16:15). In the series of greetings, he seems to be paired with a woman named Julia.

Philometor

Name of Ptolemy VI, ruler in Egypt (2 Macc 4:21). *See* Ptolemaic Empire.

Philosophy

Philosophy means 'love of wisdom.' It is a way of thinking carefully about the basic questions of life. Philosophers try to find wisdom, understand it, and explain why it matters.

Philosophy in the Bible

The word 'philosophy' appears only once in the Bible. However, in the ancient Greek world, both Judaism and Christianity were seen as types of philosophy. Greek philosophers referred to the Jews as a philosophical people because biblical religion, unlike Greek religion, tries to explain the whole of reality and provides clear guidance for how to live.

The word "philosophy" appears only once in the Bible, in Colossians 2:8–10. In this passage, Paul explains that there are two different kinds of philosophy. One kind follows Christ's teachings, while the other follows human tradition, or "the spiritual forces of the world." Paul warns the Colossians not to follow empty human traditions or basic spiritual forces of the world.

Instead, he wants them to follow Christ's way of thinking. This is because Christ, who is fully God in human form, provides true wisdom. Unlike the basic spiritual forces some people followed, Christ is "the head over every ruler and authority." Paul does not say that all philosophy is bad. Rather, he teaches that the best philosophy comes from following Christ's teachings. foundation for wisdom and philosophy.

In contrast to the mere "elemental spirits," Christ himself is the "head of all rule and authority." He is the greatest source of truth and justice. The discipline of philosophy is not condemned, for the alternative to deceit and human tradition is "philosophy . . . according to Christ."

Philosophy as a formal way of thinking began in Greece after the Old Testament was written. This is why we don't find the word "philosophy" in the Old Testament. However, some books in the Old Testament are similar to philosophy books because they help people think about life's big questions. For example, the book of Proverbs gives wisdom and advice for living a good life. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes ask important questions about why things happen and what gives life meaning.

The Influence of Greek Thought

The Bible and the pagan philosophy of its time had some things in common. One example is the idea of changing how you live after accepting new beliefs. In the time when the New Testament was written, people understood that accepting new beliefs meant changing your whole way of life. We call this kind of change "conversion."

Another similarity was the way teachers shared their ideas through letters. Before the New Testament was written, Greek teachers like Plato and Isocrates wrote letters to explain their beliefs and teach people how to live. Later, New Testament writers also used letters to teach people about their faith.

During the time when the New Testament was written, philosophy was very practical. People studied philosophy to learn how to live a good life. Philosophers also spent a lot of time thinking about God, though different philosophers had different ideas about what God was like. At this time, many people were looking for two things: they wanted to know how to live right, and they wanted to know more about God.

Epicureans and Stoics

Two specific philosophies are mentioned in the New Testament: Epicureanism and Stoicism (Acts 17:18). The Epicureans followed a teacher named Epicurus, who lived in Athens from around 342 to 270 BC. Epicurus taught people practical ways to live a happy life by:

- Being balanced in their behavior
- Building good relationships with others

Epicurus thought that everything, including people, was made up of tiny pieces of material called atoms. He believed these atoms came together by chance, and that there was no divine plan behind it.

The Stoics, like the Epicureans, taught people to live balanced lives. But they had different beliefs about the world. They believed everything happens for a reason and that the world has a purpose. They taught that this purpose comes from something they called Logos (or "reason"). They believed the Logos was everywhere and controlled everything.

Like the Epicureans, the Stoics believed that everything in the world is physical or material—including people, gods, and even the Logos itself. Sometimes they even said the Logos was God.

When Paul was in Athens, he probably met another group of philosophers called "academic skeptics." These thinkers believed that humans cannot fully understand anything. They taught that people should be careful about saying something is definitely true or false. However, they understood that people still need to make choices in their daily lives. They were also very interested in learning what other people believed.

The Bible tells us that everyone in Athens at that time—both local people and visitors—loved to hear and talk about new ideas (Acts 17:21). This made Athens a place where people enjoyed having deep discussions about different beliefs.

Paul's Message to Athens

Since the people of Athens were so interested in new ideas, it made sense for Paul to share the good news about Jesus with them. He was able to convince some people to become followers of Jesus.

When Paul spoke to the Athenians, he started by finding things they could agree on. He quoted two of their own philosophers:

- Epimenides, who lived in the 500s BC, said: "In him we live and move and have our being"
- Cleanthes, a Stoic who lived in the 200s BC, said: "We are his offspring"

However, most of the philosophers did not accept Paul's message. They were especially troubled by two things Paul taught:

1. That Jesus was unique and special in a way no other person was
2. That Jesus had died and come back to life

These ideas went against what the philosophers believed. They thought that when people died, that was the end—there was no coming back to life. This shows how different Christian beliefs were from the other philosophies of that time.

See also Epicureans; Stoicism, Stoics.

Phinehas

1. The son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron (Exodus 6:25). He was also the father of Abishua (1 Chronicles 6:4, 50). While Eleazar served as high priest, Phinehas was in charge of the gatekeepers of the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 9:20). Eleazer, his father, was in charge of the gatekeepers when Aaron was chief priest (compare Numbers 3:32).
When the Israelites sinned by worshiping Baal of Peor at Shittim, Phinehas became very angry. He killed both an Israelite man and a Midianite woman because of their immoral behavior (Numbers 25:7). After this action, the God was no longer angry with Israel. God made a special agreement (covenant) of peace with Phinehas, promising that he and his descendants would always serve as priests (Numbers 25:11–13). This deed was counted as righteousness for Phinehas for all generations to come (Psalm 106:30). Except for a short time, when Eli served as high priest (compare 1 Samuel 1–3; 14:3), Phinehas and his descendants served as high priests until the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple in AD 70.
After the incident with Baal of Peor, Phinehas joined Israel in fighting against the Midianites (Numbers 31:6). After Israel took control of the land of Canaan, Phinehas received the town of Gibeah in the hill country of Ephraim as his inheritance (Joshua 24:33). Later, he was sent with some Israelite leaders to ask about an altar that was built on the west side of the Jordan River by the Israelite tribes living on the east side (Joshua 22:13, 30–32). At another time, at Bethel, Phinehas promised Israel victory in battle against the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20:28). His descendants, Ezra the scribe and Gershom, returned with their families to Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon (Ezra 7:5; 8:2).
2. One of Eli's two sons, who served as a priest at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:3). According to 1 Samuel, this Phinehas was a terrible priest. He and his brother Hophni misused the sacrifices people offered (1 Samuel 2:12–17). They disrepected the sanctuary (1 Samuel 2:22). They ignored their father Eli's warnings (1 Samuel 2:25). A man of God told Eli that his son would die (1 Samuel 2:34). Later, during a war with the Philistines, Phinehas was killed on the same day his wife gave birth to their son, who was named Ichabod (1 Samuel 4:11, 17–19; 14:3).
3. The father of Eleazar. This Eleazar helped Meremoth and the Levites named Jozabad and Noadiah count the temple's valuable metals and containers during the time after the exile in Babylon (Ezra 8:33).

Phlegon

Christian in Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom 16:14).

Phoebe

Christian woman of the church at Cenchrea, the eastern port for the city of Corinth. In Romans 16:1–2, Paul commended Phoebe to the recipients of the letter on the basis of her valuable service to other Christians. He asked that they give her whatever assistance she needed.

The term "deacon" is applied to Phoebe. It probably designates an official position in the church, as in Philippians 1:1, although it may mean "minister" in the same sense that Paul uses it elsewhere of himself and others (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4).

Phoenicia, Phoenicians

Group of city-states (and their residents) that occupied a strip of the Syrian coastal plain at the foot of the Lebanon Mountains. "Phoenicia" was also spelled "Phenice" or "Phenicia." At one time

Phoenicia, Phoenicians

these states extended from Carmel in the south to Arvad in the north, a distance of less than 200 miles (321.8 kilometers). Nowhere is the Phoenician plain more than four miles (6.4 kilometers) wide. In these fertile plains rose independent city-states, so Phoenicia was neither a political nor a geographical unity.

Bereft of good natural ports, the Phoenicians were forced to build their own. Fortunately, they had abundant supplies of magnificent cedar on the western slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, which they dominated. Thus they had good ship timber and an important source of revenue in a wood-starved region of the world. Offshore grew some of the finest dye-producing creatures (sea snails) of the Mediterranean, making possible quality textiles and dyestuffs. These two sources of income were supplemented by superior industrial production in metal and glassware and the transport of the goods of other peoples in Phoenician ships. With the passage of time, Phoenician colonies grew up along their trade routes. Prominent among them was Carthage.

Preview

History

Though peoples of Mediterranean stock occupied Lebanon by about 4000 BC, there was no significant political or cultural development in the area until after 3000 BC, when the Canaanites arrived. Canaanite (Hamitic) culture and ethnic stock were diluted by an Amorite (Semitic) invasion of Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine about 2000 BC. Subsequently, Semites became dominant in the area.

Long before the Semites arrived, Egyptians established commercial contacts with Phoenicia. During the Old Kingdom (c. 2700–2200 BC), Egyptians seem virtually to have controlled Byblos, about 25 miles (40.2 kilometers) north of Beirut. It was the main port through which Phoenician timber moved to Egypt and Egyptian papyrus and influences entered Phoenicia.

Though Egyptian influence slipped during Egypt's first intermediate period (2200–2050 BC), it was fully restored during the Middle Kingdom. In fact, some scholars like to speak of much of Phoenicia falling within an Egyptian Middle Empire at this time (2050–1800 BC), but others think that Egypt's control was only economic. Subsequently, the Hyksos dominated the whole eastern end of the Mediterranean.

During the Egyptian empire period (c. 1580–1100 BC), the Egyptians at first effectively controlled the cities of Phoenicia, even stationing garrisons in them. But during the latter part of the period, Egyptians and Hittites fought for the mastery of Phoenicia. By 1100 BC, both the Egyptian and the Hittite empires had come to an end and Phoenicia entered a period of independence.

During the next two centuries, Tyre built up her power and established a hegemony over the other Phoenician cities. Of special significance in this rise to power were the efforts of Hiram I. At the same time, the Hebrew united monarchy was building, and the two powers reached out to each other in ventures of mutual advantage.

Conditions changed in the ninth century. In 868 BC Ashurnasirpal of Assyria forced the Phoenician states to pay tribute, and their freedom was lost again. But under the Assyrians, the Phoenicians prospered and planted numerous colonies in the west. By the end of the eighth century, Isaiah could wax eloquent about the prosperity of Tyre (Is 23:3–8).

But as time wore on, the Phoenicians grew restless under increasing Assyrian restriction of liberties. About 678 BC Sidon led a revolt against Esar-haddon of Assyria, which turned out to be a total failure. The furious Assyrians killed or captured most of the inhabitants and leveled the city of Sidon, thus intimidating all the Phoenicians. But Assyrian power subsequently diminished, and Tyre became independent about 625 BC. Her greatness largely remained, and Ezekiel penned a remarkable description of her attainments (Ez 27).

After Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, he turned his attention to Phoenicia, easily conquering the rebuilt Sidon but requiring 13 years to subjugate Tyre. At that time he took only the mainland city of Tyre, however. The island city was safe because Nebuchadnezzar had no fleet. The greatness of Tyre was gone; the mainland city was never rebuilt.

When Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC, the Phoenicians were absorbed peacefully. But about two centuries later, they participated in a rebellion against the Persians.

***Phoenicia**, Phoenicians*

When the Persian army stood before Sidon in 352 BC and the inhabitants faced the destruction of their homes and the prospect of being sold into slavery, they set fire to their homes and perished with them. It is said that 40,000 died in the flames. The other Phoenician cities had no heart to continue the rebellion.

When Alexander the Great came through Phoenicia in 332 BC, most of the cities welcomed release from Persian rule and opened their gates to him. Tyre did not, however, and was totally destroyed after a seven-month siege. When the city was rebuilt, it was populated with immigrants from Asia Minor and had little ethnic connection with the earlier period. Phoenician maritime supremacy was forever broken.

Subsequently, Phoenicia came under the control of the Ptolemies (286 BC), the Seleucids (198 BC), and the Romans (64 BC). During the Roman period, Phoenicia was part of the province of Syria and enjoyed new prosperity during the Pax Romana (the Roman peace) of the first two centuries of the Christian era. By that time, it was largely Hellenized and its former Semitic character was gone.

Cultural and Historical Significance

As the finest mariners of the ancient world, the Phoenicians dominated the Mediterranean during the first half of the first millennium BC, as well as the Aegean Sea for much of that time. As intrepid seafarers, they not only shipped products but also transmitted ideas and processes and engaged in much cultural cross-fertilization.

Though there is no evidence that the Phoenicians invented the alphabet, they disseminated it so widely that it became known as the Phoenician alphabet. Especially important was their transmission of it to the Greeks (at least by 750 BC), who then added vowels and passed it on to the Western world.

The Phoenicians also planted colonies in numerous places in the western Mediterranean, notably during the eighth century BC. Most powerful of these colonies was Carthage, which at its height controlled the western part of north Africa, much of Spain, and numerous Mediterranean islands, and which almost brought Rome to her knees during the third century BC.

Furthermore, the Phoenicians developed advanced techniques in metalworking; some scholars think the Egyptians and possibly even Aegean peoples derived some of their processes from the Phoenicians. Though they may not have invented glass-making, as many ancient authors claim, they certainly contributed much to its development and the spread of its knowledge in the ancient world. The Phoenicians exported quantities of purple dye or dyed cloth and their famous cedars. Cedars of Lebanon found their way not only to Palestine but also to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and faraway Iran.

Of all Phoenician exports, the one most severely censured in Scripture was Baal worship, which found its way into the kingdom of Israel through the marriage of Jezebel to Ahab, and into the kingdom of Judah through the marriage of their daughter Athaliah to Jehoram.

Religion

Less is known about Phoenician religion than that of most other peoples of antiquity. This is primarily because the Phoenicians' own literature has not been preserved. One cannot be sure that information from ancient Ugarit in nearby Syria correctly reflects religious practices and beliefs of the Phoenician cities. Nor should it be assumed that the religion of Phoenicia's colonies was transported without modification from the mother country. Unfortunately, what the OT says about Canaanite religion does not differentiate the beliefs or practices of individual Phoenician cities. The following information has been gleaned almost exclusively from Phoenician sources.

Several general names appeared in Phoenician religion. El was both the Semitic word for god and the name of a specific god who was head of the pantheon. Baal simply means "lord," but it also applies to the son of El. Baalat means "lady," but it often designated a specific deity as the Baalat of Gebal or Byblos. The Hebrew word melek meant a "king" or "ruler," but it might form part of a name of a deity such as Melqart ("ruler of the city"), chief god of Tyre.

As in the Greek city-states, Phoenician cities had patron deities that were not necessarily the head of the pantheon. On the female side, there was really only one deity worshiped in all the cities, the mother and fertility goddess Ashtart or Astarte (Hebrew, Ashtoreth), the Babylonian Ishtar. She was regarded as the genetrix of the gods and man as well as of plants. Promiscuity characterized her conduct, and religious prostitution was carried on in her name.

Baalat Gebal, who symbolized fertility and thus corresponded to Astarte, was the preeminent deity

of Byblos, but Adonis was also very important. As the young god who died and was resurrected, he was linked to the annual death and rebirth of vegetation.

Astarte was also predominant in the pantheon of Sidon, as is demonstrated by numerous inscriptions, temples built in her honor, and the fact that kings and queens called themselves her priests. The male deity most involved in Sidonian life was Eshmun, thought to correspond to Adonis in function. By the Greeks, he was identified as Asklepios, god of healing.

The chief god of Tyre was Melqart, the baal or lord of Tyre. Since an annual feast of resurrection was celebrated in his honor, he was equated with Eshmun of Sidon and Adonis of Byblos. The Greeks identified Melqart with Heracles or Hercules. When Tyre came to dominate the other Phoenician cities, Melqart rose to a place of prominence in their pantheons. Melqart would have been the Baal introduced to Israel in the days of Ahab, who married Jezebel of Tyre. The main female deity of Tyre was Astarte. Hiram built temples to both Melqart and Astarte at Tyre, and Solomon brought the worship of Astarte (Ashtoreth) to Jerusalem in his day (1 Kgs 11:5). Her shrine remained to plague the Jews until the reform of Josiah late in the seventh century BC (2 Kgs 23:13).

The places for worship of Baal were either high places in the hills (consisting of an altar and a stone pillar representing the Baal, and a tree or pole representing Astarte) or stone enclosures with an altar, a stone pillar, and a tree. Sometimes they were covered temple buildings. Sacrifices consisted of animals and vegetables, and in times of great disaster, of human beings. Great religious festivals were held in observance of the god's connection with the rhythm of the seasons. When he and nature died, there were mourning, funeral rites, and perhaps self-torture. The spring festival, which celebrated his resurrection and new life in nature and which sought the fertility of nature, commonly was accompanied by sacramental prostitution. The idolatry, human sacrifice, and sexual promiscuity connected with Baal worship brought upon it God's special condemnation.

Phoenicia and the Bible

Phoenicia first became involved in biblical history shortly after 1000 BC, when David obtained from Hiram I of Tyre some of the much-coveted cedars of Lebanon for construction of his palace. Solomon also bought cedar from Hiram for his palace and the temple. He hired Phoenician craftsmen for building the temple, for constructing fortifications at strategic centers, and for creating a major port facility at Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. Phoenician architectural design was employed in various Hebrew building projects in Solomon's day, and Phoenician shipbuilding expertise made possible Solomon's merchant marine. Phoenician sailors manned the ships after they were launched (see 1 Kgs 9:10–28).

During the first half of the ninth century BC, Phoenician impact on Israel was largely religious. It was then that Jezebel, a princess from Tyre, married Ahab and introduced Baal worship to the northern kingdom. More than a century later, Phoenicia was the subject of prophetic condemnation. Isaiah (before 700 BC, see Is 23) and Ezekiel (about 600 BC, see Ez 26:2–19; 28:1–23) hurled predictions of suffering and destruction at both Tyre and Sidon.

In NT times the apostle Paul spent a week at Tyre with a group of Christians on his return to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 21:2–7).

See also Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Phoenix

Phoenix was a harbor town on the southern coast of Crete. The apostle Paul and the people he was traveling with hoped to stay there for the winter during their trip to Rome (Acts 27:12, "Phenice" in the King James Version).

Phoenix was west of a place called Fair Havens, near the small island of Cauda. Paul advised the ship's leaders to stay at Fair Havens, but they decided to keep sailing toward Phoenix.

While the ship was on the way, a strong wind came from the northeast. This storm pushed the ship south and west, past the island of Caudar (verses 9–17). The wind was so strong that it almost drove the ship into dangerous sandbanks off the coast of North Africa. These were called the shoals of Syrtis Major.

Luke says that Phoenix faced northwest and southwest (Acts 27:12). This matches the location of a modern town called Phoinika, near the western tip of Cape Mouros. In ancient times, this harbor was deep and safe for ships. It also gave shelter

from the strong winter winds. The name Phoenix still survives in the modern name Phoinika.

Phrygia

Area in western Turkey on the Anatolian plateau, the boundaries of which cannot be defined precisely. The Phrygians were originally Europeans, called Phryges by the Greeks, who crossed the Hellespont from Macedonia and Thrace and settled here. This migration followed the general pattern of invasions from Europe into this section of Asia Minor. The Phrygians formed a powerful confederacy that flourished between the downfall of the Hittite Empire and the rise of the Lydian Empire, that is, between the 7th and the 13th centuries before Christ.

Their religious capital was at "Midas City," modern Yazilikaya, about 150 miles (241.4 kilometers) southwest of Ankara. This "city of Midas" consisted of an acropolis, defended by a wall with towers, and a lower city. Within a large cave was a spring, approached by steps cut in the rock, which supplied water for the upper and lower cities. The famous tomb or monument of King Midas has a Phrygian inscription that mentions the goddess "Mida," identified with Cybele the mother goddess, considered to be the mythical mother of the king. French archaeologists in 1948–49 discovered remains that indicate the city was destroyed in the sixth century BC, rebuilt about a century later, and finally destroyed in the third century BC.

Their chief goddess was Cybele. She later became the fertility goddess of all Anatolia. Orgiastic rites were performed in her honor, leading to sensuality intended to facilitate reproduction among humans, animals, and crops. When the Ionians and the Greeks settled in Miletus and Ephesus, Cybele was transformed into Artemis the Greek goddess of fertility, whose temple in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world. Her image originally was a black meteorite stone (cf. Acts 19:35). She became the consort of Adonis, a vegetation god, and their fertility rites were common throughout the Middle East. This goddess was imported into Rome; a temple in her honor was built on the Capitoline Hill soon after the organization of the empire.

Gallic tribes invaded the region some three centuries prior to Paul. This changed the demographic situation, with the result that the political, geographical, and ethnic divisions did not always coincide. What was formerly Phrygia became known as Galatia because of the new inhabitants. Yet the old names persisted.

Jews were encouraged to settle in this area by the Syrian kings. They were an important part of society, and their synagogues were to be found in every major city. Paul passed through this area on his way from Lycaonia to Troas (Acts 16:6) after having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God in Asia. The gospel probably came to this area from the pilgrims who went to Jerusalem and heard Peter preach. There, in astonishment, they heard the early believers proclaiming the works of God in their own native language (2:8–11). Some were converted and went home to spread the Good News.

That Christianity made early inroads and received a wide following here is indicated by the fact that in the middle of the second century Montanus, a zealous leader of the church, arose and called the church back to the primitive dynamism that characterized Pentecost. Thus arose the sect of Montanism, in which the leader was sometimes viewed as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit or the oracle of God. In better light, the movement is seen as a return to primitive Christianity and a protest against the increasing formalism among the churches. By the third century, the entire region was almost entirely Christian, according to Eusebius.

Phurah

KJV spelling of Purah, Gideon's servant, in Judges 7:10–11. *See* Purah.

Phut

1. KJV spelling of Put, Ham's third son, in Genesis 10:6. *See* Put (Person).

2. KJV spelling of Put, a region close to Egypt along the Mediterranean Sea, in Ezekiel 27:10. *See* Put (Place).

Phuvah

The King James Version spelling of Puvah, a son of the patriarch Issachar (Genesis 46:13).

See Puvah.

Phygellus, Phygelus

A Christian believer from Asia (a region that is now part of modern Turkey) who abandoned the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 1:15). Paul mentions him together with another person named Hermogenes. Nothing else is known about either of these people.

See also Hermogenes.

Phylactery

A small prayer case holds Scripture passages. Pious Jews wear it at prayer. At prayer, Orthodox Jewish males wear two small, black leather boxes. They contain Scripture.

The phylactery was probably not a box of Scripture. It was a strip of parchment with four Old Testament passages in Hebrew. The passages were:

1. Exodus 13:1–10
2. Exodus 11–16
3. Deuteronomy 6:4–9
4. Deuteronomy 11:13–21

The Deuteronomy 6:4–9 passage contains the "Shema"—the confession of God being one Lord. All four passages say that God commands his people to bind his laws on their hands and have them as "frontlets" between their eyes. Jews interpreted this in a non-literal sense and forgo physical adornment. Some Jews took the command literally. They began to wear portions of their Scriptures on their foreheads and hands. Exactly when they began to do this is not agreed upon by scholars. There is an explicit mention of the practice as early as 100 BC in a Jewish nonbiblical document. Some believe it began as early as the fourth century BC, if not earlier.

In Matthew 23:5, Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for, among other things, their habit to "broaden their phylacteries." The passage's context is Jesus's rejection of their explicit religious practices. Apparently, the broad phylactery would impress others with how religious the wearer was. It was evidence of pride, pretense, and hypocrisy in religion.

See also Amulet; Frontlet.

Physician

A person trained in medicine. Physicians attended the sick, administered medicines, and repaired wounds. In early Israel the diagnosis and treatment of sick people was part of the office of priests. Other nonprofessional people practiced healing arts in the small towns and villages. King Asa sought their help for his feet (2 Chronicles 16:12). Jeremiah inquired about physicians in Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22). Job complained that his friends were useless physicians (Job 13:4).

Scientific medicine and the careful training of physicians had to wait for the rise of Greek medicine. New Testament times saw medical schools established around the Greco-Roman world. Archeological discoveries of surgical instruments have come from places like Pompeii.

The New Testament refers to many sicknesses. The word "physician" occurs several times in the Gospels (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; 5:26; Luke 4:23; 5:31; 8:43). Luke is identified as a beloved physician (Colossians 4:14). Physicians were not always able to cure people (Mark 5:26; Luke 8:43), but Jesus the healer succeeded where others failed.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Pi-Beseth

City mentioned together with Thebes, Memphis, and On in Ezekiel's oracle about Egypt's fall (Ez 30:17, nlt mg). In Egyptian the name is translated "house of the goddess Bastet." Bastet was first represented as a woman with the head of a lioness, and in later periods by the head of a cat. In Greek she was known as Boubastis or Bubastis. The city of Boubastis was extensively described by Herodotus. It was located on the right shore of the Old Tanite branch of the Nile, also known as the Branch of Boubastis. Boubastis is the present Tell Basta. Archaeological excavations in 1866–67 unearthed evidence that it is a very old city, dating from the Old Kingdom. It was not until Shishak I, the founder of the 22d (Libyan) dynasty, that Pi-beseth became the capital. Hence, the dynasty is also known as the dynasty of Boubastis. The 23d dynasty kept Boubastis as the capital. It served about two centuries as the capital (c. 950–750 BC). The city was destroyed around 350 BC by Persian forces.

Pi-hahiroth

A place where the Israelites stopped during their journey from Egypt to the promised land (Exodus 14:2). It was at Pi-hahiroth that the Egyptian army caught up with them (Exodus 14:9). This led to God's rescue at the Red Sea. The Israelites always remembered how God saved them at this place.

The exact location of Pi-hahiroth is not known for certain. Baal-zephon and Migdol were also nearby places mentioned in the same area. After the Israelites left Egypt, they first camped at Succoth in Goshen and then at Etham (Numbers 33:6). After Pi-hahiroth, they travelled for three days to reach Marah and Elim. These places are probably on the east shore of the Gulf of Suez, on the way to Sinai.

Pi-hahiroth was likely on the northeast border of Egypt, possibly on the west shore of the Bitter Lakes. The Israelites did not travel by the expected northern route called the Way of the Philistines. Instead, they went southeast through the desert (compare Exodus 13:17–18). Eventually, they returned to the old Egyptian road that led to the copper and turquoise mines of Sinai.

See also Wilderness Wanderings.

Pig

A pig is an animal that people raise for its meat and fat. While the scientific name "swine" is more accurate for these animals, most people today simply call them pigs. The pigs found in the Middle East came from wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*).

Pigs are very good at providing food because they produce many offspring and grow quickly. Domestic pigs (those that people raise for food) have a thick layer of fat under their skin. Unlike sheep or cattle, farmers cannot herd pigs from place to place. This means pigs are most useful to farmers who stay in one place. The Hebrew people were travelers (nomads) at first, so they did not keep pigs. However, records show that an Egyptian prince around 1500 BC owned 1,500 pigs.

While pigs may look awkward, they can move quickly and with skill. Their most noticeable feature is their short, movable nose that ends in a flat, round surface where their nostrils are. Most pigs have large tusks (long, pointed teeth) in both their upper and lower jaws. These tusks continue to grow throughout the pig's life. The tusks in their upper jaw are special because they curve upward, while most animals' tusks point downward. Pigs produce waste that has a very strong, unpleasant smell. This smell stays on both the pigs and the people who take care of them, making them easy to notice from far away.

Pigs in the Bible

Jewish people did not raise pigs in the land of Israel and Palestine. In the Bible, there is a story about Jesus sending evil spirits into a large group of pigs (Matthew 8:28–32). This happened in a place called Gadara, which was east of the Jordan River where non-Jewish people lived. These pigs were eating on a high cliff above the Sea of Galilee.

Wild pigs lived in the land of Israel and Palestine as well as many countries today. Psalm 80:13 refers to the destruction of a wild boar (the male, or hog) attacking growing crops. A party of wild boars can destroy an entire vineyard or a field of crops in a single night. They eat, trample, and destroy everything within reach.

Boar hunts were popular in ancient Mesopotamia. Wild boars are usually peaceful but can be dangerous when provoked. They travel in groups of six to 50, mainly active in the evening and early morning. Their bodies are covered with stiff bristles and some finer hair, but often have little hair. Wild boars primarily eat plants, including roots, nuts, grains, and stems. They were especially common in Lebanon's mountainous areas, the Jordan River valley, and wooded regions like Mount Tabor.

Jewish Laws and Attitudes about Pigs

Very religious Jewish people would not even say the word 'pig.' Instead, they called pigs "the abomination."Jewish people believed they became unclean if even a pig's hair touched them. They saw pigs as dirty and ugly animals because pigs eat many unpleasant things like dead animals, rats, and waste (2 Peter 2:22).

The Bible uses pigs in several stories to teach lessons. Proverbs 11:22 talks about how strange it would be to put a gold ring in a pig's nose. Jesus used pigs in a lesson about not giving valuable things to those who do not value them (Matthew 7:6). In another story, Jesus tells about a son who became so poor he had to feed pigs and eat their food (Luke 15:15–16). For Jewish people, having to work with pigs showed how low this son had fallen.

God's law did not allow Jewish people to eat pork (pig meat) (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8).

However, the Canaanites who lived in Israel ate pigs regularly. During the time between the Old and New Testament, a Syrian king named Antiochus IV ruled over Israel. He tried to force Jewish people to follow Greek customs and beliefs. First, he made them eat pork, which Greek people saw as special food (2 Maccabees 6:18). But what really caused the Jewish people to rebel was when he put pig's blood on the temple altar as an offering to a Greek god named Zeus (1 Maccabees 1:47). This was a terrible insult to the Jewish temple and their faith.

People who worshiped other gods often used pigs in their religious ceremonies (Isaiah 65:4; 66:3, 17). This might be one reason why God did not allow Jewish people to eat pork. Archaeological discoveries in Israel show that people sacrificed pigs long before Greek culture arrived in the region. For example, researchers found pig bones in a cave below a place of worship at Gezer. They also found an underground room at Tirzah that contained pots with baby pig bones from around 2000 BC.

Archaeologists have found pieces of a small stone statue showing a pig prepared for sacrifice. In ancient Greece and nearby regions, people sacrificed pigs to their goddess Aphrodite (also called Venus). People also killed pigs when making important promises or agreements. For example, in an ancient Greek story called the Iliad, a leader named Agamemnon sacrificed a male pig to the gods Zeus and Helios. Because pigs were used so often in other religions, Jewish people came to see pigs as symbols of unclean practices and false worship.

There may have been several reasons why God did not allow Jewish people to eat pork. Pigs can carry harmful worms (like trichina) that can make people sick, although some animals that were allowed as food could also carry these worms. Pigs also eat dead animals, which might be another reason. Some people get sick from eating pork in hot weather, which could be another explanation for this rule. Muslims also do not eat pork, and some groups in ancient Egypt would not eat it either.

See also Animals.

Pigeon

A pigeon or dove is a bird from the pigeon family (*Columbidae*). People often use the two names in the same way. For example, the common city pigeon comes from the wild rock dove. In the Bible, English translations use both words for the same Hebrew term. A second Hebrew term is usually translated "turtledove." The ancient Hebrews seemed to know there were different kinds of doves.

Today, at least six kinds of pigeons or doves live in Israel:

- the rock, ring, and stock doves (genus *Columba*), and
- the turtle, collared, and palm doves (genus *Streptopelia*).

The rock dove (*Columba livia*) and the turtledove (*Streptopelia turtur*) are mentioned most often in the Bible.

Pigeons are 15–30 centimeters (6–12 inches) long. The rock dove is the most colorful kind in Israel. It is often silvery gray, with greenish wings that shine in the light (Psalm 68:13). The smaller doves are mostly gray or light brown, with a dark half collar on the back of the neck. Pigeons have short necks, small heads, round bodies, and short wings. These wings are strong, so pigeons can fly far. Smaller doves have longer tails.

Wild rock doves live mainly near the Sea of Galilee and in ravines near the Dead Sea. They make their nests on cliffs and rocks (Song of Solomon 2:14; Jeremiah 48:28). All doves in Israel make fragile nests from small pieces of plants. They usually lay two eggs, twice a year. Both parents feed the young. They eat seeds and weeds. Parents make "pigeon's milk" (soft, partly digested food) in their crops and feed it to the chicks.

Male doves often compete for mates. The turtledove's courtship flight is very beautiful. Doves care for their mates and their young. Because of this, people have long used the dove as a sign of love and peace (Song of Solomon 1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2).

Ancient writers knew pigeons and turtledoves were different. Pigeons live in Israel all year and are easy to tame. Turtledoves are wild and visit only in the spring (Song of Solomon 2:12; Jeremiah 8:7). People kept turtledoves in cages as pets or for sacrifices. Pigeons may have been the first birds humans kept, possibly even in Noah's time (Genesis 8:8–12). In New Testament times, many pigeon houses (dovecotes) were near Herod the Great's palace in Jerusalem.

Pigeons in Bible Times

People valued doves and pigeons as gentle birds, as food, and for sacrifices. Turtledoves may have been seen as more special for sacrifice because they were harder to get. The Bible often mentions them in offerings (Genesis 15:7–10; Leviticus 1:14; 5:7; 12:6; Numbers 6:10; Luke 2:24). Other passages describe their:

- moaning sound (Isaiah 38:14; 59:11; Ezekiel 7:16; Nahum 2:7),
- flight (Psalm 55:6),
- beauty (Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1; 5:12),
- gentleness (Matthew 10:16), and
- loyalty (Song of Solomon 6:9).

Hosea 7:11 uses the dove as a picture of being too trusting.

At Jesus's baptism, the Holy Spirit came down like a dove (Matthew 3:16). Early Christians connected the dove with the Holy Spirit and the comfort the Spirit gives. The dove is still a common sign of the Holy Spirit today.

See also Birds.

Pilate, Pontius

Pilate served as the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26 to 36. Appointed by Emperor Tiberius, he is known for authorizing the crucifixion of Jesus and for maintaining Roman rule in the region.

See Ponitus Pilate.

Pildash

The sixth son of Nahor and Milcah. He was a nephew of the patriarch Abraham (Genesis 22:22).

Pileha, Pilha

Political leader who set his seal on Ezra's covenant during the postexilic era (Neh 10:24).

Pillar of Fire and Cloud

The Pillar of Fire and Cloud is one of the most common ways God appeared to humans in the Old Testament. It is a visual sign of God's presence, especially in stories about the exodus from Egypt, the Sinai covenant, the Israelites' time in the wilderness, and the dedication of the temple.

Descriptions in the Bible

The Bible describes this phenomenon in different ways:

- The pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 14:24)
- Pillar of cloud (Exodus 33:9–10; Numbers 14:14)
- Pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 14:14)
- Cloud (Exodus 40:34–35; Deuteronomy 1:33)
- Fire (Deuteronomy 1:33; 4:12)

The Concept of Shekinah

Although the Bible does not use the term "Shekinah," this word is often used in Christian theology to describe the cloud and other appearances of God (theophanies). "Shekinah" comes from rabbinic literature and refers to God's visible glory.

Roles of the Cloud Theophany

The cloud theophany had several roles, all as a visible expression of God's presence:

1. The cloud filled the tabernacle and stayed there day and night, showing God's presence (Exodus 40:34–38). God appeared in the cloud on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:2). When the temple was dedicated, the cloud showed God's acceptance of it as His dwelling place (1 Kings 8:10–11; 2 Chronicles 5:13–14).

2. The cloud protected Israel during the exodus. It positioned itself between the Egyptian and Israelite armies, bringing darkness to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites (Exodus 14:19–20). The psalmist remembered how God "spread a cloud as a covering and a fire to light up the night" (Psalm 105:39).
3. The cloud guided Israel during their journey through the wilderness. "The LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide their way by day, and in a pillar of fire to give them light by night, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place before the people" (Exodus 13:21–22). When the cloud lifted, the Israelites moved; when it settled, they camped (Numbers 9:17). Despite the people's sins, God continued to lead them (Deuteronomy 1:33). Later generations remembered that God guided them day and night (Nehemiah 9:12, 19; Psalm 78:14).
4. The cloud served as a way for God to speak (Psalm 99:7). He spoke from the cloud at Sinai (Exodus 19:9, 16; 34:1–25; Deuteronomy 4:11–12; 5:22) during moments of rebellion (Exodus 16:10; Numbers 14:10; 16:42–43), when Aaron and Miriam fought with Moses (Numbers 12:1–15), and when the 70 elders were chosen. Only Moses had direct access to God's words, when he went to the tabernacle, "the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance, and the LORD would speak with Moses" (Exodus 33:9). At Moses' death, God appeared in the pillar of cloud to speak about the nation's future (Deuteronomy 31:14–29).

Similar Theophanies

Other appearances of God are associated with clouds, fire, and light:

- Ezekiel saw an immense cloud with flashing lightning and brilliant light (Ezekiel 1:4). Inside, he saw fire, creatures serving God, God's throne, and God's presence (Ezekiel 1:5–28). He also saw the glory of God leaving and later returning to the temple (Ezekiel 10; 43).
- Daniel saw "One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven" to receive authority, glory, and power (Daniel 7:13). Jesus often referred to himself as the "Son of Man" in the Gospels.
- During the Transfiguration, clouds enveloped Jesus as he revealed his glory (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).
- Jesus was received into the clouds at his ascension, and angels reminded the apostles of his promise to return the same way (Acts 1:9–11; see Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7).

See also Glory; Shekinah; Theophany.

Piltai

Priest and head of Modiah's house during the days of Joiakim the high priest in the postexilic period (Neh 12:17).

Pim

Weight measurement equivalent to about two-thirds of a shekel. *See* Weights and Measures.

Pine Tree

A pine tree is an evergreen tree with needle-shaped leaves in clusters and seed-bearing cones. While there is some confusion about which exact conifer trees the Bible mentions, pines are likely referred to in several passages such as Leviticus 23:40; Nehemiah 8:15; Isaiah 41:19; and 60:13.

One of the pine trees found in Israel and the surrounding areas is the Brutian pine *(Pinus brutia)*. This tree grows in the mountain regions of northern Palestine. It can grow from 3 to 10.7 meters (10 to 35 feet) tall with spread-out growth and branches that circle around the trunk in rings.

Another type is the Aleppo pine *(Pinus halepensis)*. In the Berean Standard Bible, the Hebrew words sometimes translated as "fir" in older versions are more accurately translated as "cypress" or "pine." These trees may refer to the Aleppo pine or a similar species, such as the cypress (2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Kings 5:8, 10; 6:34; 2 Kings 19:23; 2 Chronicles 2:8; Psalms 104:17; Song of Songs 1:17; Isaiah 14:8; 37:24; 55:13; 60:13; Ezekiel 27:5; 31:8; Hosea 14:8; Nahum 2:3; Zechariah 11:2). The Aleppo pine grows from 2.7 to 18.3 meters tall (9 to 60 feet) with upward-spreading branches and yellowish or brownish smaller branches.

Pinon

One of the chiefs (leaders) descended from the patriarch Esau (Genesis 36:41; 1 Chronicles 1:52).

Pipe

English word that translates a number of Hebrew and Greek words designating various tubular wind instruments. *See* Musical Instruments.

Piram

King of Jarmuth, a Canaanite city located southwest of Jerusalem. After joining an alliance with four Amorite kings against Joshua, Piram—along with other kings—was defeated and killed (Jos 10:3).

Pirathon

The home of Abdon, one of the minor judges (Judges 12:13–15). The Bible describes it as being in the land of Ephraim and in the hill country of the Amalekites. This may mean that at first it belonged to the Amalekites. Or it may be that they seized it during one of their invasions.

The Bible calls Benaiah a “Pirathonite.” He was one of the mighty men of King David (2 Samuel 23:30; 1 Chronicles 11:31; 27:14). In general, this place is the same as Ferata. It is on a high rock 9.7 kilometers (six miles) southwest of Samaria.

Pishon

First of four divisions of the river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden (Gn 2:11). Suggestions for its identity include the Rion, the Indus, the Ganges, a canal connecting the Tigris and Euphrates, and a symbol of the Milky Way. No consensus exists on Pishon’s identity.

Pisidia

A region in the Roman province of Galatia, where Paul and Barnabas visited around AD 48.

Pisidia lies north of the Taurus mountains, which run along the Cilician and Pamphylian coasts. Pisidia lies on Anatolia's central plateau, at 1100 meters (3,600 feet) above sea level. The mountains separate it from the coastal regions. The area includes the Taurus foothills. It stretches about 640 kilometers (400 miles) long and 265 kilometers (165 miles) wide. It borders the large province of Asia to the west, Galatia to the north, and Lycaonia to the east. The people in these mountains had a reputation for being aggressive and difficult to control.

The Seleucids first brought them under control over many years. Later, the Romans did the same. Seleucus I Nicator, who ruled from 312 to 280 BC, founded the city of Antioch to help control these tribes. Amyntas of Galatia also fortified the city around 26 BC to improve security. When he died in 25 BC, Pisidia became part of the province of Galatia. Emperor Augustus completed the effort to bring peace to the region by founding five cities in addition to Antioch:

1. Crimma
2. Comana
3. Olba
4. Parlais
5. Lystra

Military roads connected all the cities to Antioch. An inscription discovered in 1912 shows that Quirinius was a governor of the region under Augustus (see Luke 2:2). Antioch was the capital of Pisidia. This city was on the main road between

Ephesus to the west and Derbe and Tarsus to the east. It was mainly a Roman colony (a settlement controlled by Rome), with a large Jewish community brought in by the Seleucids for trade.

Paul and Barnabas traveled through Pisidia at least twice on their way between Perga and Derbe (Acts 13:14; 14:24). In Antioch of Pisidia, one of the most important decisions in the history of Christian missionary work was made and announced. After most of the Jewish audience rejected their message, Paul and Barnabas started focusing on non-Jewish people. They said, "But since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). From now on, Paul and his friends focused on spreading their message to non-Jews. This made Christianity a worldwide religion, not just another Jewish sect.

Pison

KJV translation for the Pishon River in Genesis 2:11. *See* Pishon.

Pispa, Pispah

Jether's son from Asher's tribe (1 Chr 7:38).

Pistachio

The "pistachios" mentioned in Genesis 43:11 are probably pistachio nuts from the pistachio tree *(Pistacia vera),* which is closely related to the terebinth. The pistachio tree grows to a height of 3 to 9.1 meters (10 to 30 feet) with a spreading top. This tree can be found growing wild in many rocky areas of Lebanon and Israel and the surrounding areas. The pistachio nut has a light-colored shell, and the kernel inside has a sweet, delicate flavor that people enjoy wherever the tree grows.

See Food and Food Preparation, Terebinth.

Pistis Sophia

The Pistis Sophia is a Gnostic writing preserved in a fourth-century Coptic manuscript called Codex Askewanus. It is one of the most important surviving Gnostic texts. The book has four parts and is named after its central figure, Sophia (which means "wisdom"). However, only the first half focuses on her story.

The Pistis Sophia describes how Jesus, during the first 11 years after his resurrection, returned to teach his disciples the highest mystery of all: the Treasury of the Light. Jesus went back to the Mount of Olives, where he went up through the *aeons* (spiritual realms). On his journey, he reached the thirteenth *aeon* and found Sophia. She was grieving because she had seen the true Light but had been deceived by *Authades* (the "self-willed one"), who showed her a false light. This caused her to fall into the hands of the powers of matter. Despite this, she kept her hope and faith. After she prayed 12 times, Jesus rescued her from Authades and from chaos. He restored her to the lower part of the thirteenth aeon.

The story is told in the form of a dialogue in which Jesus answers his disciples' questions. The work reflects the Gnostic belief that salvation comes through secret knowledge that brings enlightenment and freedom from the material world.

See also Apocrypha.

Pit

Word used frequently in the OT to denote the grave, the abode of the dead, or Sheol—that is, a shadowy existence that the living feared because it cut them off from light, joy, and vitality. Godly people abhorred it because it seemed to them that it would negate their fellowship with God: Hezekiah (Is 38:17–18), Job (Jb 17:13–16; 33:22), and the psalmists (Pss 28:1; 30:3; 55:23; 88:4–6).

See also Bottomless Pit; Dead, Place of the; Death; Sheol.

Pitch

See Asphalt; Bitumen.

Pitcher

A pitcher is another word for a jar or jug used to carry and pour liquids, such as water or wine. Pitchers were often made of clay, but they could also be made of metal. People carried them on their shoulders or heads. In Bible times, women often

went to the well with pitchers to collect water (Genesis 24:14–20; Mark 14:13).

See Pottery.

Pithom

Pithom was one of the store cities built by the Israelites during their time as slaves in Egypt. The Bible mentions that the Israelites built both Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh (Exodus 1:11).

For more than 100 years, experts who study ancient Egypt have debated about where these cities were actually located. The location of Rameses is fairly well known. Most experts connect it with Pirameses. It was the capital of Pharaoh Ramses II, who ruled from 1290 to 1224 BC. Several ancient sites have been suggested as the location of Rameses. For many years, scholars thought it was at Tanis in the northeastern Nile Delta region. However, Qantir, which is in the same general area, is now considered the more likely location.

The name "Pithom" comes from an Egyptian phrase that means "House of [the god] Atum." This would have been a temple built to worship Atum, who was an Egyptian sun god. The Israelites would have been involved in building the storage facilities that were part of this temple. We can get a good idea of what these storage buildings looked like by studying similar structures from Ramses II's tomb temple in Thebes. These storage buildings are still well-preserved today. They were long rectangular structures with curved roofs, built side by side. These storage facilities covered a large area of the temple complex. This helps us understand the kind of buildings the Israelites were forced to make bricks for during their slavery in Egypt.

Although we know what the name Pithom means, its exact location is still being discussed by scholars. The two places most often suggested as the site of Pithom are Tell er-Retabah and Tell el-Maskhutah. Both of these ancient sites are located in the Wadi Tumilat, a valley that runs eastward from the Nile Delta to Lake Timsah.

In recent years, archaeologists have dug at both sites. They have found evidence that people from Palestine and Syria (called Asiatics) lived in both places. There might be a connection between the Arabic name "Maskhutah" and the Hebrew word "Succoth." Succoth is mentioned in Exodus 12:37 as a place where the Israelites stopped during their journey out of Egypt. Because of this possible connection, many scholars now think Tell er-Retabah is the most likely location for Pithom, while Tell el-Maskhutah might be Succoth.

See also Egypt, Egyptian; Rameses (Place).

Pithon

Benjaminite, Micah's son and a descendant of Jonathan (1 Chr 8:35; 9:41).

Pity

Pity is the feeling of sadness for someone who is suffering or in trouble. It often leads to kindness or help. The Bible often links pity with mercy (compassion and kindness shown to someone in need).

See Mercy.

Place of the Dead

The place of the dead is a term that describes the different ways the Bible speaks about where people go after they die.

In the Old Testament, two main words describe the place of the dead:

- Sheol: The place where people were thought to go after death. It was often pictured as being deep under the earth.
- "The pit": Another name for the place of the dead, similar to Sheol.

In the New Testament, more terms are used to describe places after death:

Place *of the Dead*

- Hades: The Greek word for the place of the dead, similar to Sheol.
- Gehenna: A place of punishment after death, named after a valley near Jerusalem where trash was burned.
- Paradise: A beautiful place where believers go to be with God after death.
- "Abraham's bosom": A phrase meaning the place of comfort and rest where righteous people go after death, close to Abraham (the father of the Jewish people).

The Jewish people came to understand more about what happens after death as time went on. In the early Old Testament, ideas about the afterlife were not very detailed. By the time of the New Testament, people had a more detailed idea about what happens after death.

The Place of the Dead in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not tell us much about what happens after death. According to some passages, when people died they went to a place called Sheol. This word is often translated as "grave," "hell," "pit," or simply "the dead." Sometimes Sheol just means a physical grave where someone is buried (Numbers 16:30, 33). Other instances refer to an underground world of the dead.

The Old Testament describes this place of the dead as being deep under the earth, where people "go down" when they die (Genesis 42:38; Proverbs 15:24; Ezekiel 26:20). It is described as a place of:

- A dark and gloomy place (Job 10:21–22)
- A place of silence (Psalms 94:17; 115:17)
- A place where everything is forgotten (Psalm 88:12)

In Sheol, people did not remember God or sing praises to him (Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 115:17). People believed that even God did not remember those who were in Sheol (Psalm 88:5, 11; Isaiah 38:18). The dead were thought to be completely separated from God and could not take part in what God was doing in the world.

However, there were some cases where the line between life and death seemed less fixed. For example, when someone came back to life (2 Kings 4:32–37). Another example is when Saul spoke to Samuel's spirit (1 Samuel 28:7–25). God's law did not allow the Jewish people to try to communicate with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:11). This was important because the nations around Israel often worshiped the dead as part of their religion.

Life in the place of the dead was not really life as we know it. But it was a kind of existence, typically one where the dead were with their ancestors (Genesis 25:8; Ezekiel 32:17–30). God's power could reach the underworld (Psalm 139:8; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2). Sheol was pictured as a hungry monster eating the living (Proverbs 27:20; 30:16). But God's power could save one from Sheol (Psalms 49:15; 86:13).

By the end of the Old Testament period, people began to hope that God would eventually save them from death (Job 14:13–22; 19:25–27; Psalms 49:15; 73:23–28). Daniel was the only writer who clearly wrote about this hope (Daniel 12:1–2). The ancient Israelites did not look forward to death the way Paul did in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 5:1–8; Philemon 1:21–23). However, they came to understand that death was not the end of everything. There was still hope.

The Place of the Dead in Writings from the Time Between the Old and New Testaments

An important change happened between the Old and New Testament times (586 BC to AD 30). During this time, the Jewish people learned new ideas about what happens after death from their Persian and Greek neighbors.

When scholars translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, they needed to choose Greek words to match the Hebrew words. They used the Greek word "hades" to translate "Sheol" because both words meant "the place of the dead." Later, the New Testament writers also used the word "hades" when they wrote about where people go after death.

During this time, people developed new ideas about what happens after death. One popular belief appears in an ancient book called 1 Enoch, chapter 22. This book described the dead being kept in hollow spaces inside a big mountain until God's final judgment. There were different spaces for different people:

***Place** of the Dead*

- A pleasant area for people who had lived good lives
- An unpleasant area for people who had lived wicked lives

Other writers kept the old idea from the Old Testament that described the place of the dead (called hades or Sheol) as somewhere people were separated from God and could not be happy (Sirach 14:12, 16; 17:27–28).

During this time, Jewish people began using a new word: "Gehenna." This was named after the Hinnom Valley, which was south of Jerusalem. This valley was known for terrible things that happened there:

- In Old Testament times, it was a place where people sacrificed children to false gods (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6).
- In New Testament times, it was used as a garbage dump where fires burned constantly.

People began using the word "Gehenna" to describe the final place where evil people would go after death. They believed it would be a place of suffering (1 Enoch 90:20–27; 2 Esdras 7:70).

In contrast, they believed good people would go to a place called "paradise." This word came from Persian language and meant "a beautiful garden." They thought paradise would be a place of joy and happiness.

When the New Testament writers wrote about hades, Gehenna, and paradise, they explained these places in ways that connected them to what Jesus taught.

The Place of the Dead in the New Testament

Although the New Testament uses many terms for the afterlife, it does not speak about it often—only 35 verses in total. Most of these passages are in the Gospels and the book of Revelation. The apostle Paul spoke a lot about heaven, but only Jesus and John said much about hell.

The Place of the Dead in the Teachings of Jesus

Jesus only used the word "hades" one time, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). In this story, hades is described as a place where evil people go when they die. It is a place of suffering, where people feel pain as if they were burning in fire, even though their physical bodies have died. Those who are suffering there cannot get any comfort or relief.

When evil people die, they first go to hades. But their final place will be Gehenna. Jesus described Gehenna as a place of fire and worms (Matthew 5:22, 29–30; 18:9; Mark 9:48; compare Isaiah 66:24). Jesus also referred to Gehenna as "the outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). After God's final judgment, Jesus will send evil people to Gehenna (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1). Like Sheol in the Old Testament, Gehenna is a place where people are separated from God.

When Jesus preached about turning away from sin, he warned people about the dangers of Gehenna. He did not say as much about where the righteous go when they die. The righteous will enter into "the kingdom" after the last judgment (Matthew 25:34). The righteous go to a happy place right after they die. Jesus mentioned this twice:

1. In one story, a poor man named Lazarus went to "Abraham's bosom," a place of comfort and peace (Luke 16:22).
2. Jesus promised a dying criminal that they would meet in "paradise" on the day they died (Luke 23:43).

Later, Paul wrote about paradise as if it was the same as heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–3). John wrote that paradise would be part of the new heaven and new earth that God will create (Revelation 2:7; 21:1–2; 22:1–2).

The Place of the Dead in the New Testament Letters

The writers of the New Testament letters, including Paul, did not say much about where evil people go after death. Paul only mentioned "the abyss" once. He used this word to mean Sheol (Romans 10:7). When Paul wrote about Jesus going to "lower parts of the earth," he likely meant that Christ went to the place of the dead when he died (Ephesians 4:9). Jewish teachers used the phrase "the lowest earth" to talk about Sheol, hades, and Gehenna.

Peter wrote that after Jesus died, his spirit went to a "prison" where he "preached to the spirits" (1

Place *of the Dead*

Peter 3:18–20). People understand this passage in different ways:

- Some think Jesus went to hades and preached to evil angels from Noah's time (called "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1–4).
- Others think he preached to the spirits of dead people.

In 2 Peter 2:4, Peter used the Greek word "Tartarus" when writing about a prison for spirits. This is usually translated as "hell" in English Bibles and was another Greek name for the world of the dead.

Paul wrote a lot about where the righteous go after they die. In his early letters, he only wrote about them being raised from death (1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). But after he almost died himself, he began to write about where people go when they die (2 Corinthians 1:8–11). Dying means being with Jesus, which is better than staying alive (Philemon 1:23). When we leave our physical bodies, we go to be with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paul probably meant that people who follow God go straight to paradise to be with Jesus when they die (compare 2 Corinthians 12:2–4, where Paul called paradise "the third heaven"). Nothing, not even death, can separate Christians from Jesus (Romans 8:38–39). Instead, death brings them into the presence of God.

The Place of the Dead in the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation talks a lot about where people and spirits go after death, especially evil ones. It uses two different names

1. "The abyss" (also called the bottomless pit). This is where evil spirits are kept. Evil creatures come from here to hurt people (Revelations 9:1–11). The "beast" also comes from here. It kills God's two witnesses and carries the "great prostitute"(Revelation 11:7; 17). Satan will be imprisoned there (Revelation 20:2–3). Jesus said this place was made for the devil and his evil angels (compare Matthew 25:41).
2. "Hades." This is where dead humans go.

The good news for Christians is that Jesus is in control of these places. At the beginning of Revelation, Jesus says he has the keys to hades (Revelation 1:18). He will rescue the dead from there (Revelation 20:13). Satan does not control the abyss. Only God's messengers are allowed to use its key (Revelation 9:1; 20:1). In the end, hades, death, and the wicked will be thrown into the lake of fire (Gehenna), where they will suffer eternal torment (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14–15; 21:8).

John, who wrote the book of Revelation, agreed with Paul about what happens to the righteous when they die. They do not go to hades like the wicked do. Instead, they go to heaven.

John describes two scenes in heaven:

- People who died for their faith (martyrs) are under God's altar, asking him to bring justice for what happened to them (Revelation 6:9–11).
- A huge crowd of Christians stands before God's throne, praising him (Revelation 7:9–17). Jesus takes care of them like a shepherd, and they no longer experience hunger, thirst, pain, or sadness.

Conclusion

In the Old Testament, people first thought everyone went to one place called Sheol, where they would be separated from life and God. Later, people began to understand there were two different places people could go.

According to Christian teaching, the wicked first go to hades, a place of suffering. They stay there until God's final judgment. Then they will be thrown into the lake of fire (Gehenna). It is important to understand that Jesus, not the devil, controls these places, just as he controls everything.

For the righteous, the path is different. They do not go to hades. Instead, they go to paradise (also called "Abraham's bosom" or heaven). In paradise, they are with Jesus. They can see what they previously believed by faith. Their suffering ends and they experience joy. Instead of having to pray to God, they praise him directly.

Christians believe that even though death is scary and is called "the last enemy," they do not need to fear it. Death cannot cause them suffering or

separate them from Jesus. Instead, it brings them face-to-face with Jesus, whom they love.

Whether the righteous meet Jesus right when they die or when he raises them from death later does not matter. This is because the time between death and meeting Jesus is like being asleep. So, for people who believe in Jesus, the very next thing they will experience after dying is meeting him.

Both the Old and New Testaments compare death to sleep. In the Old Testament, when someone died, people often said they went to sleep or rest with their fathers (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12). Jesus also described death as being like sleep (Matthew 9:24; John 11:11). So did the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:30; 15:20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). They often compared death to sleep because death is not permanent. People will wake up from it. Even in the Old Testament, in Daniel 12:2, death is described as a sleep that people will wake from. Some will wake up to live forever with God, while others will wake up to face shame and rejection that lasts forever.

See also Gehenna; Hades; Heaven; Hell; Intermediate State; Paradise; Sheol.

Plague

A word used to refer to a disease, disaster, or pestilence (a widespread disease resulting in many deaths). "Plague" in Scripture does not mean a specific disease. It refers to multiple diseases (1 Kings 8:37; Luke 7:21). "Plague" can mean an epidemic disease or widespread disaster. It can refer to the ten plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7–12).

The Hebrews believed plagues were part of God's judgment on people. God threatened to send plagues to the Israelites for their sins (Leviticus 26:21) and took full responsibility for the Egyptian plagues (Joshua 24:5). The Old Testament plagues demonstrated God's control over the processes of nature, just as Christ's miracles do in the New Testament.

At one point in the history of Israel, the Philistines won a battle and captured the ark of God (1 Samuel 4:10–11). When the ark was kept at Ashdod, God showed his power. A fatal disease with swellings or tumors spread (1 Samuel 5:6). The Philistines sent the ark on to Gath, but people of all ages began to have tumors in the region of the groin (1 Samuel 5:9). A similar occurrence at the next city, Ekron, resulted in many deaths (1 Samuel 5:12).

After seven months, the Philistines decided to return the ark of God to Israel. They included a guilt offering of five golden rats and five golden tumors (1 Samuel 6:1–4). They chose this unusual offering because the Philistine prophets linked the plague on them to the swarms of rodents that infested the land (1 Samuel 6:5). The first Israelite village to receive the ark of God from the Philistines was punished for looking into it. They got the same disease (1 Samuel 6:19). The sickness in Beth-shemesh left 50,070 people dead.

See also Disease; Exodus, Book of; Pestilence; Plagues upon Egypt.

Plagues upon Egypt

Unprecedented series of disasters striking Egypt, probably culminating in spring or early summer (c. 1400 BC). They struck particularly the Nile Delta, although apparently not affecting the area called Goshen. These disasters were of such magnitude that the Egyptians from their earliest history could recall nothing like them (Ex 9:24).

Preview

- The Plagues
- Pharaoh and the Plagues
- The Nature of the Plagues

The Plagues

The plagues are described in Exodus 7–11. At first sight one might imagine that the plagues took place in succession within a few weeks, but casual notes of time (see 7:25; 9:31–32), as well as the nature of some of the plagues, would suggest that several months may well have been involved. The first plague was the turning of water into blood (7:20), so that the fish died and the water stank. Next came a plague of frogs (8:6); even after their death, the land was strewn with piles of their bodies (v 14). Next came a plague of lice (v 17), or possibly gnats, sandflies, or mosquitoes. The exact sense of the word is not clear, but it obviously means some small irritating creature. After that came "swarms of flies" (v 24). Again, the meaning is not quite clear. Later Jewish tradition made it swarms of wild beasts, but flies is a much more likely sense. Then some sort of cattle plague struck (9:3), affecting the domestic animals. After that came boils on humans (v 9), boils that erupted into painful blisters and vesicles, apparently irritating rather than fatal. Hail

followed (v 18), so severe that nothing like it had been seen before—hail associated with thunder and lightning (v 24). This was so heavy that it could be fatal (v 19), and naturally did great harm to the crops of Egypt (v 31). After that came locusts in vast numbers (10:13)—again on an unparalleled scale. Then came three days of complete darkness (v 22) that brought Egyptian life to a standstill. Finally, all the firstborn of the Egyptians died (12:29)—from Pharaoh's household down to the lowliest homes in the land.

All the plagues are seen in the Bible as successive judgments of God. Normally, each is preceded by a warning from Moses, which is disregarded by Pharaoh, and then each is lifted as a result of temporary repentance on the part of Pharaoh. But it is also clear that the plagues gradually increase in severity and intensity, until the climax comes in the death of the firstborn—with that, even Pharaoh is broken. The first plagues represent discomfort rather than danger for the Egyptians; then their animals and crops are struck down; finally death takes the firstborn, the flower of the nation.

There are certain common features that run through the account of the plagues. At first, Pharaoh's magicians try to belittle the plagues, and the signs that precede them, by producing similar effects themselves (7:11–12; 8:7). This is an interesting warning that miracles may be produced from various sources and that this sort of sign is therefore not important in itself. But the time comes when the magicians are beaten and can no longer compete (8:18); even they admit that this is God's hand (v 19). When the plague of boils comes, the magicians cannot even present themselves before Pharaoh, so bad is their condition. After that, the magicians disappear from the story.

Another motif that becomes increasingly clear as the account of the plagues continues, is the increasing emphasis on the way in which God's people, living in Goshen, were delivered from the plagues that affected the Egyptians. It could be assumed anyway that, as Goshen was not on the Nile, the water that turned to blood and the plague of frogs and mosquitoes might affect them less. But in the case of the later swarms of flies (8:22), the cattle plague (9:4), the hail (v 26), and the darkness (10:23), we are specifically told that Israel was spared; in the case of the death of the firstborn, the Lord "passed over" Israelite homes.

At first, it seems as if the hearts of all the Egyptians are just as hard as that of the pharaoh (7:13). Yet as the story goes on, his own people keep urging him to yield to God. The magicians admit God's role in the plague of lice (8:19). Pharaoh's servants who heeded God's warning through Moses brought their servants and cattle indoors before the great hailstorms, and thus escaped loss and death (9:20). Only the unbelieving suffered. Finally, Pharaoh's own servants exhorted him to let Israel go, bluntly telling him that the land was being ruined by his stubbornness (10:7).

Pharaoh and the Plagues

Pharaoh's reaction to God's word is remarkable. Scripture describes the hardness of Pharoah's heart in three ways. Exodus 7:3 speaks of God hardening Pharaoh's heart; 7:14 has the neutral statement that Pharaoh's heart was hardened; and 8:15 has Pharaoh hardening his own heart. Obviously, these all refer to the same process, which must be taken into account in any explanation. Furthermore, Paul must be allowed to have the last word on the matter (Rom 9:18).

But, within this theological framework, there is quite a movement, not merely a succession of shallow repentances designed to secure the removal of the plague, and then a renewed stubbornness, calling down a fresh judgment. There is also a typically Asian bargaining session between Pharaoh and Moses. After Pharaoh's broken promises to let the people go (8:8), he tries to bargain: the people should sacrifice to God in Egypt, without going at all (v 25); only the men should go (10:11); they should all go, but leave their flocks and herds as hostage (v 24). But there can be no bargaining of this sort in response to the call of God, as Pharaoh was to learn. After the death of the firstborn, he was glad to see the Israelites leave (12:31–33).

In this sense, the whole story of the plagues is a struggle. It has sometimes been seen as the struggle of the prototype prophet, Moses (Dt 18:15), against the prototype king, Pharaoh; while it may be that, it is far more. It is the struggle of Moses, the servant of God, against the magicians. It is the struggle of Moses against mighty Pharaoh, or rather, the confrontation of Pharaoh by God, in the form of the word brought by his servant. At the deepest level, it is a victory won by God over the false gods of Egypt. This gives to many of the stories their peculiar relish. For the Nile is the god Hapi; Hept the frog is a god of fertility and childbirth; Ra the sun (outraged by the darkness) is a god; Hat-hot had the form of a heifer, and Apis that of a bull; the flying hornet symbolized Egypt; and Pharaoh

himself was a god. Yet all were helpless before the God of Israel.

The Nature of the Plagues

It is not known how God brought about the plagues, and some may think it vain even to ask, since God is free to use whatever means he pleases. Yet the statement that God turned back the waters of the "Reed Sea" by a strong east wind (Ex 14:21) indicates that God could use natural means to bring about his will. The Hebrew concept of "miracle" was not the same as the modern one, which usually regards miracles as "supernatural" and sees all else as "natural" and thus as nonmiraculous. The Hebrews, however, regarded everything in nature as the work of God; it was only that in certain instances he had acted more "wonderfully" (perhaps one would say more "obviously") than others. Therefore, there is nothing in any way rationalistic in saying that on this occasion God may have sent a series of "natural" disasters (the sort of disasters to which Egypt was geographically prone) but so heightened them—and sent them in such rapid succession—that they constituted miracles.

Most of the explanations of this sort assume a year of unusual climatic conditions, and in particular, a variation in the annual rise of the Nile. For instance, either an exceptionally low rise of the Nile (leading to red and muddy water) or an exceptionally high rise of the Nile (bringing down red earth from the Ethiopian highlands) have been suggested as explanations of the first plague. If one feels that the description "turned into blood" would be satisfied by thick blood-colored water, then either would be satisfactory. Another attractive suggestion is the multiplication of red plankton in the water. This phenomenon is fairly common across the world, especially in tropical and subtropical areas. This would make the likeness to blood much closer. In either of these cases, death of fish in foul water, and migration of frogs from the river would be understandable. If the Nile was flooding more widely than usual, the plague of frogs would be even more understandable. Some have seen the sudden death of the frogs as due to some type of internal anthrax; and, with piles of stinking frogs' bodies in the fields, the way was laid wide open both for the carriers of the plagues (flies, etc.) and the plagues that followed.

The next plague, for instance, was one of mosquitoes, sandflies, gnats, or possibly lice. At least the first and the last are potent carriers of disease, and all would cause irritant sores by their bites. The flooding of the stagnant waters of the Nile would give perfect breeding conditions for mosquitoes in particular.

If we are right in assuming that the swarms that followed were swarms of flies, then everything would fit into a divine pattern. Piles of dead frogs, piles of rubbish strewn over the land by the flood (including, no doubt, raw sewage), foul and muddied Nile waters—this would be a prime breeding place for flies. Further, Jewish interpreters suggest that the flies in question were biting or stinging flies (like our gadflies or horseflies). Perhaps these were the agents of the disease of the cattle. Modern interpreters have suggested a particular type of fly, still known in the area, which multiplies very rapidly amid rotting vegetation. The flies and the dust (9:9) between them could have produced that dreaded tropical scourge "prickly heat," easily becoming infected.

Again, in the providence of God, if the Israelites were not in the Delta area, nor actually living along the Nile itself, but concentrated in the Wadi Tumilat to the east, they would be spared these plagues—a fact that did not escape Pharaoh's notice (9:7). The miracle thus lay in God's overruling providence, using his world and its geographic and climatic conditions to do his work of judgment on the stubborn-hearted.

Hail, accompanied by violent thunderstorms (9:24), would be easily explicable (although rare in Egypt), especially in the "funnel" conditions of the Nile Valley, surrounded by hot, dry desert on either side. As to the severity of the hail (more common in Palestine), there are biblical parallels (Jos 10:11). With this plague there is a valuable note of time, given incidentally (Ex 9:31–32) in connection with the crops destroyed by the hail.

In the case of the plague of locusts, God's use of the elements of nature is made plain in the text, where an "east wind" brings them and a "sea wind" takes them away (10:13, 19). The "plague" here is both the enormous number of locusts (see Jl 1:1–12 for another illustration of this scourge) and the timing of their arrival. There are many other places in the OT where the precision of God's timing is shown and where indeed the miraculous element lies in the timing of the event.

The locusts may have darkened the land with their numbers (Ex 10:15), but that was nothing compared with the three days of darkness that followed. Most commentators are agreed that this

is the dreaded *khamsin,* the hot desert wind bringing dust storms or sandstorms that fill the sky and may last for days without respite. If the red earth from the Ethiopian highlands had been brought down by the floodwaters of the Nile and deposited widely over the land, some commentators have suggested that it was whipped into the air by this wind, thus giving an even darker pall over the land.

In the case of the last plague, the death of the firstborn, we have no indication of what, if any, particular disease was used by God. Scripture gives us no clue. What can be said is that the Egyptians suffered but the Israelites did not. After this plague, they were free. Henceforth, it was their glad knowledge that none of "the plagues of Egypt" would strike them as God's people (15:26). It was their unshakable belief that these plagues were God's judgment, a punishment on stubborn Pharaoh, but the means of their salvation. Therefore, the plagues are not only a warning to us but also an encouragement. *See* Egypt, Egyptian; Exodus, Book of; Moses; Plague.

Plain of the Pillar

KJV for "oak of the pillar," a sacred tree at Shechem, in Judges 9:6. *See* Oak of the Pillar.

Plane Tree

A large spreading tree that has a wide trunk and scaly bark. It is native to the region of Palestine. This tree belongs to a family with bell-shaped fruit clusters. Usually, its outer bark flakes off in patches or strips. The references in Genesis 30:37 and Ezekiel 31:8 are apparently not to the chestnut tree, which does not naturally grow in Palestine. These are references to the oriental plane tree, *Platanus orientalis*.

The plane tree is a massive tree that can grow 18.3 meters (60 feet) or more in height. Its trunk is often very thick, sometimes reaching around 12.2 meters (40 feet) in circumference. The outer bark peels off in sheets or scales, revealing a smooth whitish or yellowish inner bark underneath.

This tree is common throughout Lebanon, Syria, and the region of Palestine. It can grow even in high mountain regions. However, it is mainly found in plains and lowlands, growing alongside streams and lakes and in wet, marshy places.

Plants

Identifying plants mentioned in the Bible has always been difficult. This is partly because people often think that plants like elm, sycamore, lily, rose, and vine in the Bible are the same as modern plants with these names. Also, people sometimes assume that all plants growing in the Holy Land today were there in biblical times. Or, people sometimes assume that all plants mentioned in the Bible can still be found there today.

Unfortunately, many plants that are common in the Holy Land today did not exist there during biblical times. On the other hand, many plants that once grew abundantly in that area are now extinct. Some plants disappeared because foreign species invaded their habitat. Others have been eliminated or nearly eliminated because of too much farming, the cutting down of forests, and the resulting changes in climate and other environmental conditions.

At one time, the region was full of palm trees. The date palm was as common and typical there as it was in Egypt. Today, the date palm is much less common in the region. Similarly, in ancient times, tall cedar trees covered the slopes of Lebanon and other mountain ranges. Now, the few remaining cedar trees must be carefully fenced in to protect them from being trampled and eaten by goats.

Specific types of plants are listed below. Click on a plant listed below to access the full-length article.

Types of Plants

- Acacia: A thorny tree or bush that grows in hot, dry areas, especially in the deserts of the Sinai Peninsula and the Jordan River Valley.
- Acanthus: A flowering plant with large, spiny leaves that was used as a design pattern in ancient Greek and Roman architecture.
- Algum: A rare, valuable wood from trees that King Solomon imported for building the temple in Jerusalem.
- Almond: A tree that produces edible nuts and is one of the first trees to bloom in spring in the Middle East.
- Almug: A precious wood imported by Solomon, likely sandalwood, used for making pillars and musical instruments.
- Aloe: A desert plant with thick, spiky leaves that produces a healing gel used for medicine and perfumes in biblical times.
- Apple: A round fruit with crisp flesh that grows on trees throughout the Mediterranean region.
- Apricot: A small, orange fruit with a large seed that is similar to a peach.
- Aromatic Cane: A species of fragrant reed used by the Israelites as a perfume.
- Ash: A type of tree that grows in many parts of the world, including the Middle East.
- Aspen: A tree with heart-shaped leaves that tremble in the slightest breeze.
- Balm: A fragrant resin from trees in Gilead that was used for healing wounds and as a valuable trade item.

- Barley: A grain crop that ripens earlier than wheat and was a staple food for common people in biblical times.
- Bdellium: A yellowish, fragrant resin that resembles wax and was compared to the appearance of manna in the Bible.
- Bean: A nutritious vegetable that grows in pods and was commonly eaten in ancient Israel.
- Bitter Herbs: Edible plants with a sharp, unpleasant taste that were eaten during Passover to remember the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.
- Boxthorn: A thorny shrub with small red berries that grows in dry regions of the Middle East.
- Box Tree: An evergreen tree with dense wood that was used for fine carvings and musical instruments.
- Bramble: A thorny, wild shrub that produces berries and appears in Jotham's fable about choosing a king.
- Broom: A desert shrub with small leaves and white flowers that provides shade.
- Buckthorn: A thorny shrub or small tree with berries that grows in the Mediterranean region.
- Bush: A general term for a low-growing, woody plant with multiple stems.
- Buttercup: A small, bright yellow flower that grows in fields throughout the Middle East.
- Calamus: A sweet-smelling cane plant used as an ingredient in the sacred anointing oil described in Exodus.
- Cane, Sweet Cane: A tall grass plant grown for its sweet sap.

- Caper Plant: A small shrub that grows from rocky cracks, producing edible flower buds used for seasoning.
- Carob Tree: A large evergreen tree that produces long, edible pods.
- Cassia: A cinnamon-like spice used in the holy anointing oil and as a fragrant perfume in biblical times.
- Castor Oil Plant: A plant with large leaves and seeds that produce oil.
- Cedar: A tall, fragrant evergreen tree from Lebanon that was highly prized for building temples and palaces.
- Chicory: A blue-flowering plant with a root that can be roasted and used as a coffee substitute.
- Cinnamon: An aromatic spice made from tree bark that was used in the holy anointing oil and as a perfume.
- Citron Tree: An evergreen tree that produces large, lemon-like fruits.
- Coriander: An herb with seeds that were compared to manna in the Bible and used as a spice in cooking.
- Cotton: A plant that produces soft fibers used for making cloth.
- Cucumber: A vegetable that grows on vines and was one of the foods the Israelites remembered eating in Egypt.
- Cummin: A small plant with aromatic seeds used as a spice and mentioned by Jesus when speaking of tithing.
- Cypress: A tall, cone-shaped evergreen tree valued for its durable, aromatic wood used in shipbuilding and construction.
- Dandelion: A common plant with yellow flowers and puffy seed heads that grows throughout the Middle East.

- Darnel Grass: A weed that closely resembles wheat until it matures.
- Dill: A fragrant herb used for flavoring food and mentioned by Jesus in his teachings about tithing.
- Ebony: A dark, heavy wood imported from Africa or India that was highly valued for decorative purposes.
- Endive: A leafy vegetable with a slightly bitter taste that may have been among the bitter herbs eaten at Passover.
- Fig, Fig Tree: A tree that produces sweet fruits and appears frequently in the Bible as a symbol of peace and prosperity.
- Fir Tree: An evergreen tree whose wood was used alongside cedar in building Solomon's temple.
- Flax: A plant with blue flowers whose stems provide fibers for making linen cloth and whose seeds produce linseed oil.
- Frankincense: A valuable, fragrant resin burned as incense in worship and brought as a gift to baby Jesus.
- Galbanum: A strong-smelling gum resin used as an ingredient in the sacred incense of the tabernacle.
- Gall: A bitter, poisonous plant used in the Bible to symbolize poison, suffering, or God’s judgment.
- Garlic: A bulb with a strong smell and flavor that the Israelites remembered eating in Egypt.
- Hedge: A fence made of living plants used to protect fields and vineyards.
- Henna: A plant whose leaves yield a reddish-orange dye used for coloring hair, skin, and fabric.
- Hyacinth: A spring-flowering bulb plant with clusters of fragrant flowers.

- Hyssop: A small bush used for sprinkling blood or water in purification rituals.
- Juniper: An evergreen shrub or small tree whose shade protected Elijah as he fled from Jezebel.
- Leek: A vegetable with a mild onion flavor that the Israelites remembered eating in Egypt.
- Lentil: A small, round seed from a plant in the bean family.
- Lettuce: A leafy vegetable that may have been among the bitter herbs eaten at Passover.
- Lily: A beautiful flowering plant known for their bright colors and pleasant smell.
- Lotus Bush, Lotus Tree: A thorny desert shrub that provided food and shade in wilderness areas.
- Mallow, Saltwort: A plant with edible leaves that was gathered by the poor for food during times of famine.
- Mandrake: A plant with roots resembling human figures that was believed to help with fertility.
- Melon: A sweet, juicy fruit with a hard outer skin and many seeds inside.
- Millet: A small-seeded grain used to make bread, especially during times of scarcity.
- Mint: A fragrant herb used for flavoring food and mentioned by Jesus in his teachings about tithing.
- Mulberry: A tree that produces dark, blue-purple berries that people can eat.
- Mustard: A plant that grows from a tiny seed into a large bush.
- Myrrh: A valuable, fragrant resin used in perfumes, medicines, and burial preparations.

- Myrtle: An evergreen shrub with fragrant leaves and white flowers.
- Narcissus: A bulb plant with fragrant, trumpet-shaped flowers that blooms in the spring.
- Nard, Spikenard: An expensive perfume made from the roots of a Himalayan plant.
- Nettle: A plant covered with stinging hairs that grows in neglected areas.
- Nutmeg Flower: A plant whose black seeds were used as a spice and possibly mixed with bread dough.
- Oak: A large, long-lived tree that often served as a landmark and meeting place in biblical times.
- Oil Tree, Oleaster: A small tree similar to an olive but with smaller, less valuable fruit, used for making oil.
- Oleander: A poisonous flowering shrub that grows near wadis (dry stream beds) in the Middle East.
- Olive, Olive Tree: A tree that produces oil-rich fruits central to the diet, economy, and religious life of biblical Israel.
- Onion: A bulb vegetable with a strong flavor that the Israelites remembered eating in Egypt.
- Palm, Date Palm: A tall tree with a crown of large leaves that provided food, shade, and building materials in biblical times.
- Papyrus: A tall water plant whose stems were used to make writing material, boats, and the basket that carried baby Moses.
- Pine Tree: An evergreen tree whose resinous wood was used in construction.
- Pistachio Tree: A large tree that produces edible nuts. It is closely related to the Terebinth.

- Plane Tree: A large shade tree with mottled bark that sheds in patches, mentioned in Ezekiel's riddle.
- Pomegranate: A fruit with many seeds that decorated Solomon's temple and symbolized fertility and abundance.
- Poplar: A tall tree with trembling leaves that Jacob used in his breeding of livestock.
- Prickly Alhagi: A small shrub that grows in dry, rocky places that produces a sweet from its leaves and stems.
- Quince: A yellow, aromatic fruit similar to an apple that may have been the "apple" mentioned in some Bible passages.
- Reed: A tall grass growing near water that was used for making pens, measuring rods, and musical instruments.
- Rue: A strong-smelling herb used for medicinal purposes and mentioned by Jesus in his teachings about tithing.
- Rush: A water plant similar to a reed, used for making baskets, mats, and the ark that carried baby Moses.
- Saffron: A valuable spice made from crocus flower stigmas, mentioned in the Song of Solomon as a fragrant plant.
- Sage: An aromatic herb used for flavoring food and for medicinal purposes.
- Spelt: A grain similar to wheat but with a tougher husk, used for making bread in ancient times.
- Storax Tree, Sweet Storax: A tree that produces a sweet-smelling resin used in perfumes and possibly as an ingredient in holy incense.

- Sweet Bay Tree, Bay Laurel: An aromatic evergreen tree whose leaves were used for flavoring food and making victory wreaths.
- Sycamore: A tree that produces fig-like fruits and has wood used for building.
- Tamarisk: A small, fast-growing tree or shrub with strong, durable wood.
- Terebinth: A large tree with thick branches. It is closely related to the Pistachio Tree.
- Thistle, Thorn: Prickly plants used in the Bible as symbols of the curse on the ground and of worthless people or teachings.
- Tulip: A spring-flowering bulb plant with cup-shaped flowers.
- Tumbleweed: A plant that breaks off at the root when mature and is blown by the wind.
- Vegetable: Any edible plant part grown in gardens.
- Vine, Wild Vine: A vine is any plant with a flexible stem that climbs, twines, or spreads along a surface or support.
- Walnut: A tree that produces nutritious nuts enclosed in a hard shell.
- Water Lily: A flowering plant that grows in ponds and slow streams throughout the Middle East.
- Wheat: A grain crop harvested after barley and used to make bread.
- Willow: A tree or shrub with long, narrow leaves and flexible branches.
- Wild Gourd: A climbing plant with bitter fruits.
- Wormwood: A bitter plant used as a symbol of sorrow and divine judgment in the Bible.

Pledge

See Banker, Banking.

Pleiades

The Pleiades is a constellation (group of stars) that appears in the eastern night sky. While people can usually see six bright stars with their eyes alone, special cameras on telescopes show many more stars in this group. These stars are surrounded by clouds of gas and dust that connect them. In the Bible, God asks Job: "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loosen the belt of Orion?" (Job 38:31).

See also Orion.

Plow, Plowman, Plowshare

See Agriculture.

Plumb Line, Plummet

Cord with a weight attached, used to ensure the straightness of a wall.

Pochereth-hazzebaim, Pochereth of Zebaim

The head of a family of Solomon's servants who returned from the exile in Babylon with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:57; Nehemiah 7:59). Some translations, like the King James Version, write the name as "Pochereth of Zebaim," treating Zebaim as a place name.

Poetry, Biblical

Poetic language in Scripture.

In the Old Testament

The OT contains all that we know of the poetry of Israel, and what we have occupies an important place in that literature. It was presumably well known throughout the ancient Near East, for its fame had spread even to Babylon (Ps 137:3). Much of the OT is poetic in spirit and structure—a feature of the prophetic writings as well as the poetic literature. In the former are found passages of elevated poetry, studded with brilliant gems of imagery. The movement is rhythmical, with meter, parallelism, and strophic arrangement, as in the poetry books.

The English Revised Version of the Bible (1881) first rendered a great service to English readers by printing OT poetry in parallel lines. Where this is not done in the prophetic literature, the poetic quality of these books is obscured. Note that besides the OT books recognized as poetry—the Psalms, Job, Lamentations, Song of Songs, and Proverbs—Ecclesiastes and the Prophets consist of prose and poetry. The historical books also contain fine examples of poetry.

The Hebrew language was an ideal instrument for expressing poetic speech. Its simplicity of form combined intensity of feeling and pictorial power and allowed great play of imagination. Figures, metaphors, and hyperboles are extremely common. In its powerful imagery the genius of Hebrew poetry comes to its finest expression.

The normal unit of Hebrew verse is the couplet of two parallel lines. But this is not the only grouping of lines in Hebrew poetry. Units of three (Pss 1:1; 5:11; 45:1–2), four (Pss 1:3; 55:21; Prv 27:15–16), five (Ps 6:6–7; Prv 24:23–25), six (Ps 99:1–3; Prv 30:21–23), and even larger combinations of parallel lines occur.

As far as can be determined, meter is absent from biblical poetry. Certainly there is little concern for the careful meter that marks classic Greek and Latin, as well as much of English, poetry. The only exception is found in wailing songs or laments (Jer 9:18–20; Lam 1–4). This is called the lamentation meter, where the verse is in two parts. Rhyme also is so rare as to be almost nonexistent.

On the other hand, Hebrew poetry is rhythmical—one of its distinguishing features. Its rhythm recurs with stressed and unstressed syllables in relatively regular succession. There are usually three or four accents or beats to a line, but the rhythmic unit is not uniform. Rhythm in Hebrew poetry, however, is not confined to the balance of accents or beats in a line. The meaning of the words and their position in the line are also significant—a feature called parallelism. This distinguishing characteristic was first clearly recognized by Dr. Robert Lowth, who in 1753 developed the principle of parallelism.

He distinguished three types. The first is *synonymous parallelism,* where the thought

expressed in the first part of the verse is repeated in the second part, in different but equivalent terms (Pss 2:4; 19:1; 36:1–2; 103:11–12; Prv 3:13–18). The second is *antithetic parallelism,* where the thought in the first part of the verse is contrasted with its opposite in the second (Ps 1:6; Prv 10:1–4, 16–18; 13:9). The third is *synthetic parallelism,* where the idea expressed in the first line of a verse is developed and completed in the following lines (Pss 1:1; 3:5–6; 18:8–10; Prv 26:3). There are more complicated forms of parallelism, but these three are the most common.

Another characteristic of biblical poetry is the use of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalms in which verses are linked together by this means are called acrostic. Today, an acrostic is formed by taking a name and beginning the successive lines of the short poem with the letters that make up the name. The Hebrews took only the alphabet and arranged the lines of the poem according to the succession of the letters.

Each line of a psalm may begin with a different letter, as in Psalm 25. Or each of the stanzas may begin with the same letter until all 22 letters of the alphabet are exhausted, as in Psalm 119. However, this psalm, which is the most conspicuous example of a Hebrew acrostic poem, is quite complicated in its arrangement. Not only does each stanza begin with a letter, but each of the eight lines of every stanza begins with the same letter, so that eight alphabetic arrangements move through the psalm in parallel lines. Other elaborate acrostics are Psalms 9, 10, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 145.

The first four chapters of Lamentations also follow an acrostic arrangement. This example of acrostic arrangement is less noticeable to the English reader because the names of the Hebrew letters do not mark the beginning of the stanzas. In Lamentations 3 each letter of the alphabet begins three successive lines numbered as verses. Another acrostic occurs in Proverbs 31:10–31. It is an alphabetic description of the virtuous woman.

Another poetic device giving unity to a poem and marking its divisions is the refrain. Psalm 136 is an outstanding example of this arrangement. The refrain is "His faithful love endures forever" and is used to conclude every verse.

The meter of Hebraic poetry is dependent on accentuation; the unit is the couplet, in which the members may be of equal or varying length. Couplets are often arranged into strophes. The fundamental category of Hebrew poetry is the song or lyric. The song was accompanied by music (Gn 31:27; Ex 15:20; 1 Chr 25:6; Is 23:16; 30:29; Am 6:5) and could be associated with dance (Ex 15:20–21).

Some complete poems in the OT are embedded in the narrative books and represent various types of Hebrew poems. The first recorded poem in the Bible is a battle song (Gn 4:23–24). Other famous examples of this type are the Song of Moses (Ex 15:1–18) and the Song of Deborah (Jgs 5:1–31). Then there is the Taunt Song (Nm 21:27–30), the Song of the Well (vv 17–18), and songs of blessing. Of this latter type, well-known examples are the Blessing of Jacob (Gn 49:1–27), the Blessing of Moses (Dt 33:2–29), and the four Blessings of Balaam (Nm 23:7–10; 23:18–24; 24:3–9; 24:15–24). There are also laments for the dead (2 Sm 1:19–27) and didactic poems that warn against improvidence (Prv 6:6–11) and drunkenness (23:29–35). Common throughout all of these various types of poems is religious emotion and fervor. The songs of Moses and Deborah praise God as the giver of victory.

Most poems of distinctively religious fervor characterize the worship of the sanctuary. The psalms are religious poems sung with musical accompaniment. Many are private prayers, while others were composed for public worship, especially hymns of thanksgiving sung at the tabernacle or temple. It is in the Psalter that the soaring spirit of Hebrew poetry rises to a level never achieved by Israel's pagan neighbors; the Hebrews worshiped God in spirit and in truth, and as they did so, they were giving expression to a personal experience of the living God in their soul.

The internal qualities of Hebrew poetry are in part influenced by the age, social conditions, and environment in which the writers lived. Although the OT is of divine authorship, it also comes within the scope of literature and should be appreciated as such. Though the Holy Spirit inspired the message of the Hebrew writers, their individual writing styles remain clearly evident. Using simple and vivid diction, figures of speech, and literary devices, each poet expressed a wealth of religious thought, experience, and emotion; simile, metaphor, allegory, hyperbole, personification, irony, and wordplay all variously enhanced each writer's pattern of thinking. Hebrew poetry is the expression of the poet's human spirit, and it is the literature of revelation—the Word of God to humankind.

In the New Testament

The NT has a limited number of poetical passages. Probably the NT contains less poetry than the OT (relatively speaking) because the early Christians found the OT Psalter (in the Hebrew and LXX) adequate for their devotional purposes. All the writers of the NT were Jews, except Luke. He has given us some memorable poems: the Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55), the Benedictus (vv 68–79), and the Nunc Dimittis (2:29–32). Interestingly, these poems are strongly Hebraic in form, character, and content. Matthew has given us the poetic Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–12). These Beatitudes have the parallelism that is common in OT poetry—specifically, synthetic parallelism (where the second line of each verse completes the meaning of the first line). There is also a definite rhythmic quality in Matthew 11:28–30. John's Prologue to his Gospel of John (1:1–18) is a fine example of Hellenistic poetry.

The NT Epistles contain a number of poetic passages, especially in the doxologies (see, for example, Rom 16:25–27; Jude 1:24–25). Other sections are distinctly poetry and/or early Christian hymns. These include Philippians 2:6–11 ("The Humility of Christ" hymn/ poem); Colossians 1:15–20 ("The Preeminence of Christ" hymn/poem); and 1 Timothy 3:16 ("The Incarnation" hymn/poem). The writer to Hebrews also produced a noteworthy poetic prologue (1:1–3). Other sections of Paul's writings display poetic language, where rhythm and exalted diction are prominent (see, for example, 1 Cor 13; 15:54–57).

The book of Revelation also contains a number of poems of praise as well as hymns (see Rv 5:9–10, 12–13; 7:12; 11:17–18; 15:3–4).

See also Ecclesiastes, Book of; Job, Book of; Lamentations, Book of; Music; Proverbs, Book of; Psalms, Book of; Song of Solomon; Wisdom; Wisdom Literature.

Pokereth-hazzebaim

Another spelling of the name Pochereth-hazzebaim.

See Pochereth-hazzebaim.

Pollux

A figure from Greek mythology who was the son of Zeus and the twin brother of Castor. Together, they were known as the Dioscuri, meaning "sons of Zeus." The Dioscuri were considered protectors of sailors and ships. In Acts 28:11, Paul and his companions sailed from Malta from Alexandria. The ship had the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. Many ancient ships had carved figureheads, often believed to bring good luck and protection during voyages.

See Dioscuri.

Polycarp

A Christian leader who died for his faith in the time after Jesus's apostles.

Polycarp's Early Life and Role in the Church

Polycarp was born to a Christian family. He called himself a disciple of "John." This was likely the apostle John. Polycarp was chosen to be the bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor.

Around AD 116, another Christian leader named Ignatius wrote letters to Polycarp and the church in Smyrna. Ignatius wrote these letters while Roman soldiers were taking him to Rome to be killed for his faith. Near the end of his life, Polycarp traveled to Rome to speak for the churches in his region about when to celebrate Easter.

Arrest and Martyrdom

Civil authorities arrested Polycarp. These authorities attempted to convince him to renounce his faith. When Polycarp refused, they burned him at the stake. The letter from the church of Smyrna to the church of Philomelium describes Polycarp's death. This story is the earliest record of Christian martyrdom outside the New Testament.

Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians

As bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp wrote many letters to various churches. Only one of his letters has survived. He wrote this letter to the Philippians in response to a letter they had sent him. While Ignatius was traveling to Rome to be killed for his faith, his guards stopped in Philippi. Ignatius encouraged the church in Philippi to write to the church in Antioch. They sent a letter by way of

Polycarp. They also wanted help sending a letter to the church in Antioch.

Polycarp wrote a reply to the Christians in Philippi that we now call the *Letter to the Philippians*. He wrote it around AD 120. This letter is very special because it is the only piece of writing we still have from Polycarp. In this letter, Polycarp thought Ignatius might have died, but he was not sure. He asked the Philippians to tell him any news they had about Ignatius.

In this letter, Polycarp:

- Praised the Philippian church for their good reputation among other churches
- Mentioned that Paul had written several letters to them
- Warned about loving money too much, which had led Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus
- Spoke against false teachers who said Jesus did not truly rise from the dead
- Taught church leaders and other Christians how they should live

Many critics have labeled Polycarp's letter "unoriginal" because it does not contain any new theological ideas. However, it helps us understand which New Testament writings the early churches had. The letter includes:

- Quotations and allusions from many New Testament books: Matthew, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, and 1 Peter
- References to letters from other Christian leaders like Clement and Ignatius
- No quotes from the Old Testament
- No mentions of John's Gospel, even though people say Polycarp learned from the apostle John

The letter ends with Polycarp's promise to send the letter from the Philippians to Antioch. He also promises to send them Ignatius's letters.

Polygamy

See Marriage, Marriage Customs.

Pomegranate

The pomegranate is usually a small, bush-like tree but may sometimes grow as a large, branching shrub or small tree reaching a height of 6.1 to 9.1 meters (20 to 30 feet). The branches often have thorns. The showy bell-like flowers are usually bright red, though sometimes yellow or white.

The round fruit is as large as an orange or medium-sized apple. It has a hard outer skin of bright red or yellowish color when ripe. The top of the fruit has dry flower parts that look like a crown. Inside the fruit is a crimson juicy pulp with many red seeds embedded in it.

The flowers of the pomegranate likely served as a pattern for the golden bells mentioned in Exodus 28:33–34 and 39:24–26, and the open flowers described in 1 Kings 6:32. The upright parts on top of the fruit served as a model for the crowns of kings.

The pomegranate originally comes from Asia, but it has been grown since very ancient times. It is now quite common in the region of Palestine, in Egypt, and along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It is listed as one of the pleasant fruits of Egypt (Numbers 20:5). It is also listed as one of the promised blessings of the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 8:8).

Pommel

KJV for "bowl," part of the capitals of the temple pillars (2 Chr 4:12). *See* Architecture (Palestinian); Tabernacle; Temple.

Pontius Pilate

The Roman emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate as the fifth governor (also called *prefect*) of Judea. Pilate served from AD 26 to 36. The Gospels describe him as the Roman governor who approved Jesus's crucifixion. Other historical records describe Pilate as a practical and disciplined leader who worked to strengthen Roman control in Judea.

Pilate's Role as Governor of Judea

The Roman historian Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) mentions Pilate in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus, but gives little more information than the Gospels. The Jewish historian Josephus, however, includes three different stories about Pilate.

1. First, he describes Pilate's arrival as the new governor (*War* 2.9.2; *Antiquities* 18.3.1; compare Eusebius's *Histories* 2.6). Pilate offended Jewish law by bringing Roman military flags into Jerusalem that showed the image of Caesar. Many Jews traveled to Caesarea to protest and fasted there for five days. The Jews demonstrated they would rather die than allow the Roman symbols. This event was Pilate's first lesson in how deeply the Jewish people valued their religious traditions. He finally ordered the flags to be removed.
2. In a second incident, Pilate used money from the temple treasury to build a 56.3-kilometer (35-mile) aqueduct for Jerusalem (*War* 2.9.4; *Antiquities* 18.3.2). Once again, there was a large public protest. Pilate ordered his soldiers to wear plain tunics and mix with the crowd in disguise. When he gave the signal, they attacked the people with clubs. Many Jews were killed. Josephus writes that the people of Jerusalem were shocked and horrified by what happened.
3. Finally, Josephus tells the story of Pilate's removal from office (*Antiquities* 18.4.1–2). In AD 36, a Samaritan man claimed to be the *Taheb* (the Samaritan messiah). He promised to show his followers sacred objects that he said Moses had hidden on Mount Gerizim. Pilate sent a large group of soldiers on foot and on horseback to stop the crowd. Most of the Samaritans were killed. Their leaders complained to Vitellius, the governor of Syria. Pilate was ordered to go to Rome and explain himself to the emperor Tiberius. The emperor then sent another governor, Marcellus, to take Pilate's place.

Philo, a Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, records another story about Pilate (*Embassy to Caius* 299–305). Philo writes that Emperor Tiberius was usually kind to the Jewish people. In contrast, he describes Pontius Pilate as a harsh ruler who did not respect Jewish traditions. Pilate had placed gilded (gold-covered) shields bearing the emperor's name in Herod's former palace in Jerusalem. When the Jewish leaders protested, Pilate refused to listen. The sons of Herod then appealed to Tiberius, who ordered Pilate to move the shields to the temple of Augustus in Caesarea. The similarities between this story and Josephus's account suggest that Philo may have been describing another version of the same event.

Luke includes a short story that adds to this picture of Pilate. In Luke 13:1, some Jews tell Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. No other ancient source records this event, but it agrees with how Philo and Josephus describe Pilate's cruel behavior. Luke gives another detail in his account of the trial of Jesus. In Luke 23:12, he writes that before Jesus's crucifixion, Herod Antipas (the ruler of Galilee) and Pilate had been enemies. Their conflict may have come not only from Pilate's usual hostility but also from this earlier event in Galilee.

Pilate's Role in the Trial of Jesus

Pilate's role in the death of Jesus is recorded in each of the Gospels (Matthew 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:29). The apostles also mention his involvement as a historical fact in their teachings (Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; 1 Timothy 6:13). To make

sure Jesus was condemned, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) brought their accusations to Pilate. They presented the charges as political in order to gain his attention, but Pilate said he found no reason to punish Jesus. In the end, Pilate gave in to the demands of the Jewish leaders and ordered the crucifixion of Jesus.

All four Gospels, and especially John, show that Pilate declared Jesus innocent several times. According to Matthew 27:19, Pilate's wife had a troubling dream about Jesus and warned her husband not to condemn him. Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded that Barabbas be freed instead. Matthew also says that Pilate washed his hands before the people (27:24–25), declaring his own innocence in this. And finally, John says that Pilate refused to change the title over the cross (John 19:19–22). These accounts take the full blame for the death of Jesus from Pilate and place it on the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin. They are ultimately responsible.

But why would Pilate act on behalf of the Sanhedrin? Two answers are possible.

1. First, there may have been cooperation between Caiaphas and Pilate based on a long relationship. Caiaphas served as high priest for eighteen years, and ten of those years were during Pilate's rule. When Pilate was removed from office in AD 36, Caiaphas was also dismissed at the same time.
2. Second, if Jesus's trial occurred in AD 33, Pilate may have been concerned about his removal from office. He had originally been appointed by Sejanus, the commander of the imperial guard in Rome who helped choose governors for Emperor Tiberius. Sejanus was executed in the autumn of AD 31. This background explains how a Jewish delegation could appeal directly to Tiberius during the incident with the golden shields. Therefore, the warning recorded in John 19:12 ("If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar") would have had real influence over Pilate. Realizing the danger to his own career, Pilate became eager to calm the Jewish leaders and remain in the emperor's favor.

Nothing is known for certain about Pilate's life after he was removed from office in AD 36. The early church historian Eusebius writes that Pilate later took his own life during the reign of Emperor Caligula, who ruled from AD 37 to 41 (*History* 2.7).

Pontus

Roman province in northeastern Asia Minor, located along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Galatia, Cappadocia, and Armenia bordered Pontus. About 1000 BC the first Greeks started to colonize the southeastern coast of the Black Sea, founding Sinope and Trebizond. Here Xenophon and his men reached the sea after their great eastern adventure. The famous geographer Strabo, to whom is owed knowledge of the ancient history of Pontus, was born in the inland city of Amasia. Mithridates Eupator, king of Amasia, was, according to the Romans, the most formidable enemy the republic ever encountered. He waged three wars against the Romans until his final defeat by Pompey around 60 BC.

Aquila, the tentmaker who, with his wife, Priscilla, was a helpful coworker of the apostle Paul, was born in Pontus. Unlike Paul, however, he was not a Roman citizen; hence, he was subject to the edict of Claudius and expelled from Rome because he was a Jew (Acts 18:2; 22:25–28).

The Christians who were resident there in Peter's day (1 Pt 1:1) were probably converts of those who returned from Jerusalem after the first Pentecost when Peter spoke (Acts 2:9).

Pools of Solomon

See Solomon, Pools of.

Poor, the

Those lacking material wealth.

Poverty as a Bad Thing

At times the Bible gives a very simple explanation of why people are rich or poor. If a person delights in the law of the Lord, he or she will get wealth and riches. Such people will prosper in everything they do (Pss 1:3; 112:3). With regard to Israel in OT days, these ideas are not quite so naive as they might seem. There was indeed a connection between sin and poverty. Israelite society was built on rules laid down by God, so if there was poverty, that must mean that somewhere the rules were being broken.

Whether a person's poverty was due to his or her own sin or to someone else's, the OT saw it as an evil to be combated, and the law made many provisions for the relief of it (e.g., Ex 22:21–27; Lv 19:9–10; Dt 15:1–15; 24:10–22). God cared for the needy and expected his people to do the same.

During the period between the testaments, that care continued to be exercised within Jewish communities scattered around the Mediterranean, and it was in due course taken up as a practical responsibility by the Christian church (Acts 11:29; 24:17; Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1; Gal 2:10; Jas 2:15–16; 1 Jn 3:17); for Christians also, the giving of alms was a duty plainly expected by their Lord (Mt 6:2–4; Lk 12:33). It was not really a primitive communism that the early church practiced, for had they renounced personal possessions, they could not have done what they in fact did—namely, to *give* in cash or in kind "as any had need" (Acts 2:45; 4:35).

Poverty, then, although it provides the wealthy with a chance to show the virtue of generosity, is in itself (in the NT as in the OT) a bad thing.

Poverty as a Good Thing

As we can see, there is a certain sense in which righteousness will make people prosperous and sin will make them poor. But ordinary life is more complicated than that. Psalms 1 and 112, referred to above, show only one side of the matter. What about the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 73:3) and its corollary, the person who is righteous yet poor? The answer of Scripture (e.g., Jb 21; Pss 37, 49, 73) is that the wealth of bad people is a fleeting thing and that the righteous, though poor in worldly goods, have spiritual riches.

This thought—that far from being prosperous, the good person may often be poor—is sometimes curiously inverted. The righteous may be poor, but Scripture sometimes appears to reckon that to be poor is to be righteous. Of course, it is not automatically so (Prv 30:8–9), but such references are frequent enough, especially in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 9:18; 10:14; 12:5; 34:6; 35:10; 74:19), to deserve careful consideration. And on reflection, they are not so strange. As God is specially concerned about the poor, so the poor may be specially concerned about God, for two good reasons. First, if there was poverty in Israel, it was because those with power were misusing it; therefore, the poor would claim God's help first because it is his rule that was being flouted, and he must vindicate himself. And second, poverty turns people to God because in those circumstances there is no one else to turn to. In this way "poor" becomes almost a technical term. "The poor" are the humble, and the humble are the godly (Pss 10:17; 14:5–6; 37:11; Zep 3:12–13). Just as being rich can foster self-indulgence, self-confidence, pride, and the despising and oppression of one's fellow human beings, so being poor should encourage the opposite virtues.

Instead of being an evil to be shunned, poverty thus becomes an ideal to be sought. Following the OT use of "the poor" and "the pious" as almost interchangeable terms, personal property was renounced by many Jews during the period between the testaments. Among them were the sect of the Essenes and the related community that was set up at Qumran near the Dead Sea. The latter actually called themselves "The Poor." This tradition continued into NT times. Possibly "the poor" at Jerusalem means a definite group within the church there (or even the Jerusalem church as a whole; Rom 15:26; Gal 2:10). Certainly there emerged later a Jewish-Christian sect called the "Ebionites" (from a Hebrew word for "poor").

The NT teaches clearly, of course, that what really matters is the attitude of the heart. It is quite possible to be poor yet grasping, or rich yet generous. Even so, with the OT background outlined above, the general sense of these words in the Gospels is that rich = bad, poor = good. On the one hand, the Sadducees are rich in worldly wealth and the Pharisees in spiritual pride, and men of property are selfish, foolish, and in grave spiritual peril (Mk 10:23; Lk 12:13–21; 16:19–31). On the other hand, it is devout and simple folk, like Jesus's own family and friends, who generally represent the poor.

In truth, therefore, the two versions of the first beatitude (Matthew's and Luke's) amount to the same thing. Matthew's has the depth: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3). But Luke's has the breadth. When he says simply "Blessed are you poor" (Lk 6:20), he means those who in their need—in *any* kind of need—turn to the Lord. It was to bring the gospel to such people that Christ came into the world (Mt 11:5; Lk 4:18). Jesus Christ himself embodies the same ideal. As Paul put it, "Though he was very rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich" (2 Cor 8:9, nlt). Our helpless poverty is an evil from which he comes to rescue us; his deliberately chosen poverty is the glorious means by which he does so.

See also Alms; Riches; Righteousness; Wages; Wealth.

Poplar

The poplar is a fast-growing tree that loses its leaves seasonally. It belongs to the same plant family as the aspen and cottonwood. The references in 2 Samuel 5:23–24 and 1 Chronicles 14:14–15 to balsam trees are more likely referring to the Euphrates poplar or aspen, *Populus euphratica*. This tree grows to a height of 9.1 to 13.7 meters (30 to 45 feet) with spreading branches. The Euphrates aspen is found only along rivers and stream banks throughout the area from Syria through the region of Palestine to Stony Arabia. It is especially common in the Jordan Valley.

The white poplar *(Populus alba)* is common in wet places in Syria, Lebanon, the region of Palestine, and Sinai. It grows to a height of 9.1 to 18.3 meters (30 to 60 feet) with spreading branches. Some scholars suggest that the altars of various pagan religions were usually built on the top of a hill and in the shade of a poplar grove.

Poratha

One of the ten sons of Haman killed by the Jews (Esther 9:8).

Porch

Court associated with the temple or palace. In the kjv, it is the translation of several Hebrew words. In 1 Kings 7 and Ezekiel 40, the kjv has many mentions of porch as a part of the temple. The porch separated the Holy Place from the rest of the world. By means of several steps, one would enter into the porch, which was elevated above the surrounding area. Both the steps and the elevation emphasized the separation of the temple. On both sides of the entrance to the porch stood the supporting pillars, the Jachin and the Boaz. In the NT the kjv has "porch" for proaulion and stoa ("portico"). The stoa was a roofed portico supported by pillars. Solomon's portico was the famous collonaded porch around the temple area facing the temple (cf. Jn 10:23; Acts 3:11; 5:12).

See also Architecture; Tabernacle; Temple.

Porcius Festus

See Festus, Porcius.

Porcupine

A porcupine (*Hystrix cristata)* is a large rodent that lives in the Holy Land. It has long, sharp quills (spiky hairs) that cover its body. When the porcupine feels threatened, it can raise these quills to look bigger.

Porcupines are most active at night. During the day, they rest in holes or cracks in rocks. They live in different places like forests, rocky hills, and valleys. There are two main types of porcupines. The kind found in the Middle East and Africa (called Old World porcupines) usually stays on the ground. The kind found in North and South America (called New World porcupines) often climbs trees.

A porcupine can grow very large, weighing up to 27.2 kilograms (60 pounds). It eats many different things, including:

- Fruit
- Tree bark
- Roots
- Plants
- Dead animals

While people can eat porcupine meat, the ancient Israelites did not eat it because it was not considered ceremonially clean according to the law of Moses. Many translations of Isaiah 34:11 and 14:23 use the word "porcupine." Other translations use "hedgehog" or "owl." The exact animal is uncertain.

See also Animals; Hedgehog; Owl.

Porter

KJV rendering of "gatekeeper."

Portico, Solomon's

See Porch; Tabernacle; Temple.

Posidonius

Ambassador for Nicanor. Posidonius was sent with Theodotus and Mattathias by Nicanor to arrange a truce with Judas the Maccabee after having engaged in battle with Judas and realizing that it was better to negotiate a settlement (2 Macc 14:19).

Possession, Demon

See Demon; Demon-possession.

Postexilic Period

A period in the Jews' history after their exile to Babylon. This period extends from 539–c. 331 BC.

Preview

The Biblical Perspective

The books that specifically cover the history of the postexilic or Persian period are Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. These cover a period of over a century, only a portion of which is dealt with in detail, as the following table shows:

The Collapse of the Babylonian Empire

This occurred with dramatic suddenness, largely because of internal resistance to the policies of the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus (555–539 BC). His neglect of the traditional Babylonian deity, Marduk, in favor of the moon god, Sin, was particularly resented. Nabonidus lived in Taima during the last decade of his reign, refusing to enter Babylon, where his son Belshazzar ruled as virtual king, as noted in Daniel 5. Babylon fell to the Persians in October 538 BC and the entire empire passed into their control.

The Policy of Persia

This is well documented through contemporary inscriptions, notably the record of Cyrus, the first king of the Persian Empire (559–530 BC), in the "Cyrus Cylinder." A new phase in the relationship of conqueror to conquered peoples opened up, which contrasted with the policy of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires of crushing any opposition by massive force. Cyrus and his successors followed a conciliatory line, allowing exiled groups to return home, encouraging local faiths, posing as the champions of the territorial deities, and allowing local autonomy except where Persian interests were affected adversely. The cost of this operation, although considerable, must have been infinitesimal compared with that of keeping rebellious subjects under constant subjection.

The new enlightened policy is reflected in the decree of Cyrus, dated 538 BC (Ezr 1:1) and preserved in two versions. The first (vv 1–4) is

clearly the official proclamation, while the second (6:3–5) is a more prosaic memorandum dealing with building specifications, a record of Cyrus's commitment stored in the official archives (vv 1–2). The critical tendency to question the narrative in Ezra 1, especially on the score of the favorable references to the God of Israel and the vast financial support promised, has been nullified by the archaeological evidence, which shows an identical policy elsewhere. The Cyrus Cylinder, for example, notes, "The gods who live within them [i.e., the cities] I returned to their places. . . . All of their inhabitants I collected and restored to their dwelling places."

In Judah itself there is no evidence for any warfare in this period, which suggests that the Persian takeover of the area was nonviolent. Judah was incorporated into the fifth Persian province, which included the entire area west of the Euphrates River (Ezr 7:21). It was no more than a minor subdistrict, governed through Samaria.

The Return from Exile

The continuance of a large Jewish community in Babylonia shows that not all the Jews responded to the invitation to return to their homeland, probably because of the prosperity acquired in exile. But 42,360 dedicated Jews (Ezr 2:64) braved the challenge of a four-month 900-mile (1,448-kilometer) journey under Sheshbazzar (1:8), the officially appointed leader, and Zerubbabel his nephew (3:2), who was probably the one to whom the Jews looked as leader. With great enthusiasm the Jews rebuilt the altar of sacrifice and resumed the observance of the traditional feasts (vv 1–6), revealing both a sense of stewardship (2:68–69) and careful attention to the requirements of the Law (3:2–4). Soon after, work on the second temple commenced—the materials and master craftsmen being imported from Tyre and Sidon (Ezr 3:7–9; cf. 1 Kgs 5). When the foundations were laid, the worshipers were doubtless aware that they were fulfilling God's promise through Jeremiah (Ezr 3:10–11; cf. Jer 33:10–11). But their high hopes were thwarted when there was opposition from neighboring areas (Ezr 4:4–5), selfishness in giving their own accommodations a higher priority than the Lord's house (Hg 1:2–4, 9), and a series of crop failures that further reduced morale (1:6, 10–11; 2:17).

Work on the temple was not resumed until Haggai and Zechariah appeared in 520 BC. They encouraged Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua) the high priest, rebuked the people for their apathy and selfishness, and promised God's presence and blessing upon the temple project (Hg 1:12–2:9). Zechariah's preaching went beyond the building of the temple, including the rebuilding of Jerusalem itself (Zec 2:1–5) and its world reputation (2:1–5, 11–12; 8:22). The two leaders were addressed in ways that anticipated the Messiah (Hg 2:21–23; Zec 6:10–14). But the Persian king Darius (521–486 BC) was not alarmed when the rebuilding operation was reported to him (Ezr 5:1–6:13) and allowed the work to continue. In February 515 BC it was dedicated (6:14–16). The Jewish community again had a focal point for its religion, but the political situation remained difficult, with no real security in a still-shattered city.

The Return of Ezra

The traditional date of Ezra's return is 458 BC (preceding that of Nehemiah in 445 BC). This is based on the premise that the King Artaxerxes noted in Ezra 7:7 was Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464–424 BC) and not Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–359 BC). However, some scholars, allowing that the king was Artaxerxes I, but believing that Nehemiah preceded Ezra, suggest that a tens unit has dropped out of "seventh" in Ezra 7:7, and that the date of Ezra's return should be the 27th (438 BC) or 37th year (428 BC) of Artaxerxes I, making Ezra's return a few years after Nehemiah's. While this is plausible, there remains strong support for the traditional view. It accords with the order of the two books in the OT and requires no textual emendation. It also accounts for the section in Ezra 4:7–23, where, in the reign of Artaxerxes, an abortive effort was made by a recently returned group to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah 1:1–4 suggests that this was regarded as important and its abrupt termination, by a decree of the king, caused Nehemiah great distress. The probability is that Ezra, recently returned, realized that little could be done in the way of major religious reformation until Jerusalem was secure, but in attempting to rebuild the wall he exceeded his mandate and was not able to function adequately until Nehemiah arrived, when the new security of Jerusalem allowed the great Law-reading ceremony of Nehemiah 8:1–12 to take place.

Ezra's ministry concerned the teaching of the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, which had long been extant in its final form by this time. Ezra 7 shows that Artaxerxes was following the traditional Persian policy of encouraging good relationships with his subject peoples. Ezra's appointment (Ezr

7:12) was to a state office; it has frequently been paraphrased as "Secretary of State for Jewish Religious Affairs."

Nehemiah's Return and Ministry

Hanani and others (Neh 1:1–3) informed Nehemiah of the complete failure of a recent attempt to rebuild the wall, probably that recorded in Ezra 4:7–23, and sought his mediation before the very king who had authorized the decree that compelled work on the wall to cease. A friend in high places was vital, and Nehemiah, a trusted and influential member of the court (Neh 1:11), was approached for this delicate and dangerous task. Nehemiah 1:4–2:8 shows how well he prepared for and seized his opportunity. His appointment as the governor of Judah (5:14) involved the removal of this area from the control of the governor of Samaria, which accounts for the unrelenting hostility of Sanballat (2:19; 4:1). The evidence of Nehemiah 3 suggests that the extent of Judah at this time was limited, probably not reaching as far north as Bethel or as far south as Hebron. Nehemiah was faced with opposition that included ridicule (2:19; 4:1–3), armed force (4:8, 11), discouragement (v 10), internal economic problems (5:1–18), intrigue (6:1–2), intimidation, and blackmail (vv 5–14). In spite of these obstacles, the wall was completed in the incredibly brief period of 52 days (v 15).

In addition to this monumental achievement, Nehemiah completely reorganized the social and economic life of Jerusalem, dealing with alienated mortgages, excessive interest rates (Neh 5:1–13), mixed marriages (10:30; 13:23–30), Sabbath observance (10:31; 13:15–21), and temple supplies (10:32–40; 13:10–13). Almost certainly, it was this political and economic security that allowed Ezra, who probably arrived 13 years earlier, to proceed with his great religious reformation based on the Law. Nehemiah's book, usually called the "Nehemiah Memoirs," was probably presented by him in the temple as a "votive offering" (as indicated by the form of 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31).

The Remainder of the Persian Period

Persian control, which probably centered on Lachish, was traditionally mild, except where her interests were directly threatened. There is no evidence of any major discontent in Judah, which enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy. The Phoenician revolt of 351 BC, which took Artaxerxes III (359–338 BC) three years to subdue, was the only serious disturbance in the area. While Artaxerxes deported some Jews to Hyrcania, southeast of the Caspian Sea, that was probably a precautionary measure, and Judah does not appear to have been greatly involved in the revolt. The Jerusalem priests were allowed to mint their own coinage and levy a temple tax. Under the wider influence of the Persian Empire, Hebrew gradually fell out of popular usage as a spoken language, being replaced by Aramaic. As the international stature of Greece increased, so the influence of Hellenism began to be felt, even in Judah.

Religious Features of the Postexilic Period

The Decline of Prophecy

There were three main reasons for this:

1. The prophetic movement as a whole became discredited after Jerusalem fell in 586 BC. The large number of popular cult prophets who had foretold a sudden end to the Babylonian oppression (e.g., Jer 28:1–4) were proved decisively wrong. The suspicion that henceforth became attached to prophecy was increased further in the Persian period, when large numbers of itinerant "prophets" of various religions traveled widely. Zechariah 13:2–6 shows the stern measures advocated against such false prophets and fortune-tellers.

2. There was a markedly different historical situation. The chastened remnant that survived had turned away from the blatant apostasy that characterized the preexilic period, so that the prophetic condemnation was not required with the same urgency. The temple and the Law had acquired a new prominence, and postexilic prophecy generally was concerned either with the rebuilding of the temple (e.g., Haggai and Zechariah) or the purification of its cult (e.g., Malachi). Once this goal had been realized, the role of the prophet was diminished. Another historical factor was the relatively large number of priests who returned from captivity, doubtless encouraged by the prospect of serving in the rebuilt temple. The main need at this time was for the priest, who revealed God's will on the basis of the Law.

3. There was an increasing stress on the transcendence of God, caused partly by an emphasis upon priestly mediation and partly by a fear of God that resulted from the recent judgment. The apocalyptic movement, with its emphasis on angelic intermediaries between humans and a

transcendent God, encouraged this tendency. Correspondingly, the prophetic appeal for a personal, moral walk with God weakened.

The Rise of the Synagogue

Some type of local worship, independent of the temple and its sacrifices, must have developed in the Captivity, with the Law increasingly occupying a dominant position. Later on, the prophetic books were read and expounded, but the primary stress was always on the Law. This mode of worship later took root in the homeland, and the synagogue gradually developed into the focal point of the community for social relationships, education, and worship. It facilitated the worldwide continuance and expansion of the Jewish faith, independent of Jerusalem.

See also Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament); Diaspora of the Jews; Ezra, Book of; Haggai, Book of; Israel, History of; Nehemiah, Book of; Zechariah, Book of.

Pot

A pot is a container used for holding liquids or solids.

See Pottery.

Potentate

A term used in 1 Timothy in the kjv and the asv to translate the royal title ascribed to God in this passage. Most recent versions use the terms "Sovereign" or "Ruler."

Potiphar

Officer who purchased Joseph when he arrived in Egypt after being sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites or Midianites (Gn 37:36; 39:1). The word translated "officer" is derived from an Akkadian word for a court official. By the first millennium, the meaning "eunuch" was attached to the term; hence, the neb, following the Septuagint tradition, has "eunuch" in Genesis 37:36. But most English versions are correct in rendering it "officer" or "official." Little, if anything, is known of eunuchs in Egypt, and certainly they played no role in Pharaoh's court in the second millennium BC.

A second title held by Potiphar was "captain of the guard," which seems to be a Semitic expression for an Egyptian title rather than a transliteration of an Egyptian phrase. This same title is applied to Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's general (see 2 Kgs 25:8, 11, 20; Jer 39:9–11). The Egyptian counterpart to this title suggests that this officer was an instructor for retainers who were attached to the king. The titles indicate that Potiphar was a man of some importance and status. His purchase of a Semitic slave to serve in domestic affairs is in keeping with the practice of Egyptians from 1800 BC onward.

The name Potiphar seems to be a transliteration of the Egyptian name, meaning "he whom Re [the sun god] has given." This name formula is known in Egypt beginning around the 13th century BC.

When falsely accused of trying to seduce Potiphar's wife, Joseph was placed in prison (Gn 39:20). Some think that Potiphar as "captain of the guard" would have been the warden. But Genesis 39:21 tells us that the "keeper of the prison" was impressed with Joseph's abilities (something Potiphar had already learned—cf. vv 2–6), and so gave him special responsibilities. The warden's discovery of Joseph's talents while in prison suggests that he was a different man.

See also Egypt, Egyptian; Joseph #1.

Potiphera

Priest of On whose daughter, Asenath, was given to Joseph as his wife by Pharaoh (Gn 41:45, 50; 46:20). On (or Heliopolis) was the center of the sun-god cult, and Potiphera was likely a high-ranking priest in the cult. His name, which means "he whom Re [the son god] has given," does not appear in Egyptian records until the tenth century BC, a fact employed by those who prefer a late date for the book of Genesis. Yet the name is known from the 15th century (the time of Moses), and its full form may be a modernization of a name common in Joseph's era (20th century BC).

See also Egypt, Egyptian; Joseph #1.

Potsherd

Piece of broken pottery used in OT times to carry hot coals or to dip water. Potsherds were also used as lids for storage containers or cooking kettles, as

a medium for written communication, or to add grit to waterproofing compounds. The symbolic importance of sherds is clear in Psalm 22:15, Isaiah 30:14, 45:9, and Ezekiel 23:34.

See also Pottery; Writing (Potsherds).

Potsherd Gate

Gate in the south section of the preexilic Jerusalem wall. It led to the valley of Hinnom and to the Potter's Field. Potters could dispose of sherds there, hence its name. The kjv (relating the term to the Hebrew word for sun) renders it "east gate" (Jer 19:2).

See also Jerusalem.

Pottage

Red-colored vegetable stew commonly served in the OT (Hg 2:12). Pottage was made of lentils, herbs, onions, and sometimes meat. Its aroma proved strong enough to shift a birthright from Esau to Jacob (Gn 25:29–34). Elisha's disciples relished its nourishment (2 Kgs 4:38–41).

Potter

A potter is a person who makes pots or other items from clay.

See Pottery.

Potter's Field

The name of a burial ground outside Jerusalem (Matthew 27:7, 10).

See Blood, Field of.

Pottery

The manufacture of clayware and earthenware.

History and Development

The first pottery was made by hand, molded into the desired shape and dried in the sun. There are no records describing the work of the ancient potter and his or her place in society, although the walls of tombs and palaces in Egypt abound with pictures of potters at work and a great deal can be learned by observing the activities portrayed. The first potters are thought to have been women who, out of necessity, produced vessels for food preparation, while the men were out trying to bring in the food. This still seems to be the pattern in places like Africa, Anatolia, Kurdistan, and the southwestern United States. Eventually, the making of pottery became a profession, apparently practiced by certain people in a large village and often by itinerant craftsmen moving from village to village making pottery to meet the demand and then moving on.

The discovery that moved pottery making from an occasional activity of a housewife to that of a profession was the invention of the potter's wheel. The speed with which vessels could then be made industrialized the craft, and it eventually became primarily a male occupation, although there is evidence that people (one would assume women) continued to make some vessels at home. Until the discovery of the potter's wheel, the techniques of making pots by laying coils of clay, one on top of the other, was the predominant method used, especially for large vessels. The first potter's wheel found in excavations in the lands of the Bible come from Ur in Sumer around 3500 to 3000 BC. It may have been developed in emerging urban settlements due to a greater market for pottery. Jeremiah speaks of a potter's workshop in the sixth century BC: "So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so the potter squashed the jar into a lump of clay and started again" (Jer 18:3–4, nlt). There is evidence in Greece of large workshops in the classical period employing more than 50 workers.

Clay must be spun at least 100 revolutions a minute to create the centrifugal force necessary to "throw" the vessel. The oldest wheels were made of two stones, a lower one with a hole in the center and an upper one with a protrusion that fits into the lower hole, allowing the upper stone to be turned. The upper stone, with a larger board attached to it on which the vessel rested, was undoubtedly turned by an apprentice. By the Hellenistic period, after 300 BC, the foot wheel was invented.

Another technique used in ancient pottery making was the mold. Molds were carved out of soft stone or made from clay for use in mass production of the same kind of vessel. Lamp molds are rather common in museums of the Middle East from the

Hellenistic and Roman periods. Small oil lamps were made in two parts in the molds, an upper half and lower half, and then fused together before firing. Herodian lamps also had spatulated spouts that were formed independently of the other two parts.

The amount of diversity in both the size and shape of ancient pottery is remarkable. An average ancient home would have within it large vessels (amphorae and pithoi) to hold liquids such as wine or water. These were pointed on the bottom and designed originally to lie against the slope of a ship's hull while being transported. In homes of the common people they were partially set into the ground and leaned against the wall. In taverns in Pompeii and Herculaneum they were stored in wooden racks. Large, open-mouthed jars would be partially buried in the ground to keep the liquid contained in them cool. Also, grains of various kinds could be kept in these, some of which were four feet (1.2 meters) in height and three feet (.9 meter) wide. Smaller water decanters holding a quart (.9 liter) or more were commonly used. Globular jugs were used to serve wine, having spouts that prevented spilling the precious liquid. Round canteens, with handles on either shoulder, were used to carry water on a journey. Bowls and dishes were common in various sizes and depths in ancient homes. Large-mouth dishes known as kraters were used for drinking. Cooking was done in medium-sized (about one gallon, or 3.8 liters) pots with rounded bottoms that would sit easily in the fire or in a dug-out place in the floor after being taken from the fire. They also had two looped handles, which allowed them to be hung over the fire.

Vessels were painted in classical Greece with vivid descriptions of religion, sex, warfare, and community life. Earlier vessels of Minoan and Mycenaean cultures contain beautiful artwork in the form of plants, animals, and marine life as well as geometric designs. From earliest times in the Middle East, variations in design were created by the use of dark and light shades of slip painted or poured randomly on vessels.

Pottery in Scripture

There are many references to the potter and his work in the Bible. Typical are the following: "Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand" (Jer 18:6, nlt); "Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are all formed by your hand" (Is 64:8, nlt). In the Creation story God is portrayed as a potter making man from the ground (Gn 2:7). His absolute sovereignty in the election of Israel is argued by Paul (Rom 9:20–21) from an illustration used by Isaiah (Is 45:9) concerning a pot arguing with its potter: "Does a clay pot ever argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you are doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be!' " (nlt).

Jeremiah graphically prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem by breaking a potter's earthen flask into so many pieces that it could not be restored (Jer 19:11). The Jews, at the time of the destruction, though precious in God's sight, were "treated like pots of clay" (Lam 4:2)—an expression of their human frailty; they could be easily broken and destroyed.

A broken pottery vessel in the ancient world was considered so worthless that the pieces were swept aside or thrown out the window and a new one made. The potter's art was widely known and vessels were readily available at a cheap price. People normally did not transport their vessels when they moved. It was easier to make or buy new ones than to try to carry them, especially the larger ones. Broken pieces, however, were not without some use. Job scraped the secretion from his sores with a potsherd, which is a broken piece of pottery (Jb 2:8). At a much later time, potsherds were used to write notes on and were called ostraca. The psalmist spoke of his strength as having dried up like a potsherd (Ps 22:15)—a reference to the lack of moisture in a dried and fired pottery vessel. The eventual defeat of polytheistic and idolatrous pagan nations is described as vessels of pottery being dashed to the ground and broken to pieces by the righteous (Ps 2:9; Rv 2:27).

See also Archaeology and the Bible; Brick, Brick Kiln; Inscriptions.

Pound

1. The King James Version term for "*mina*," a weight equal to one pound or half a kilogram (1 Kings 10:17; Ezra 2:69; Nehemiah 7:71–72).
   See Weights and Measures.
2. A Greek coin *(*mina*)* equal to about three month's wages (Luke 19:13).

3. A Roman measure (*litra* in Greek) equal to about 12 ounces, or .3 kilogram (three-quarters of a pound). It is only mentioned in John 12:3 and 19:39.
   See Weights and Measures.

Power

The ability to do things because of strength, skill, resources, or permission.

The Bible uses several words for power in Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament. We can group what the Bible says about power into four main areas:

1. God's unlimited power
2. The limited power God gives to his creation
3. God's power shown through Jesus Christ
4. God's power (through the Holy Spirit) in his people's lives

The Unlimited Power of God

God is all-powerful. All other power comes from him and is under his control. Much that the Bible says is summed up in the words of 1 Chronicles 29:11–12, addressed to God in praise: "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in heaven and on earth belongs to You. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You are the ruler over all. In Your hands are power and might to exalt and give strength to all."

The Bible often describes God's power as his "mighty hand" and "outstretched arm" (Exodus 6:6; 7:4; Psalm 44:2–3). We see God's power in:

- creation (Psalm 65:6; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 10:12; 27:5)
- God's rule over the world (2 Chronicles 20:6)
- God's acts of salvation and judgment (Exodus 15:6; Deuteronomy 26:8)
- Helping his people (Psalm 111:6)

The New Testament also speaks of God's mighty power. Ephesians 1:19 says that his power is unlimited. In Matthew 26:64, Jesus used "Power" as another name for God: "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power."

The Limited Power God Gives to His Creatures

God's creation has power of its own. For example:

- animals, such as the wild ox, the horse, and the lion (Job 39:11, 19; Proverbs 30:30)
- the wind, storm, thunder, and lightning

Power is given to humans in:

- physical strength (Judges 16:5–6)
- the power to fight (Judges 6:12)
- the power to do good and the power to harm (Genesis 31:29; Proverbs 3:27; Micah 2:1)

Rulers have God-given power and authority (Romans 13:1).

The Bible also speaks of the power of angels (2 Peter 2:11) and spiritual beings called "principalities and powers." Satan has power as well (see Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6). Sin, evil, and death are allowed to have some power over men (Hosea 13:14; Luke 22:53; Romans 3:9).

All of these have limited power, and God gives his people strength to conquer all these powers. He can protect them from wild animals (Daniel 6:27; Luke 10:19) and from other people's control. Jesus told Pilate, "You would have no authority over Me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11).God can save people from sin, death, Satan, and all evil spiritual forces (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10–18). The "ruler of this world" has no power over Christ (John 14:30), so he cannot control those who trust in Him.

The Power of God Seen in Jesus Christ

The gospels and the book of Acts often show the power of Christ. His power is shown in his:

- miracles (Matthew 11:20; Acts 2:22)
- healings
- exorcisms (Luke 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; Acts 10:38)

His resurrection shows His greatest power. Jesus talked about His ability to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:18), but the New Testament often mentions God the Father's power in raising His Son from the dead (Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:19–20). Eventually, He will come with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30). During His life on earth, He did His powerful works through the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38).

The Power of God in the Lives of His People

In the Old Testament, God often makes the weak strong. He gives power to those who are weak (Isaiah 40:29) so they can grow stronger (Psalm 84:7; see also Psalms 68:35; 138:3). His power is given to prophets (Micah 3:8) and kings (1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 21:1). His power will be given in a special way to the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6; 11:2; Micah 5:4). But all of God's people receive power to live for and serve Him (Isaiah 49:5).

In the New Testament, the gospel is described as the power of God to save everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). "But to all who did receive Him [Jesus Christ], to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

As children of God, they receive power from the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:8):

- power to live in his service (Ephesians 3:16)
- power to be his witnesses (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)
- power to endure suffering (2 Timothy 1:8)
- power for ministry (Ephesians 3:7)
- power in the face of weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- power through prayer (James 5:16)
- power to be kept from evil (1 Peter 1:5)

Those who do great things for Christ do not do them on their own (Acts 3:12). They go out knowing that everything is under His control and that He will always be with them (Matthew 28:18–20).

See also God, Being and Attributes of; Principalities and Powers.

Powers

See Principalities and Powers.

Praetorium, Praetorian Guard

These terms refer to the security personnel attached to an official, as well as the soldiers' quarters. These locations also served some military purposes for holding and questioning prisoners.

The word appears in the Greek New Testament in Mark 15:16; Matthew 27:27; John 18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35; and Philippians 1:13. It is a Latin word borrowed from the Romans, who ruled the Mediterranean world in New Testament times. It was used primarily in military and governmental affairs. Originally, Praetorium or Praetorian meant the tent of the general *(praetor)* in a military encampment. The meaning was extended to include the residence of a governor or other Roman official. For example, Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea had Praetorian guards. Casual use may also have applied the name to the soldiers' quarters within the official palace.

English translations of the New Testament use a variety of terms to translate the word. The general

reference to the headquarters of the Roman leadership is clear, but the word is used in different contexts. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark identify the praetorium as the place where Roman soldiers mocked Jesus after his meeting with Pilate. Mark also calls it a "palace" (Revised Standard Version) or "courtyard" (New English Bible, Translated English Version). According to the Gospel of John, the "praetorium" was the place where Pilate examined Jesus about the charges brought against him. Pilate went outside the praetorium to meet with the accusers who brought the charges.

Within Jerusalem, two locations are possible for Pilate's headquarters. One is the fortress known as the Tower of Antonia at the northwest corner of the temple area. The other is the old palace of Herod the Great, in the western part of the city. Either one could have served as the praetorium, but the Gospel sources don't specify either by name or description.

Acts 23:35 records that Paul was being held in a praetorium in Caesarea while waiting for his accusers to arrive. This one is specifically identified as "Herod's praetorium." At some point, the procurator Felix or his predecessors took over Herod's old palace as their coastal headquarters.

The location of Paul's imprisonment at the time he wrote to the Philippians is not clear. His mention of the "praetorium" in Philippians 1:13 suggests some center of Roman government. The phrase "the whole praetorium," however, seems to refer to all the guards and officials rather than to a building or a place. Recent translations reflect this meaning:

- "the whole praetorian guard" (Revised Standard Version)
- "all at headquarters" (New English Bible)
- "all the soldiers in the palace guard" (New Living Translation)

Praise

Honor, commendation, and worship.

To Whom Praise Is Offered

The one Lord who is God over all is alone worthy of praise. Frequently, the OT stresses that the praise due him is not to be offered to other gods or to idols of any kind (e.g., Is 42:8). There is a place for the commendation of men and women for their qualities of life and their right actions (Prv 31:28–31; 1 Pt 2:14). Ultimately, however, they should seek the praise and commendation of God (Rom 2:29), not the praise of their fellows (Mt 6:1–6; Jn 12:43), that others may be led to glorify God for whatever good is found in them (Mt 5:16). Frequently the Bible speaks of praising "the name" of God (e.g., Ps 149:3), meaning that he is to be praised for all that he is and has revealed himself to be. The often repeated word "Hallelujah" is simply the Hebrew equivalent of "Praise the Lord."

By Whom Praise Is Offered

God is praised perfectly by his angels in heaven (Pss 103:20; 148:2). They caroled their praise when Jesus was born (Lk 2:13–14), and the book of Revelation (e.g., Rv 7:11–12) speaks about their continual praise in heaven. All creation praises God in the sense that it shows his greatness as Creator (Ps 19:1–6). Psalm 148 lists sun, moon and stars, fire and hail, snow, rain, wind and weather, mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars, wild animals, cattle, snakes and birds—all these—as praising God together. Heaven and earth are spoken of as involved in the praise of God (Pss 89:5; 96:11; 98:4). The Psalter closes with the words "Let everything that lives sing praises to the Lord!" (150:6). In the OT we read of the special role of priests and Levites (Ps 135:19–20) and of the temple singers (2 Chr 20:21) and of those who, like Miriam (Ex 15:20) and David (2 Sm 6:14), led others in God's praise. But it was the duty of all God's people to praise him; their praise was intended, moreover, to lead the nations to know and to praise him (Ps 67:2–3). The NT has this same emphasis (Rom 15:7–12), and it stresses that God's gifts are given to his people to be used to his praise and glory (Eph 1:6, 12, 14). It is by a life of righteousness as well as by word of mouth that people are to praise him (Phil 1:11). The redeemed people of God are appointed to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pt 2:9). The last book of the NT presents the praise of God in heaven, where the four living creatures (representing all creation) and the 24 elders (representing the people of God under the old and new covenants) unite in worship, adoring the mighty God who created them and the Lamb of God who redeemed them (Rv 4–5).

When God Is to Be Praised

In the OT there were times of special praise, Sabbaths, new moons, and festivals. In Psalm 119:164 the psalmist says he praised the Lord seven times a day. "Everywhere—from east to west—praise the name of the Lord" is the exhortation of Psalm 113:3 (nlt). Psalm 145:1 says, "I will praise you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever" (nlt). A dedication to a life of praise is expressed in Psalm 146:2: "I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God even with my dying breath" (nlt). In the NT, likewise, there are special times of praise, but the whole of the Christian's life is intended to be devoted, in word and action, to the praise of God.

Where Praise Is to Be Offered

In the OT the temple (and thus "Zion" or "Jerusalem," where the temple was located) had a special place in the purpose of God: his people should praise him there. Psalm 102:21 pictures people declaring "in Zion the name of the Lord, and in Jerusalem his praise." People are to praise God publicly before the congregation and before the leaders of the nation (Ps 107:32), but they may also do so alone. For the whole of life is to be praise. Thus praise can come from unexpected places. Godly men and women can sing for joy as they lie on their beds (149:5). Paul and Silas can sing praises to God in a Philippian prison (Acts 16:25).

How God Is to Be Praised

As there is no limit to time or place, so there is no limit to the ways in which God may be praised. He may be praised with singing (Ps 47:7), with dancing (149:3), or with instruments of music (144:9; 150:3–5). The Psalter provides us with many songs of praise, and others are scattered throughout the OT. The NT speaks of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16; see also Eph 5:19), and examples of Christian songs of praise are probably to be seen in Ephesians 5:14, Philippians 2:6–11, 1 Timothy 1:17, and 2 Timothy 2:11–13.

Why God Is to Be Praised

Creation provides impetus for the praise of God (Ps 8:3), as does his preserving love and care (21:4) and the fact that he is a prayer-answering God (116:1). His redeeming work leads his people to worship him (Ex 15:1–2). Some of the psalms (e.g., Ps 107) list many reasons why he should be praised. With the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a fresh outburst of praise because the Messiah, the Savior, has come to his people (Lk 2:11). All that he did by his life, death, and resurrection calls for praise. But ultimately praise will be made perfect when God reigns victorious over all. Thus John speaks in the book of Revelation (19:6): "Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a huge crowd, or the roar of mighty ocean waves, or the crash of loud thunder: 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns' " (nlt).

See also Prayer; Tabernacle; Temple; Worship.

Prayer

The addressing and petitioning of God. Prayer to a god or gods is a feature of many, if not all, religions, but here attention will be restricted to the biblical teaching and some of its implications. A classic definition of Christian prayer is "an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies" (Westminster Shorter Catechism). Christian prayer is the end product of a long process of change and development in God's relation to people, as a survey of the biblical data shows.

Prayer in the Old Testament

Newly created humans, made for fellowship with God, lived in close communion with him. Sin broke this intimate, direct relationship. Nevertheless, when the Lord formed his covenant with Abraham (Gn 15), the relationship between the covenant partners was open again. Abraham's prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah (ch 18) is a striking combination of boldness and persistence and is a recognition of his own smallness and inferiority compared to God. The same could be said about Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Peniel (ch 32). But boldness and directness are not to be confused with familiarity. Biblical prayer is characterized by the reality that there is a distance between the Creator and the creature due to human sin, bridged only by God's grace. The basis of a person's approach to God in prayer is never simply "man's search for God" but God's gracious initiative, the establishing of the covenant, and the promise of help and deliverance on the basis of that covenant. It is this covenant relationship that gives the *warrant* for prayer. Thus, in patriarchal times prayer was conjoined with sacrifice and obedience.

The reestablishing of the national consciousness of Israel at the time of their deliverance from Egypt

marks another phase in the biblical development. Moses was not only the political leader of Israel but also their divinely appointed mediator and intercessor with the Lord. Repeatedly he "pleads the name of the Lord" in the face of the human uncertainties of the wilderness journey and his own people's unbelief and disobedience. Pleading the name of the Lord is not to be thought of as an incantation but as a reminder to God of who he has revealed himself to be. (God's revelation of himself to Moses at the burning bush is fundamental to an understanding of this.) In this revelation of himself, God made promises to his people, and in prayer Moses held God to these promises. Moses was by no means the only intercessor. Aaron, Samuel, Solomon, and Hezekiah were among those who interceded for the people.

With the formation of the priesthood and the establishment of the ritual worship of the tabernacle and later the temple, the worship of God seems to be characterized by distance. There is little indication that the people personally prayed to God, and—with the exception of Deuteronomy 26:1–15—there is nothing about prayer in all the instructions for worship given to the people. However, there is indication in the psalms that sacrifice and prayer would be coupled together (Pss 50:7–15; 55:14). Many of the psalms are remarkable for the way in which personal perplexities are acknowledged, leading to "arguments with God" and an ultimate resolution of the conflict (e.g., Ps 73).

The prophets were men who prayed, and it seems that God's Word came to them in prayer (Is 6:5–13; 37:1–4; Jer 11:20–23). Jeremiah's ministry was characterized by times of conflict in prayer (Jer 18:19–23; 20:7–18) as well as more settled times of fellowship with God (10:23–25; 12:1–4; 14:7–9; 15:15–18). At the exile, with the establishment of the synagogue, corporate prayer became an element in Jewish worship. After the exile there was an emphasis on spontaneity in prayer and on the need for devotion to be more than mechanical and routine (Neh 2:4; 4:4, 9).

Prayer in the New Testament

The NT's teaching on prayer is dominated by Christ's own example and teaching. His dependence on his Father in his mediatorial work expresses itself in repeated prayer, culminating in his High Priestly prayer (Jn 17) and the agony of Gethsemane with the prayer from the cross. His teaching on prayer, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, is to be understood as contrasting with the Jewish practices at that time, not with OT ideals. Prayer is an expression of sincere desire. It is not to inform God of matters that he would otherwise be ignorant of, and the validity of prayer is not affected by length or repetitiveness. Private prayer is to be discreet and secret (Mt 6:5–15).

The parables are another important source of Christ's teaching, emphasizing persistence in prayer (Lk 18:1–8), simplicity and humility (vv 10–14), and tenacity (11:5–8). A third source of teaching is the Lord's Prayer. Once again there is the blend of directness ("Our Father") and distance ("who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name"). The requests given in the Lord's Prayer are concerned first with God, his kingdom and his glory, and then with the disciples' needs for forgiveness and for daily support and deliverance. Occasionally, it seems from our Lord's teaching that anything that is prayed for will, without restriction, be granted. But such teaching ought to be understood in the light of Christ's overall teaching about prayer ("Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven").

Christ stated that when the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, came, the disciples would pray to the Father in the name of Christ (Jn 16:23–25). Accordingly, we find that after the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the early church is characterized by prayer (Acts 2:42) under the leadership of the apostles (6:4). The church praises God for the gift of his Son and his Spirit, and petitions God in times of difficulty (4:24; 12:5, 12).

It is in Paul's writings that the theology of prayer is most fully developed. The NT believer is a son, not only a servant. The Spirit who, as a result of Christ's triumph, has come to the church is the Spirit of adoption, enabling the Christian to come to God as his Father, with all his needs. Prominent among these needs, in the mind of the apostle, are a deepening of faith in Christ, love for God, and a growing appreciation of God's love in turn (Eph 3:14–19). Prayer is a part of the Christian's armor against satanic attack (6:18), the effective ministry of the Word of God depends on the prayers of God's people (vv 18–19), and the Christian is encouraged to pray for all sorts of things, with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6), and so to be free from anxiety. Paul's own example in prayer is as instructive as the teaching he gives.

The Christian's prayer is rooted, objectively, in Christ's intercession; subjectively, in the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The church is a kingdom of

priests, offering spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (Heb 13:15; 1 Pt 2:5), but Christ is the "great High Priest." This thought is developed fully in Hebrews. Because of Christ's human sympathy, the power of his intercessory work (i.e., the triumph of his atonement), and his superiority over the old Aaronic priesthood, the church is encouraged to come to God boldly, to find grace when it is needed (Heb 4:14–16; 9:24; 10:19–23). Nowhere in either the OT or NT is there any encouragement to pray to individuals other than God. Nowhere in Scripture is it suggested that there is any other mediator between God and men except Christ (1 Tm 2:5).

The Elements of Prayer

Although prayer is, typically, an unself-conscious activity in which the person praying devotes himself to God, it is possible to distinguish various elements in prayer, as will be apparent from the discussion of the biblical data. *Praise* involves the recognition of who God is and what he does. It is "giving God the glory," not in the sense of adding to his glory, which would be impossible, but of willingly (and where appropriate, publicly) recognizing God as God. Typical expressions of such praise are to be found in the psalms (Pss 148; 150). When the recognition of God's goodness is in respect to what he has done for the one who prays, or for others, then the prayer is one of *thanksgiving,* for life itself, for the use and beauty of the physical universe, for Christ and his benefits (see 2 Cor 9:15), and for specific answers to prayer. *Confession* of sin recognizes the holiness of God and his supreme moral authority, together with the personal responsibility of the one making the confession. Confession thus involves the vindicating or justifying of God and an explicit and unreserved recognition of sin, both as it takes its rise in sinful motives and dispositions and as it finds outward expression. Psalm 51, David's confession of sin regarding Bathsheba, is the classic biblical instance of a prayer of confession. *Petition* can be thought of as it concerns the one praying, and also as it concerns others, when it is *intercession.* Scripture never regards prayer for oneself as sinful or ethically improper, as can be seen from the pattern of prayer given in the Lord's Prayer. Prayer for others is an obvious expression of love for one's neighbor, which is fundamental to biblical ethics.

See also Lord's Prayer, The; Praise; Worship.

Prayer of Azariah

A prayer found in some versions of the Bible. It was spoken by Azariah, one of Daniel's friends, while he was in the fiery furnace.

See Daniel, Additions to.

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Prayer of Joseph

The Prayer of Joseph is a Jewish apocalyptic text that the early church scholar Origen described as "not to be despised." Almost all that is known about this work comes from Origen's quotations. Because the rest of the text has been lost, its full content and importance are uncertain.

An ancient list of Old Testament apocryphal and canonical writings mentions the Prayer of Joseph in third place and says it was 1,100 verses long.

Origen's quotations focus mainly on Joseph's father, Jacob. In the story, Jacob claims to be an angel and also uses the name Israel. He is the speaker in the passages quoted by Origen and prophesies about the fate of humankind. He describes meeting the angel Uriel on a journey to Mesopotamia, where the angel wrestled with him. Uriel claimed to be the greatest of the angels.

The writer of this apocalyptic poem refers to the biblical story of Jacob wrestling at Jabbok (see Genesis 32:22–29) and to Daniel 10:13 . Because Jacob claims to be "the first born of all living beings" and thus the chief of all angels, Uriel challenges him.

See also Apocrypha; Joseph.

Prayer of Manasseh

This short prayer, attributed to King Manasseh of Judah, is often considered one of the finest works in the entire English Apocrypha (a set of ancient texts not included in the Hebrew Bible but accepted by some Christian groups). During the

Reformation, Protestants deeply appreciated its expression of piety. However, it is not considered Scripture by Protestants, Roman Catholics, or the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The older title, *The Prayer of Manasses King of Judah When He was Held Captive in Babylon*, is better than the modern title and the Latin title, *Oratio Manassae*. The older title says this prayer is linked to King Manasseh, who reigned from 696 to 642 BC. Manasseh was taken captive to Babylon, where "he finally came to his senses and humbly cried out to God for help. The Lord listened and answered his plea by returning him to Jerusalem and his kingdom!" (2 Chronicles 33:12–13; on the historicity of this account, see Manasseh #3).

The writer of 2 Chronicles said this prayer came from the national archives and another source (2 Chronicles 33:18–19). An anonymous author composed the prayer, but the date of composition is uncertain. Based on internal evidence, scholars have dated it between 250 BC and AD 50. The oldest surviving Greek biblical manuscript with this prayer is the Codex Alexandrinus. It is from the fifth century AD. The earliest evidence for its existence is in a Syriac manual of church procedures called the *Didascalia,* from the third century AD. This manual was later revised in the *Apostolic Constitutions* in AD 380.

Most scholars believe the prayer was originally written in Greek. However, it is hard to find the original language of a text so short—about 400 words in English. The Prayer of Manasseh exists in:

- Greek
- Syriac
- Two Latin versions
- Ethiopic
- Armenian
- Old Slavonic

Its popularity among Jews and Christians in the first three centuries of the Christian era is clear.

The Prayer of Manasseh is a prayer by a sinner who admits his wrongs and appeals to a merciful God.

The Revised Standard Version and New English Bible divide the prayer into 15 verses. The King James Version and English Revised Version do not indicate verse numbers, and a less common system divides the prayer into 19 verses.

The prayer draws from descriptions of God found in the Old Testament. It identifies God as:

- "Lord Almighty" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:1; compare 2 Corinthians 6:18)
- "God of our fathers" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:1; see also 2 Chronicles 20:6; 33:12)
- The Creator—glorious, powerful, wrathful, yet merciful (Prayer of Manasseh 1:2–7a)
- He "made heaven and earth" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:2; see also Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 146:6)
- "In their manifold array" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:2)
- He "shackled the sea" and "confined the deep" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:3; see also Job 38:8–11)
- No one can endure his glorious majesty (Prayer of Manasseh 1:5a; compare 2 Peter 1:16–17)
- His power makes every creature "shudder and tremble" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:4)
- His goodness is shown in mercy and salvation (Prayer of Manasseh 1:7, 14; see also Isaiah 63:7 and Romans 2:4)
- He is compassionate, patient (forbearing), and very merciful (Prayer of Manasseh 1:7; see also Psalm 86:5, 15)
- He is "the Lord Most High" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:7; see also Psalm 7:17; 47:2)

Manasseh also says that:

- "No one can withstand your [God's] threatening wrath against sinners" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:5b)
- His idolatry has always been evil in God's eyes, even though he has only recently realized that he has been "piling sin upon sin" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:10)
- He is in chains and rejected by God because his idolatry has angered God (Prayer of Manasseh 1:10; see also 2 Chronicles 33:6 and Psalm 107:10)

Manasseh says that God's mercy is his only hope. God's mercy is:

- Immeasurable and beyond understanding (Prayer of Manasseh 1:6)
- Boundless (Prayer of Manasseh 1:7)
- Great (Prayer of Manasseh 1:14)

God's mercy is available because the Lord himself has "appointed repentance for sinners, that they may be saved" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:7; see also Acts 5:31), including Manasseh himself (Prayer of Manasseh 1:8).

The heart of the prayer (Prayer of Manasseh 1:9–13a) includes Manasseh's confession of sin and his appeal for forgiveness. It has three memorable lines:

1. "**My transgressions abound, O Lord, my transgressions abound." … Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me!"**
2. **"And now I bend the knee of my heart, beseeching thee for thy kindness."** Despite his unworthiness (Prayer of Manasseh 1:9, 14), he begs God not to destroy him, nor to remain angry with him forever, nor to condemn him to the grave, because the Lord is "the God of those who repent" (Prayer of Manasseh 1:13).
3. Manasseh becomes confident that God, in his goodness and mercy, will save him (Prayer of Manasseh 1:14). He then shows the proper response of a forgiven sinner when he says, **"I will praise thee continually all the days of my life"** (Prayer of Manasseh 1:15).

The prayer ends with a short doxology praising God's eternal glory.

Although this prayer has many admirable qualities, it differs from Christian teaching in one important way. The author mistakenly assumes there are two types of people. They are the righteous, who are good, and sinners, who are bad. The prayer portrays Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as righteous men who did not sin and did not need to repent. It is not accurate. But, it reflects Jewish thought before Christianity (see Matthew 9:13). The Apostle Paul said that no one is righteous on their own. Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:10–12, 21–26). Abraham's righteousness was not inherent. It came through faith (Romans 4:3; compare Philippians 3:8–9).

See also Apocrypha.

Preaching of Peter

The Preaching of Peter survives only in fragments. It was probably written in Egypt during the early second century AD. Although the title does not say Peter wrote it, the early Christian teacher Clement of Alexandria (late second century AD) believed the apostle Peter was its author (*Stromata* 2.15.68). Most fragments of the Preaching of Peter are preserved as short quotations in the writings of Clement of Alexandria.

The fourth-century AD church historian Eusebius of Caesarea said that none of the ancient authorities had accepted the Preaching of Peter (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.3.1–4). He might not have known about its acceptance by Clement, or perhaps does not include him among the authorities. Even though only fragments of the document have survived, they are important because they show a transition stage in early Christian literature. In the first century AD, Christian literature, including all of the New Testament, was written for Christians. In the second century, Christian writers began to defend their faith against criticisms from non-Christians and from Jewish opponents.

During this period, a new kind of Christian writing appeared called an apology (meaning “defense”). The earliest Christian apologists included Quadratus and Aristides, who wrote in the early second century AD. The Preaching of Peter represents a transition from the kind of apologetic writing and sermons found in the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the early apologists.

Since Clement of Alexandria only quoted short parts of the *Preaching of Peter* at different times, it is not possible to know the original order of these sayings. However, we can still see some of the main ideas from the quotations that survive.

According to Clement, Peter called the Lord both "Law and Word" in the "Preaching" (*Stromata* 1.29.182; 2.15.68). Humankind must recognize that *one* God created the beginning of all things and has the power to bring all things to an end (*Stromata* 6.5.39–41). The writer opposes the beliefs of the pagans, who said the universe had no beginning and would last forever.

The Preaching of Peter says that God is invisible, beyond human understanding, needs nothing, cannot be fully known, and is everlasting and uncreated. People must not worship God as the Greeks do, because they foolishly make images from wood or stone and call them gods. They also sacrifice animals to these idols, even though animals were meant to be food. The Preaching of Peter also warns that the worship of the Jews should not be imitated, because they honor angels, archangels, and even the moon and months as if they were divine. Yet, the author says that if any person from Israel repents, God will forgive them (*Stromata* 6.5.43).

In one place, the Preaching of Peter narrates how the Lord sent disciples to spread the good news worldwide after the resurrection (*Stromata* 6.6.48). It is not clear how this story connects to the earlier teaching sections. It may mean that the Preaching of Peter began with its own version of the command Jesus gave to his followers to go into all the world (see Matthew 28:18–20).

Elsewhere, also says that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke about Christ. Sometimes they used parables and riddles, but at other times they spoke very plainly (*Stromata* 6.15.128). In fact, the prophets predicted the major events of Christ's life in great detail: his coming, suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

The surviving fragments of the Preaching of Peter are important because they show how early second-century AD Christianity shifted from a defensive to an offensive position in its proclamation of the Gospel.

See also Apocrypha.

Predestination

The belief that God has already planned what will happen in people's lives, especially regarding their salvation. Some Christians believe God chooses who will be saved, while others believe humans have more choice in this decision.

See Elect, Election; Foreordination.

Preparation, Day of

The Day of Preparation is the name given in Scripture for the day before the Sabbath. Each of the Gospels refers to a day that it calls "the Preparation" (Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). Mark calls it "the day before the Sabbath." The Jews did not have specific names for the days of the week. Instead, they referred to "the first [second, etc.] day of the week." But the Sabbath was distinctive, and the previous day was used to prepare for this weekly day of rest and worship. Thus, what we call "Friday" the Jews called "Preparation." What was "prepared" is not said. But as no work could be done on the Sabbath, preparations had to be made for food and other necessities.

"The Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14) is often understood to mean "Passover eve," the day before Passover. This understanding comes from the common use of "the Preparation" for the day before the Sabbath. Outside historical examples of people calling the day before the Passover "the Preparation" do not exist.

Presbyter

A New Testament term referring to an elder in the church. In the Old Testament, synagogues were governed by a council of elders. Following this pattern, the church of the New Testament had officers (*presbuteroi,* “older persons”). The task of officers was to tend the flock of God (like a shepherd tends a flock of sheep) that was under their care (1 Peter 5:2). Thus, elders had the following responsibilities:

- Elders were called to labor in preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).
- Elders were called to visit, pray over, and anoint the sick (James 5:14).
- Elders were called to administer famine relief (Acts 11:29–30).
- Elders were called to generally oversee the affairs of the church (Acts 15:4; 16:4).

Evidence suggests that all elders were of equal status. The terms "presbyter" and "bishop" were at first used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5–7). However, in the second century, the presiding presbyter gradually emerged as a distinctive figure. The presbyter had the highest-ranking position and was the source of authority. As the years passed, the title "presbyter" was shortened to that of "priest." In churches of the episcopal order (those governed by bishops), it remains so today.

Nevertheless, it is significant that the New Testament never links priestly functions with the office of presbyter. With the spread and development of Christianity, the priest became a powerful figure. Unbiblical additions developed alongside doctrines concerning the Lord's Supper. These additions were exposed and rejected when the Reformers triumphed in the 16th century and stressed the priesthood of all believers. This teaching declares that all believers have access to God through Christ without needing a priest to mediate for them. The Reformers were leaders of the Protestant Reformation, a religious movement to reform (or change) the Catholic church. In Protestantism, priests became ministers, pastors, or (in more modern times) clergymen. In non-Roman Episcopal churches, "priest" is used again today. Even where it is interpreted differently from Roman usage, most evangelical Anglicans refuse to use it. In Presbyterian and similar churches, the elders (whether teaching or ruling) are still officially called presbyters, and all are of equal status.

See also Bishop; Deacon, Deaconess; Elder; Pastor; Spiritual Gifts.

Presence of God, the

God's expression of his spiritual being. God shows himself to people in different ways. Even though God is spirit and cannot be seen, believers can still feel his presence. God also reveals himself through nature. Sometimes this happens through powerful natural events like fire, lightning, and earthquakes (1 Kings 19:11–13). At other times, God appears in the form of a human (Genesis 18; 32:22–32). In these ways, God helps people know he is real and present with them.

The Presence of God in the Old Testament

The Angel of the Lord

The angel of the Lord was God's messenger and special protector of Israel. The Bible mentions this angel many times, though it may not always be the same angel (Exodus 14:19; 23:20; 33:2).

In several stories, this angel seems to be God himself appearing in the form of an angel. When the angel disappeared after speaking to Hagar, she said she had seen God himself (Genesis 16:13). When the angel spoke to Jacob, he spoke as if he were God (31:11–13). In Genesis 21:18, 22:11, Numbers 22:35, tthe angel uses "I" in a way that shows God's presence.

Sometimes, the stories switch from God to an angel and back to God (Exodus 12:23; Genesis 48:15–16). In these stories, God was choosing to appear as an angel for a time. This helped show his people that he was truly present with them.

The Glory of God

Glory is what God possesses in his own right. It is a visible extension of his nature. The heavens are a visible form of God's presence, for they are his glory (Psalms 8; 19:1–6; 136:5). The glory that appeared to Israel as a consuming fire on Sinai also filled the tabernacle (Exodus 29:43; 40:34–38). By it, God set apart the tabernacle as the place of his presence. In Isaiah 6 the glory appears as the normal expression of the divine presence. In Ezekiel, the glory is identical with God (Ezekiel 9:3–4). Throughout the Old Testament, the glory of God is the God who is beyond human understanding making his presence and nearness visible to his own people.

***Prickly** Alhagi*

The Face of God

In the Old Testament, "presence" is used to represent the Hebrew word for "face." When "face" is used with a preposition, it means "in the presence of." In Genesis 32:30, Jacob saw God "face to face." A human's personality and character are made visible on his or her face. In this sense, a person's face is the person. So, "the Angel of His Presence [face]" in Isaiah 63:9 may mean "the angel who is his face." The prophet Isaiah may have intended the identification.

The face of God is God showing his grace. So, when he "hides his face," he is withholding his grace. But when he makes his face shine, there is blessing (Psalm 31:16;44:3). The face of God, then, is the presence of God (Exodus 33:14). To pray to God in a holy place was to "seek God's face," his personal presence (Psalm 24:6). This describes temple worship and private prayer in Israel (63:1–3; 100:2). People were blessed when God showed them his kindness, which the Bible describes as God's face shining on them (Numbers 6:25; Psalm 80:3, 7, 19).

The Name of God

Among the people who spoke Semitic languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, the equation of the name and the person was a common idea. The name of God was also an interchangeable term for God himself. It was a symbol of his activity in revelation. When people worshiped using God's name, they experienced his power (Psalms 44:5; 89:24; Is 30:27). It was a way of describing the power of God that spreads help and energy to everyone.

God could act by his name. The angel of the Lord's authority and power functioned because God's name was in him (Exodus 23:20–21). As one who carried the divine name, the angel made real the hidden presence of God. The temple was the dwelling place of the name (1 Kings 11:36). People prayed to God in the temple, but it was more than just a place of prayer. It was where God chose to live among his people.

The Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit helps people experience God's presence. Even though God is beyond human understanding, the Holy Spirit helps bring him close to his people. God's presence becomes real among his people through the Spirit (Isaiah 63:11–14; Zechariah 7:12). By the Spirit, God's gifts and powers are at work among his people (2 Chronicles 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Zechariah 4:6; 6:1–8).

The Spirit was the presence and power of God with his people. God himself acts by his nature. The sinner cannot be in the presence of God without the aid of God's Holy Spirit. To be without the Holy Spirit is to be without God's presence (Psalm 51:11). Without the Spirit, communion between God and humans is not possible.

The Presence of God in the New Testament

In the New Testament, God showed himself to people in a new way through Jesus Christ. When Jesus came to live among people, he showed them what God was like (John 1:14–18; 17:6, 26). Jesus's mission was to reveal God to humanity. He did this through his whole life's work and his words.

The name "Jesus" itself was important because it means "The Lord Saves." This name showed what God does: he saves people. Through Jesus, people could fully understand the meaning of God's name.

In earlier times, people met with God at the temple. Now, Jesus became like a new temple where people could meet with God (John 1:14; 2:21; Colossians 2:9). God was fully present in Jesus. This was just the beginning of how God would show himself to people in new ways.

In the New Testament, the church becomes God's temple in a new way. Christianity as a religion is about being close to God and having a relationship with him. The body of Christ (that is, the church) is like a spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:22). It is made of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). It is the residence of the presence of the glorious God.

And now, the individual Christian is also a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). God is especially present in the Christian's spirit. There God reigns, because there is his kingdom. There, God is worshiped. In the individual Christian, God's glory and presence have set apart the inner person into a temple (see John 14:23).

See also God, Being and Attributes of.

Prickly Alhagi

The prickly alhagi (*Alhagi maurorum*) is a small shrub that grows in dry, rocky places. It has sharp thorns and small flowers that look like pea flowers. In hot weather, the plant produces a sweet gum

that comes out through the stems and leaves. This gum hardens in the sun and can be collected. In some regions, people call it “manna,” but it is different from the manna described in the Bible.

See also Manna.

Pride

Pride can refer to a reasonable or justifiable self-respect, but it can also mean improper and excessive self-esteem, known as conceit or arrogance.

Positive and Negative Pride

The apostle Paul showed a positive kind of pride when he spoke about his confidence in Christians or strength in the Lord (2 Corinthians 7:4; 12:5, 9). However, the Bible mostly refers to the negative side of pride in both the Old and New Testaments.

In the Bible, pride often means having an attitude of being high or superior, which is the opposite of humility. One Greek word for pride describes someone who seems important but is really just puffed up with self-importance (for example, 1 Corinthians 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; Colossians 2:18).

Pride as a Sin

Pride is a sin of attitude and spirit. So it is said, “Haughty eyes and a proud heart—the guides of the wicked—are sin” (Proverbs 21:4). Ecclesiastes 7:8 talks about being proud in spirit, and the psalmist says, “O LORD, my eyes are not haughty” (Psalm 131:1).

Pride is cited in the two lists of the most obvious sins in the Bible. n addition to the sins for which God will judge the gentiles, Paul lists insolence, arrogance, and boasting (Romans 1:30). Paul also mentions that in the last days, people will be boastful, arrogant, and conceited (2 Timothy 3:2–4).

Just like many sins of attitude, pride cannot remain internal:

- It can affect how someone speaks:
    - They may boast more often (Malachi 3:13).
- It can affect how someone looks:
    - They may have “haughty eyes” or "a proud look" (Proverbs 6:17; Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 30:13).
- It can affect how someone treats others:
    - They may treat others rudely (Proverbs 21:24). For example, how the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders treated and talked about those they saw as lesser (for example, Matthew 23:5–12; John 9:34). This was especially true of tax collectors and sinners.

Biblical Examples of Pride Leading to Downfall

The Bible gives several examples of pride leading to downfall:

- Pride was the downfall of King Uzziah, who, because of this sin, dared to offer incense on the altar of incense and was made sick with leprosy as his punishment from God (2 Chronicles 26:16).
- Hezekiah, after his healing by the Lord, became proud of heart and brought God's anger upon himself, Judah, and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:25–26).
- The Pharisee praying in the temple, comparing himself with the humble tax collector, is another example (Luke 18:9–14).
- Herod's refusal to give God the glory for his greatness brought judgment from God; Herod was eaten by worms and died for his sin of pride (Acts 12:21–23).
- Ezekiel 28, which describes the pride of the leader of Tyre, is taken by many biblical scholars to refer, in a deeper sense, to the fall of Satan back in the beginning.

Pride not only causes personal downfall but can also affect nations. It was a key reason for the removal of Israel and Judah from Canaan (Isaiah 3:16; 5:15; Ezekiel 16:50; Hosea 13:6; Zephaniah 3:11). It also led to the downfall of the Assyrian king and Moabite king (Isaiah 10:12, 33; Jeremiah 48:29). Because of its deadliness, Israel is warned against pride and forgetting God (Deuteronomy 8:14).

God Hates Pride

Given this, it is clear why the Bible says pride is one of the seven things God hates (Proverbs 6:17). It also mentions that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5; see also Proverbs 3:34; 18:12). The hymn of Mary, the mother of Jesus, may summarize the attitude of God towards pride: "He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has exalted the humble" (Luke 1:51–52).

Priesthood

A priest is a person who serves as a religious leader and performs sacred duties. The word "priesthood" refers to both the role of being a priest and the group of people who serve as priests.

The modern word "priest" comes from the French *prêtre* and German *priester.* In churches with bishops, this term describes clergymen (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican). It is also used in the description of the whole church as "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9).

To understand what priesthood means fully, we need to look at how the Bible talks about priests and priesthood. We also need to look at how Christian teachers and writers have explained priesthood over time.

Priesthood in the Old Testament

When God made an agreement (covenant) with the people of Israel, God called them to be a "kingdom of priests." So, they were a people set apart to God (Exodus 19:6). There were three orders for the priestly activities—high priest, priest, and Levite. "High priests" and "priests" were male descendants of Aaron, who was a Levite (Numbers 3:10). "Levites" were other male members of the tribe of Levi.

The main functions of the priesthood took place in the temple. Priests managed the ceremonial items and performed the sacrifices. They wore special, symbolic clothing called vestments while performing their duties. They were also teachers who passed on the sacred traditions of the nation. They also instructed the people in matters such as medical information (Leviticus 13–15).

The high priest was the spiritual leader of Israel. He had special functions. These included entering the the Most Holy Place (also called the Holy of Holies) on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The Levites assisted the priests and served the congregation in the temple. They sang the psalms and kept the temple courts clean. They helped to prepare certain sacrifices and offerings, and also functioned as teachers.

Through these three groups, the priests helped all the people of Israel worship God. They also prayed to God for themselves and others, and learned God's will. This system was like how a the leader of a family would lead in worship at home, but on a larger scale and with more formal ceremonies at the temple.

Priesthood in the New Testament

It is notable that the term "priest" to describe leaders in the early church. The word "priest" only appears when talking about Jewish or pagan priests (Acts 4:1, 6; 14:13). The book of Hebrews explains that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfills the role of the Old Testament priesthood in three important ways:

1. God himself chose Jesus to be high priest (Hebrews 5:4–6). Jesus's priesthood is greater than Aaron's priesthood (chapter 7).
2. Jesus can sympathize with the weaknesses of sinful people. He "was tempted in every way" like them, but was without sin (4:15; 7:26).
3. Instead of offering animal sacrifices to take away sin, he offers himself. He is the sinless sacrifice who takes away sin. This sacrifice only needed to happen once (7:27; 9:24–28; 10:10–19).

Jesus fulfills the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The unique, unrepeatable, and unlimited sacrifice of Jesus also completes it. Having risen from the dead, he is a priest forever (Hebrews 7:17). He remains the same yesterday and today and forever (13:8). Part of his high priesthood is to intercede for his people (7:25). He brings people to God as a mediator through a new and better covenant (7:22; 8:6; 9:15). Only through Jesus are sinful human beings able to enter the holy presence of God. Only through Jesus are they accepted as children of God (John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; 1 Timothy 2:5). So, Christians do have a priesthood. Yet, it is only in and through Jesus Christ, their high priest and Mediator.

The Priesthood of Believers

The New Testament describes those who believe and follow Jesus as "being built… to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). They are "priests to his God and Father" (Revelation 1:6). They are "a kingdom and priests to serve our God" (5:10). They "will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:4–6).

So, what does the "priesthood of believers" mean in the New Testament? We can define the high priesthood of Jesus in two ways:

1. Jesus has complete dedication and obedience to God his Father.
2. Jesus has unlimited compassion for his fellow human beings.

His sacrificial death on the cross is the center of his priesthood. The priesthood of believers finds its basis in his sacrificial death and union with him. This priesthood is their sacrificial obedience to God. It involves spiritual worship and love of God. It also includes compassion and prayer for their fellow human beings.

Paul wrote, "offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1). Christians offer their whole bodies to Jesus. Each local church offers itself wholly to Jesus. Jesus offers his whole body (the church) to God the Father. So, Jesus shows us both what it means to be a priest and how to serve as priests under him as our high priest. The Holy Spirit helps believers serve as priests by:

- living in their hearts,
- giving them power to serve God in ways that please him, and
- helping them worship God properly.

See also Offerings and Sacrifices; Priests and Levites; Tabernacle; Temple; Worship.

Priests and Levites

Priests and Levites were servants of God in the Old Testament.

There were three main kinds of religious leaders in ancient Israel:

1. Prophets
2. Wise men
3. Priests and Levites

The prophets spoke messages from God. They did not work for pay. They only spoke when God called them to do so.

The wise men gave advice in government and education. Some of their work was not religious.

Priests *and Levites*

But they also taught people how to live in a way that pleased God.

The priests and Levites did many kinds of religious work. They helped the people worship God. They also taught the laws of God and cared for the holy place. They were like full-time church leaders today. The people gave them food and gifts so they could serve God full-time.

The role of the priesthood is best understood by looking at how Israelites practiced their religion. The most important part of Judaism was a relationship with God. Being an Israelite or a Jew meant staying close to the living God every day.

This relationship showed in many parts of life. It included:

- the covenant (God's special promise),
- worship,
- the temple, and
- daily life with other people.

Religion was both personal and shared with the whole community.

The priest helped take care of these connections between God and people. This was the most important part of Old Testament religion. Everything priests did was about helping people stay close to God. Prophets also helped with this special promise between God and people. While the priests did the regular religious work, prophets had a special job. When people stopped following God, prophets called them to come back to Him.

The Old Testament often talks about both priests and Levites. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart like in Deuteronomy 18:1–8. Even today, people who study the Bible carefully are still trying to understand exactly how priests and Levites are different.

Usually, only Aaron's sons could be priests. Other Levites did religious work too, but they were not priests. Most Bible passages make this clear, but some do not. It is clear that both priests (Levites from Aaron's family) and Levites (not from Aaron's family) had important religious jobs. These jobs changed during Israel's history.

Preview

The Beginnings of the Priesthood in Israel

The priesthood in Israel began during the time of Moses and Aaron.

The book of Exodus tells the story of how God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This was not only a rescue story. It was also the beginning of the nation of Israel.

Soon after this, God made a covenant with the people at Mount Sinai. This covenant gave them laws to follow. These laws became the foundation for Israel's way of life.

The covenant also explained how the people could worship God. It included rules for the priests and Levites. These rules show us the three main groups of religious leaders:

1. The high priest (the most important priest)
2. The priests (who served in the temple)
3. The Levites (helpers who assisted the priests)

The High Priest

Every big group needs a leader. He was the leader of the other priests. In the early days, this was a small group, but his job was still very important. God chose Moses the prophet to give the covenant to the people. Then God chose Aaron as the first high priest to lead the religious life of the people.

At first, the high priest's job was simple. He was the leader of the other priests, but his job was still important. He had special ceremonies to make him a high priest, wore special clothes, and had special duties. The high priest did many of the same things as other priests, but he also had duties only he could do.

The high priest managed the other priests, but his job was more than just being a manager. All priests were the servants and guardians of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The high priest was chief servant and chief guardian. He was responsible for the spiritual life of all God's people.

We can see how important the high priest was by looking at what he did. The best example is the Day of Atonement called Yom Kippur. Only on this day could the high priest go into the most holy place, the Holy of Holies. Standing there before the "mercy seat" he would ask God to forgive all the people of Israel (Leviticus 16:1–19).

This special day showed what Israel believed about God. They believed in having a close connection with God. When people did wrong things, it hurts this connection. While they worshiped God all year to keep this connection, the Day of Atonement was the most serious day of the year. All the people focused all of their attention on the meaning of life.

Life only had meaning if they stayed close to God. The high priest had the honor and heavy duty of asking God to forgive all Israel.

The high priest wore special clothes that showed how important his work was. While some of the meaning is unclear, the Bible explains some of the meaning behind the clothes. There were three main ideas shown in his clothing.

The first idea was beauty. His clothes were beautiful because of how they were made. They were made of different colors and precious stones. The most beautiful piece was his breastplate. The breastplate was a special piece worn over his chest. In the Hebrew language, the word for his breastplate actually means "beautiful" or "excellent." The clothing is a symbol of beauty. The other two themes bring out the excellence of the office.

The second idea showed how the high priest spoke to God for all Israel. This important part of the office of the high priest is shown in two ways. First, the priest wore two onyx stones on his ephod (a special outer garment). His breastplate also had 12 precious stones attached to it. When the high priest went to God, these stones reminded God of His people. The breastplate was linked to God's judgment (Exodus 28:15). It was intended to constantly remind God of his people (Exodus 28:12).

The third idea is the role of the high priest as God's representative to his people. This role of the office is seen by two special objects called the Urim and Thummim. They were kept in the breastpiece (a chest covering worn by the priest). Through the Urim and Thummim, God told the people what he wanted them to do. When Aaron wore all his special clothes, he looked magnificent. His beautiful clothes showed how important his job was.

The position of high priest was meant to stay in the family. The high priest had to be married, and when he died, his son would become the next high priest. But later in Israel's history, people did not always follow this rule. Aaron had four sons. When Aaron died, his son Eleazar became the high priest.

The Priests

People became priests because they were born into a priest family, not because they chose to be priests. The first priests were Aaron's four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. They became priests at the same time Aaron became the high priest (Exodus 28:1).

Like Aaron, they wore special clothes. Their clothes were similar to the high priest's, but they did not wear his most special items. The special ephod, the chest piece, and the crown were only for the high priest. When the priests had sons, their sons would also become priests.

The job of the priest was very holy, so there were special rules to keep it pure. A man had to be from Aaron's family to be a priest, but that was not enough. There were other rules too. A priest could not marry a woman who had been divorced or who had been a prostitute (Leviticus 21:7).

Some health problems could stop a man from being a priest. If he was blind, could not walk well, was missing body parts, had a curved back, or was very short, he could not be a priest (Leviticus 21:16–23). This was like the rule about animals used in sacrifice. They had to be perfect to serve God.

The Bible tells us what some of the first priests did. Eleazar was in charge of the tabernacle (the holy tent) and its offerings (Numbers 4:16). He helped Moses with a few jobs. He counted the people and divided the land (26:1–2; 32:2). Later, he gave advice to Joshua.

Ithamar watched the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 38:21). He was also in charge of two groups of families called the Gershonites and Merarites (Numbers 4:28–33).

Nadab and Abihu died soon after becoming priests. They did something wrong while doing their priestly duties (Leviticus 10:1–7). The Bible suggests they may have been drunk when this happened (Leviticus 10:8–9).

Priests had three main jobs (Deuteronomy 33:8–10). First, they worked with the high priest to tell people what God wanted them to do. Second, they taught people about God's rules and laws (Deuteronomy 33:10). Third, they served in the tabernacle, helping with sacrifices and worship. They shared some other duties with the Levites.

Unlike other Israelite tribes, priests and Levites did not own any land. Their only job was to serve God directly. Because they had no land to grow food or raise animals, they needed help to live.

So God made a rule that the people should support the priests. When people brought animals to the tabernacle for worship, the priests got to keep some parts of the animals. People also gave them grain, wine, oil, and wool.

The Levites

The word "Levites" can mean all people from the tribe of Levi. Usually, "Levites" means the people from Levi's tribe who were not priests. Levites helped at the tabernacle, but they had less important jobs than priests.

Like priests, Levites worked full-time in religious service and got paid with money and food. Though they did not own land as a tribe, they had special cities to live in (Numbers 35:1–8). Outside these cities, they had fields where their animals could eat.

The Levites had three main family groups: Kohath's family, Gershon's family, and Merari's family (Numbers 4:1–49). Each family had different jobs caring for the tabernacle when it moved:

- The sons of Kohath carried the tabernacle furniture after priests covered it
- Gershon's sons took care of the coverings and curtains
- Merari's sons carried and put up the frame of the tabernacle

The priests, not the Levites, carried the ark of the covenant. The ark was the special box containing God's law. Levites could only work between ages 25 and 50 (Numbers 8:24–26).

Though some Levite jobs were ordinary, they had an important religious meaning. God's law said all firstborn sons belonged to God, remembering when God saved Israel's firstborn in Egypt. God accepted the Levites to serve him instead of Israel's firstborn sons (Numbers 3:11–13). Their animals also replaced Israel's firstborn animals.

When Moses counted the people, there were more firstborn Israelites than Levites. Each extra person had to pay five shekels (a type of money) to the priests (Numbers 3:40–51). The Levites represented the people before God like the priests did.

The book of Deuteronomy lists other jobs that both priests and Levites might have done:

- Being judges in court, especially for religious crimes (Deuteronomy 17:8–9)
- Taking care of God's law book (Deuteronomy 17:18)
- Checking people with skin diseases (Deuteronomy 24:8)
- Helping with special ceremonies when people renewed their promise to follow God (Deuteronomy 27:9).

The History of the Priesthood

In theory, the covenant law of Moses determined the nature and course of the offices of priests and Levites for the future history of Israel. In practice, however, changing historical circumstances and changes in the shape of Israel's religion and culture altered the shape of the priesthood and the role of the Levites from time to time. Even more significantly, the people who held the offices shaped them and their effectiveness through their faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

The Priesthood before the Monarchy

In Joshua's time, the priests continued their important work of carrying the special holy box known as the ark of the covenant. The members of the tribe of Levi helped divide the new land among the tribes of Israel. Joshua 21 gives a detailed list of which cities were given to the priests and Levites, following God's earlier instructions. After the Israelites settled in the land, some records show that the Levites began carrying the ark (1 Samuel 6:15; 2 Samuel 15:24).

The book of Judges tells two stories about specific Levites. The first story is about Micah (Judges 17–18). Micah set up a place of worship and made his son a priest, even though his son was not from the tribe of Levi or Aaron's family. Later, Micah hired a traveling Levite to be his priest at his shrine. This Levite later left to be a priest for the tribe of Dan.

This story does not fit well with the normal rules about priests and Levites, but it shows how confused religious practices were at the time. What is important to note is that this Levite-priest's main job was to ask God for guidance (Judges 18:5–6).

The second story in Judges is a disturbing account of a Levite and his concubine (Judges 19). A concubine is a woman a man lives with who is not his wife. The story shows how morally wrong things were in Israel. It shows no one was enforcing the laws. However, it does not tell us much about what the Levites did.

We know more about the priests during the 1100s BC, just before Israel had its first king. The tabernacle became more permanent. The ark of the covenant and the tabernacle were placed in Shiloh.

Eli was the priest in charge of the sanctuary in Shiloh. He probably came from the family of Aaron's son Ithamar. Eli had two sons Hophni and Phinehas. They also served as priests. This shows that being a priest was still passed down in families. Eli was a good priest, but his sons misused their role as priests.

It is hard to know exactly what role Samuel had during this time. He was mainly a judge and a prophet. Judges were the leaders of Israel before the Israel had kings. Prophets spoke God's messages. We are not sure if he was also a priest. The history books of the Bible do not call him a priest. However, Psalm 99:6 might suggest he was one.

Several passages show Samuel doing things priests usually did. He offered sacrifices (1 Samuel 7:9–10). When he was young, he served at Shiloh and wore an ephod (1 Samuel 2). Ephods were special priestly clothing. Also, one of the family records in the Bible suggests he came from a priestly family (1 Chronicles 6:23–30).

However, people do not normally call Samuel a priest. His story begins by saying he was from the tribe of Ephraim, like his father (1 Samuel 1:1), not from the tribe of Levi. If a priest always worked in the sanctuary like Eli, then it is clear that Samuel was not a priest. However, Samuel's priestly role may be connected to how his mother gave him to God (1 Samuel 1:28) while he was young.

The Priesthood during the Time of David and Solomon

Many big changes happened when David and Solomon were kings. These changes came mainly because they built a permanent temple in Jerusalem and put the holy chest there called the ark of the covenant.

During the time when Saul was the first king of Israel, society was similar to the way it was during the time of the judges. King Saul was a military leader. His relationship to religion and the priesthood was not clearly determined.

David changed the situation in many important ways. After he captured the city of Jerusalem, he made it the government center and the religious center of his nation.

He made Jerusalem the religious center by moving the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle there. Jerusalem was now the permanent location of the ark. This made it the permanent home of the religion. At the same time, many local places of worship that had grown up before Israel had kings slowly disappeared.

These changes affected the priests and Levites in many ways. Abiathar and Zadok were the two main priests during David's time as king. Abiathar was first a priest in a place called Nob. He joined David before he became king. Abiathar came from Eli's family. Eli came from Aaron's son Ithamar.

We know less about Zadok's background. It seems he came from the family of Aaron's other son, Eleazar. When the old writings talk about David's time as king, they always name these two priests together with Zadok first.

The old writings do not clearly call either one "high priest" or the top priest. There are signs that Abiathar worked as the high priest (1 Kings 2:35). Later, in New Testament times, (Mark 2:26) calls him high priest. It seems Zadok was responsible for taking care of the ark of the covenant during David's time as king (2 Samuel 15:24–25).

These two priests had important positions in David's royal government. They probably shared the job of leading all the priests, who now worked at the temple in Jerusalem.

David spent much time planning to build a permanent temple for God. As they prepared for

and built the temple during King Solomon's time, the Levites got new jobs.

When they built the permanent temple, the Levites no longer needed to care for and carry the tabernacle. Many Levites worked as builders to construct the temple. Other Levites found new ways to serve God, first at the tabernacle during David's time, then at the temple when it was finished.

Three Levites were put in charge of music for worship. Their names were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan. These music leaders led both singing and a group of people who played many different kinds of instruments, like an orchestra. The Levites had many other jobs too.

They worked as guards at the holy place. They helped the priests prepare for sacrifices. They kept the holy place clean. They also worked as officials who helped run things and make decisions (1 Chronicles 23:1–32). Other Levites worked like bankers. They took care of the money stored in the temple (1 Chronicles 26:20–28).

After David died, people argued about who should be the next king. Solomon won and became king. During Solomon's time as king, they finished building the temple. The nation now worshiped regularly at the temple.

During the fight over who would be king, Abiathar had supported someone else, not Solomon. When Solomon became king, he took away Abiathar's important position in the royal court. During Solomon's time as king, Zadok took control of all the priests.

The Priesthood during the Divided Monarchy

The great nation that David and Solomon built fell apart after Solomon died. Two smaller nations formed from what was left. The southern nation was called Judah. It kept Jerusalem as its capital and the temple as its worship center. The northern kingdom was called Israel. Its first capital was at Shechem. Later they moved it to Tirzah.

In the southern state of Judah, the priests and Levites continued their normal work at the Jerusalem temple. The position of high priest stayed in Zadok's family. Zadok was the high priest when Solomon was king.

This job continued to be passed down through Zadok's family until the time of the second temple about 171 BC. Even though worship continued in Jerusalem, there were problems with religion in Judah.

These problems started with their first king, Rehoboam. The problems continued with the kings after Rehoboam. During Rehoboam's time as king, religion got worse. People brought in ways of worship from other countries (1 Kings 14:22–24).

Throughout Judah's history, religion would get worse and better through reforms. The reforms were changes made by prophets to make things right.

The priests rarely led people in spiritual matters as they should have. The prophets often criticized the priests for doing wrong things (Jeremiah 2:8, 26).

Israel's first king was Jeroboam I. He had to make some big changes in religion. Jeroboam could not recognize the temple of Jerusalem. First, the temple was outside of Israel in Judah. Second, it was associated with the family of King David of Judah.

Jeroboam made two principal places of worship in his kingdom. Both places were important during the life of the northern kingdom. It lasted about 200 years. The first place of worship was at Bethel. It was located in the southern part of Israel near the border of Judah. It was only about 19.3 kilometers (12 miles) north of Jerusalem. The second place of worship was at Dan. It was in the far northern part of his kingdom.

Both these places of worship had long histories and traditions. As early as the time of Abram (Genesis 12:8), Bethel is known. The worship place at Dan is known from the history of the judges (Judges 18). Priests and Levites may have still been living and working in both places.

Jeroboam created a priesthood that was not related to the family of Levi to work in these two places and other shrines. This separated the religion of Israel from the religion of Judah. The worship place for the king was at Bethel, near the Jerusalem temple. This location may have been used to compete with the temple in Judah.

The priesthood in Israel was often just as bad as the one in Judah. Many of God's messengers called prophets spoke strongly against Israel's places of worship and their priests. These prophets included Amos, Hosea, and Jeremiah.

Hosea spoke very strongly against them, saying: "Like raiders who lie in ambush, so does a band of priests; they murder on the way to Shechem; surely they have committed atrocities." (Hosea 6:9).

Priests *and Levites*

The priests were supposed to take care of the spiritual lives of God's chosen people, but they rarely did their job well.

Priests and Levites during and after the Exile

The northern kingdom of Israel ended in 722 BC when the Assyrian army defeated them. The southern nation of Judah continued worshiping God for a while longer.

Finally, in 586 BC, the Babylonian army defeated Judah. They destroyed Jerusalem and its temple (Lamentations 2:20). The Babylonian commander took Seraiah (the high priest) and Zephaniah (his assistant) to Riblah. At Riblah, they killed Seraiah, Zephaniah, and the other leaders (2 Kings 25:18–21).

Then Babylonians made a plan. They forced the most important people of Judah to move to Babylon. The less important people stayed in Judah because these people probably would not cause trouble. Many of those forced to move to Babylon were priests (Jeremiah 29:1) because priests were powerful leaders.

However, it seems fewer Levites were forced to move to Babylon. This might show that Levites were less important in society than priests.

The time when people were forced to live in Babylon was called the exile. During the exile, there was little normal worship in Jerusalem. The altar had been destroyed and was not rebuilt until after the exile.

Some form of worship probably continued, but it was very limited. Most priests were in Babylon, but they could not do their work because there was no temple. Ezekiel said that God himself was the only "sanctuary" for the people in exile (Ezekiel 11:16). The priests and the Levites could not do their work until the people returned from exile and rebuilt Jerusalem and its temple.

When the Persian army defeated Babylon, they let the Hebrew people return home. Of those who returned, 4,289 were priests and their families, but only 341 were Levites (Ezra 2:36–42). These numbers were probably similar to how many were forced into exile at first.

They began rebuilding under the leadership of Joshua the priest (also called Jeshua) and Zerubbabel. The priests helped rebuild the altar in Jerusalem during the first year of the return. This let people start offering sacrifices and worshiping God again.

After they rebuilt the altar, they started rebuilding the temple in the second year. Both the priests and the Levites helped with this work. When they finished the temple's foundation, they had a special ceremony.

At the ceremony, the priests wore their special clothes, and the Levites sang and played music (Ezra 3:8–13). When the temple was finished, both priests and Levites joined in another special ceremony (Ezra 6:16–18).

The rebuilding was not just about buildings. It was also about fixing moral and religious problems. Priests and Levites helped with this, but they also had problems themselves. For example, many had married women from other nations (9:1), so they had to follow Ezra's new rules.

After returning from exile, the priests and Levites started doing their normal duties in worship. The priests led worship at the temple.

The Levites helped as temple servants (Nehemiah 11:3). They managed valuable things and collected tithes (gifts for God) (10:37–39). They also taught people God's law (8:7–9).

But even after the exile, the priests still did wrong things. The prophet Malachi spoke strongly against how they misused their position (Malachi 1:6–2:9). The bad things the priests did were like what the evil priests had done when Israel had kings.

After the exile, Zadok's family continued to provide the high priests. The high priest was the top priest in charge. Joshua was the first high priest after they returned (Haggai 1:1).

But things were different politically now, and this changed what it meant to be high priest. Before the exile, the high priest had to obey the king. After the exile, there was no real king anymore.

Politically, the Jewish people were now part of a province or colony. In practice, they were a group of people connected by their shared religion.

The high priest no longer had to obey a Jewish king. He had a lot of religious power. In some ways, he did things like kings used to do before the exile.

The Priesthood in the Maccabean Period

From 200–100 BC, some changes took place in the priesthood. This was especially true of the office of high priest. These changes ended the Old Testament time and set up how things would be in New Testament times.

During this time, the Seleucid kings ruled Judea. The Seleucids received part of Alexander the Great's large Greek empire. Judea was controlled by the high priesthood. The high priest got his power from the Seleucid kings.

From 200 BC to 170 BC , the high priests still came from the family line of Zadok. The high priests were from the Oniad family which was part of the Zadokite family. Onias III was high priest from 198–174 BC. Onias's brother Jason was high priest from 174–171 BC. During Jason's time, things started happening that would end the tradition of high priests coming from Zadok's family.

Onias III had fought against Antiochus IV's plan to make Jewish people follow Greek ways. This threatened their faith. Antiochus replaced Onias with Jason, who basically bought the job of high priest from the Seleucid king. Even though Jason was a part of the Zadok family, buying the job of high priest showed that the family line was not the most important thing anymore.

Jason's enemies were called the Tobiads. They removed him and put one of their own priests Menelaus. He was not from Zadok's family. This act led to a war between Jason's supporters and Menalaus's supporters.

The war led to Antiochus IV doing terrible things. He killed many people in Jerusalem and made descreated the temple (made it unclean) in 167 BC. This led to the Maccabean revolt, which gave the Jews freedom for a short time.

Menelaus stayed high priest until 161 BC. Then Alcimus became the high priest from 161–159 BC. After that, there was no high priest for seven years.

The situation made it unlikely that Zadok's family would ever be high priests again. The Zadok family began ruling in the time of King Solomon. Jonathan, a Maccabean leader, took control of Jerusalem. In 152 BC, with the Seleucid king's approval, Jonathan was given the robes and job of the high priest.

Jonathan's brother Simon became the high priest and ruler in 143 BC, also with Seleucid approval (Demetrius II).

In the third year of his reign 140 BC, a big religious meeting approved Simon as high priest, and his family became "high priests forever" (1 Maccabees 14:41–47). This officially ended the tradition of the high priests coming from Zadok's family and started the Hasmonean family line of high priests.

Not everyone accepted changing the family line of the office of the high priest. A Jewish group called the Essenes probably started because they opposed Simon being high priest. The Essenes were known for writing and preserving the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were probably started by a priest from Zadok's family who said Simon was not a real high priest. So, in a small way, priests from Zadok's family continued to exist.

The Priesthood in New Testament Times

In early New Testament times, both priests and Levites kept working in the Jewish religion. Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, was a priest from the group of Abijah (Luke 1:5). His wife also came from a priestly family.

When an angel visited Zechariah, he was working as a priest in the Jerusalem temple. Different groups of priests took turns doing temple work and then went home (Luke 1:23).

The New Testament still shows the difference between priests and Levites (John 1:19). Jesus talks about both in his story about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:31–32). Some of the first Christians were priests and Levites.

Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Many priests became Christians (6:7).

The New Testament often mentions the high priest. Several high priests are named. There were many high priests because it had become a political job, not passed from father to son like before.

The two most important high priests in the New Testament lived during Jesus's life. Annas was high priest from around AD 6 to 15. Even after he stopped being high priest, he still had power through his son-in-law Caiaphas who was high priest from around AD 18–36.

Both Annas and Caiaphas were important in Jesus's trial. Later, Ananias was the high priest from around AD 47–58. He led the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) during Paul's trial.

The priests had a lot of power in New Testament times. The Sanhedrin controlled most of the religious matters in Judea, though Rome limited some of their power. The Sanhedrin included current and former high priests and many members from many important priestly families who were members of a Jewish group called the Sadducees. This showed how important the temple was to Jewish life in the first century AD.

In AD 70, when the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, the priesthood changed completely. Without the temple, priests had no real purpose. Although priests continued until the Bar-Kochba rebellion in AD 135, their time was ending after AD 70.

Since the end of the first century AD, Judaism has developed without priests. Instead, Jewish teachers known as rabbis have led Judaism until today. The rabbis come from another Jewish group called the Pharisees.

See also Priesthood.

Primogeniture

A word that comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for "firstborn." It is not found in the Bible. It is a concept that reflects the special status and inheritance rights granted to the firstborn male child.

If the firstborn died, the next oldest living male did not receive the rights of the firstborn. A firstborn female also did not receive these rights, and neither did the firstborn if he was born of a concubine or of a slave woman (for instance, Genesis 21:10).

The Scriptures put a lot of importance on the rights of the firstborn as seen in the distinction between the firstborn and other sons (Genesis 10:15; 25:13; 36:15), the double portion to be given to the firstborn (Deuteronomy 21:17), as well as the special blessing their fathers gave to them (Genesis 21:1–14; 27:1–29; 48:18).

See also Birthright; Firstborn.

Principalities and Powers

A phrase familiarized by the King James Version of the Bible. It occurs several times in Paul's writings and is expressed using three Greek synonyms. The concept of principalities is represented by the Greek words *exousia* and *archai.* The concept of powers is represented by *dunamis.* In the New Testament, *exousia* describes the power inherent in authority as something confirmed by or derived from a position of prominence. There is nothing evil about this kind of authority. On the contrary, it is essentially right both morally and spiritually (Matthew 21:23). It thus applies most appropriately to these positions of authority:

- the authority of the Messiah, God's anointed one (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10)
- the authority of the apostles (2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10)
- the authority of human government (compare Matthew 8:9; Luke 20:20).

Archai has several meanings but occurs 12 times in the sense of "command," "rule," or "sovereignty." Nine of these occurrences are in Paul's letters (Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1). The last word, d*unamis,* is a common word for power. It denotes the ability or strength to achieve an impressive goal (Matthew 25:15; Acts 3:12).

By using the expression "principalities and powers," Paul was referring to the hierarchy of supernatural agencies, such as angelic beings, who worship and serve the Creator of the universe. Some commentators have divided this hierarchy into five categories:

- thrones (a throne is a chair where rulers sit when exercising their authority)
- principalities
- powers
- authorities
- dominions

However, this categorization must be inferred, since there is nothing in Scripture that points directly to such distinct groups. In using the phrase, Paul was probably expressing the cosmic lordship of Jesus in as colorful and dramatic a manner as possible.

In giving Jesus a name above every other name, Paul was demonstrating the supreme lordship of Christ over all created beings, whether good or bad (Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10). As their Creator, the heavenly armies of angels were his subjects, acknowledging him as Lord of the universe. This affirmation was important for the Colossians, whose understanding of God had apparently been tainted by unbiblical speculation (Colossian 2:8). The truth is that in Jesus there resided all the fullness of God, and this is transmitted to believers through the Lord's Spirit.

Prisca

The King James Version spelling of the name of Priscilla, Aquila's wife (2 Timothy 4:19).

See Priscilla and Aquila.

Priscilla and Aquila

Who Were Priscilla and Aquila?

A Christian couple who were friends and possible converts of the apostle Paul. Luke mentions them during the ministry of Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:1–3). They are always listed together in the New Testament. The name of Priscilla comes before Aquila in four out of six references (Acts 18:18; Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19). This may be due to her personal character or her leadership role in the church.

Aquila was a Jew and a native of Pontus in Asia Minor. The AD 49 edict of the emperor Claudius expelled him from Rome (Acts 18:2). The historian Suetonius refers to this edict. "He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus."

Friends and Coworkers of Paul

From Rome, Aquila and Priscilla went to Corinth. There Paul met them. This was on his second missionary journey. They lived together and worked as tentmakers. Their close association with Paul had benefits. Later, they even instructed the learned Jewish teacher Apollos. Then he "powerfully refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (verses 24–28).

Both Priscilla and Aquila were loyal friends and trusted coworkers of Paul (Romans 16:3–4). When he left Corinth, they accompanied him. Then they remained at Ephesus after he returned to Syria (Acts 18:18–19). When Paul wrote the First Letter to Corinth, they were still at Ephesus. Their home became a place for Christians to gather (1 Corinthians 16:19). Then decree of Claudius ended. So Priscilla and Aquila went back to Rome. This was when Paul wrote to the Roman Christians (Romans 16:3). When the Second Letter to Timothy was written, Priscilla and Aquila were back in Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:19).

Prison

A place where people are confined against their will.

See Criminal Law and Punishment; Punishment.

Prison Gate

The King James Version translation of "Gate of the Guard." This was a gate in Jerusalem. It is possible that it was on the palace grounds (Nehemiah 12:39).

See Guard, Gate of the.

Prison, Court of the

The King James Version translation of "Court of the Guard." It was an open court where they kept the prophet Jeremiah prisoner (Jeremiah 32:2).

See Guard, Courtyard of the.

Prize

Reward given the winner of a contest. In the ancient Greek games (the Olympian and Isthmian), the prize usually consisted of a simple wreath woven with olive branches. The apostle Paul transposed this technical term from the athletic arena into the language of the early church for illustrative purposes. He alone uses the word, and in only two related passages: 1 Corinthians 9:24, where he employs it literally, and Philippians 3:14, where he applies it metaphorically.

Comparing the living of the Christian life to the running of a footrace, Paul exhorts his readers to live so that they may win the prize. The prize itself, whether defined as "eternal life" or "heavenly perfection" or "resurrection glory," is a gift of grace; therefore, Paul's figure of the race and the reward cannot be pressed to imply that man's effort is the causative agent in the securing of the prize (Rom 9:16), but only that strenuous effort must be exercised if the prize is to be enjoyed. The purpose of the illustration is to summon believers to live the Christian faith with the same self-denial, supreme exertion, and single-minded concentration as that manifested by the winner of the prize in the Grecian games.

Prochorus, Procorus

One of the seven men chosen by the early church in Jerusalem to serve the widows and manage the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:5). These seven men were selected because they were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. The other six men were Stephen, Philip, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas.

See also Deacon, Deaconess.

Proconsul

A proconsul was a governor chosen by the senate of Rome to rule a province. Starting from the time of Emperor Augustus, the Roman senate chose governors to manage certain Roman senatorial provinces. These were provinces considered safe enough that they did not need an army stationed there.

Proconsuls served for one year. They served between the time when they were a *praetor* (a lower government official) and when they became a consul of Rome (a higher position). Proconsuls were different from procurators, who were chosen by the emperor to rule imperial provinces for no set time period.

We meet two proconsuls in the book of Acts:

- Sergius Paulus of Cyprus (Acts 13:7–12), and
- Gallio of Achaia (18:12–17).

See also Gallio; Gallio Inscription; Sergius Paulus.

Procurator

A procurator was a financial officer of Rome. Many modern translations use the term "governor." was usually from the equestrian rank (upper middle class of Roman society). The procurator's job included overseeing and collecting imperial taxes in an assigned province. In Judea and other smaller provinces of the Roman Empire, the procurator sometimes acted as the governor of that region.

A procurator not only managed finances but also had judicial and military authority. His main responsibility was keeping peace in his jurisdiction. The New Testament mentions three Roman procurators:

- Pontius Pilate was procurator from AD 26–36 (see Matthew 27; John 18–19).
- Antonius Felix was procurator from AD 52–59 (see Acts 23:24–25:14).
- Porcius Festus was procurator from AD 59–62 (see Acts 24:27–26:32) .

These administrators were accountable and subordinate to the governor of Syria.

See also Felix, Antonius; Festus, Porcius; Pilate, Pontius.

Promise

A declaration from one person to another that something will or will not be done. It gives the other person the right to expect the promised action.

Types of Promise

In the Bible, there are a few examples of promises that people make to each other (for example, Numbers 22:17; Esther 4:7) and to God (for example, Nehemiah 5:12). But, God's promises to man are far more important. These divine promises are absolutely trustworthy because the one who gives them is totally able to perform that which he has promised (Romans 4:21).

God's promises in Scripture assure recipients of many benefits. These include:

- Sonship (2 Corinthians 6:16–7:1)
- Forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9)
- Answers to prayer (Luke 11:9)
- Deliverance from temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Grace in tough times (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- Providing for all needs (Philippians 4:19)
- Rewards for obedience (James 1:12)
- Eternal life (Luke 18:29–30; John 3:16; Romans 6:22–23)

God's promises are certain and sure. But, to share in their blessings, we must meet certain conditions. Divine promises also are not always guarantees of blessing. Indeed, there are promises announcing the certainty of judgment on those who refuse to obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8–9).

Besides God's promises, which apply to many individuals in different times and places, many are about the unfolding of his redemptive plan in a grand procession of historical events. These promises have neither repeated applications nor conditional natures. In such cases, promise is nearly synonymous with prophecy. These promises and their fulfillment are intertwined in redemptive history.

Promises in the Old Testament

The Old Testament's promise theme is best seen in the first announcement of the gospel (called the protevangelium). It is given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after their fall into sin (Genesis 3:15). The later promises are:

- The covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 12; 15; 17)
- The covenant God made with David (2 Samuel 7)
- The promise of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31)

The Protevangelium

Genesis 3:15b says: "I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This statement is a promise that at some future time, the offspring of the woman will crush Satan. The offspring of the woman is individualized in the "he" of the last phrase. "He" shall strike you [Satan] on the head, although Satan will inflict a wound on the offspring of the woman. Here is the promise. It gives Adam, Eve, and their descendants hope. They expect their adversary, Satan, to be destroyed by their offspring.

The Promise to Abraham

In Genesis 12:1–7, Abraham is told to leave his people and country and to go to a land that the Lord would show to him. God, in turn, promises him:

1. His offspring would become a great nation
2. He would be blessed, and his name made great
3. Through him, other nations would be blessed
4. The land of Canaan would be given to his descendants

Among these promises to Abraham, the most important is this: He will bless many nations through his offspring. This promise appears five times in Genesis (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). It refers to Genesis 3:15 and points to Christ.

The Promise to David

In 2 Samuel 7, God gave a promise to King David that his dynasty would endure forever (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:34–37). This Davidic covenant narrows the promised line to the royal line of David. It had run from Adam through Seth, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. David is to be the ancestor of the Messiah-King to come (Psalm 89:3, 27–37). David thus became a central figure in the history of God's plan to redeem the world. Jesus Christ is referred to as the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).

The Promise of a New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31–37 promises that, in the future, the Lord would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. This new covenant reaffirms and extends the old one: "I will be their God, and they will be My people...I will forgive their iniquities and will

remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:33–34). The "new covenant" of Jeremiah is a restatement of the promises in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.

The new covenant began with Christ's first advent. Now, believers in him receive its blessings through the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 8:6–13). These blessings will be fully realized at Christ's return. Then, his kingdom will be fully established. We will enjoy life in the new heavens and new earth. God's people live in a time when some benefits of the age to come are real. But, the new age is not yet here.

The Promise Theme in the New Testament

The New Testament writers refer to the Old Testament promises. They did not view these promises as separate assertions. Instead, they saw them as parts of a single promise, fulfilled in Christ (see Luke 1:54–55, 69–73; Acts 13:23, 32–33; 26:6–7; 2 Corinthians 1:20). Jesus fulfills the promises made to the patriarchs and David. So, these promises should be seen as focused on him.

In Galatians and Ephesians, Paul expands on this. He tells the Gentile Christians they are "fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6). Paul says that Gentiles who trust in Christ are heirs of the promise. They are now part of Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29). He even equates the gospel with the promise given to Abraham. He states, "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and foretold the gospel to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you'" (Galatians 3:8). These and other New Testament texts establish the close connection between the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of the promise. The promises of God converge in Christ. They rest in all he achieved and will achieve for his people.

One further aspect of the promise particularly emphasized in the New Testament concerns the coming of the Holy Spirit. Paul calls believers "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13). He also says they "receive the promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:14). The gift of the Holy Spirit fulfills an Old Testament promise (Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28) and that of Christ (Luke 24:49; John 14:16, 20; Acts 1:4). But, it is also a promise of something yet future. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit's presence within the believer as a guarantee of our inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit is the "firstfruits" of future glory (Romans 8:23).

One final aspect of the New Testament's promise theme is its assurance of Christ's second coming and the new heavens and earth (compare John 14:1–3; 2 Peter 3:4, 9, 13).

See also Covenant; God, Being and Attributes of; Hope; Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess.

Prophecy

This term, and the related "prophet," "to prophesy," "prophetism," and "prophetic", are derived from a group of Greek words that, in secular Greek, mean "speak forth," "proclaim," "announce." In biblical Greek, however, these terms always carry the connotation of speaking, proclaiming, or announcing something under the influence of spiritual inspiration.

Preview

- Prophecy in the Old Testament
- Types of Old Testament Prophets
- The Message of the Prophets
- Prophecy in the New Testament
- The Role of the Christian Prophet

Prophecy in the Old Testament

One of the clearest and most significant statements on the nature of prophetic inspiration in the Old Testament is found in Numbers 12:6–8:

He said, "Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, will reveal Myself to him in a vision; I will speak to him in a dream. But this is not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD."

Several important insights into the nature of prophetic inspiration are found in this passage:

1. The prophetic gift of Moses was unique in that he alone received revelations directly from God.
2. Ordinarily, prophetic revelation was received in a dream or a vision.
3. The meaning of prophetic revelation is not always completely clear. Prophecy is sometimes ambiguous.

Further insight into the nature of prophetic revelation is found in Deuteronomy 18:18: "I [God] will raise up for them [Israelites] a prophet like you [Moses] from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him." This passage is of interest because Jesus was identified as "the prophet like Moses" who came in fulfillment of this prediction (Acts 3:22; 7:37). But the more immediate historical reference is to the succession of prophets that guided Israel from Joshua to Malachi. The phrase "I will put my words in his mouth" refers to the process of divine inspiration and is reminiscent of the common Old Testament prophetic formula "the word of the Lord came to [such and such a prophet]" (for examples, see 1 Samuel 15:10; 2 Samuel 24:11; 1 Kings 19:9; Jonah 1:1; Haggai 1:1; 2:1, 20; Zechariah 7:1, 8; 8:1). A true prophet is one who speaks (or repeats) all that God has told him [or her].

Modes of Prophetic Inspiration

Dreams were a commonly recognized mode of inspiration throughout the ancient world. But they were more highly regarded in Greece than in ancient Israel. Revelatory dreams in the Bible fall into two major categories: (1) dreams whose meaning is self-evident, and (2) symbolic dreams that usually require the expertise of an interpreter of dreams. Both types normally involve both visual and auditory elements. In those dreams whose meaning is self-evident, normally a supernatural being (God or an angel) appears to the dreamer and speaks to him or her in a straightforward manner.

More frequently, revelatory dreams have symbolic elements that require interpretation. The two great dream interpreters of the Old Testament are Joseph and Daniel. The latter, Daniel, is clearly a prophet. The two symbolic dreams that Joseph himself dreamed (Genesis 37:5–11) had sufficiently self-evident meaning so that his brothers and father were able to interpret them immediately. The dreams of the butler and baker were more complex (40:1–19), as well as Pharaoh's dream (41:1–36), which Joseph was able to interpret with the help of God. Similarly, Daniel was enabled to interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:25–45; 4:4–27). Joseph and Daniel both attributed the skill in interpreting such dreams to God (Genesis 40:8; 41:16, 25; Daniel 2:27–30; compare 4:9). Dreams are used almost interchangeably with visions in referring to modes of prophetic inspiration (Joel 2:28). But dreams do not occupy a significant part in the prophetic revelations of any of the Old Testament prophets, with the exception of Daniel.

One of the most characteristic modes of prophetic inspiration was the vision (Numbers 12:6; 24:4, 16; Hosea 12:10). The revelatory visions experienced by the prophets were not limited to visual phenomena alone but also included the auditory dimension as well. In Isaiah 1:1, the author describes his entire prophetic book as a "vision": "This is the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Yet in the very next verse, Isaiah says, "Listen, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD has spoken." Again, in Amos 1:1, "These are the *words* of Amos, who was among the sheepherders of Tekoa—what he *saw* concerning Israel" (emphasis added).

Manifestations of Prophetic Inspiration

All prophecy, whether biblical or not, presumes that the prophet either possessed or was possessed by a personal supernatural power. The behaviors expressed from this possession vary greatly.

The phenomenon generally called "ecstatic" prophecy appears to have existed in Canaan prior to the arrival of the Hebrew tribes in the 13th century BC. The first reference to ecstatic prophecy in Israel occurs in 1 Samuel 10:5–13 (11th century BC), and it persisted at least till the sixth century BC (Jeremiah 29:26).

The ecstatic prophet achieves a trancelike state by self-induced means. The most common devices used to achieve a state of ecstasy were musical instruments, such as the harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre (1 Samuel 10:5). Among the prophets of Baal, self-flagellation was another means of inducing ecstasy (1 Kings 18:28–29).

This kind of prophetic ecstasy was usually practiced by groups of prophets (1 Samuel 10:5), and such ecstasy was contagious. When Saul met a band of such prophets, the Spirit of God came upon him and he, too, began to prophesy (verses 10–13). This phenomenon occurred repeatedly to various messengers sent by Saul on a later occasion (19:20–22). At that time Saul again prophesied, and his ecstatic behavior is described in 1 Samuel 19:24. When Elisha was asked to prophesy for King Jehoram of Israel, he first requested a musician. When the musician played, the power of the Lord came upon him (2 Kings 3:15).

Types of Old Testament Prophets

There are two basic types of prophetic commission in the Old Testament. One type is that of a narrative call by God to a particular individual whose objections to the call are gradually overcome in a dialogue between himself and God. The classic example of this type of prophetic commission is found in Jeremiah 1:4–8:

The word of the LORD came to me, saying: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

"Ah, Lord GOD," I said, "I surely do not know how to speak, for I am only a child!"

But the LORD told me: "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' For to everyone I send you, you must go, and all that I command you, you must speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.

Similar prophetic commissions including such dialogues are associated with the calls of Moses (Exodus 3:1–4:17) and Gideon (Judges 6:11–17).

The second major form of prophetic commission is the "throne vision." An outstanding example is Isaiah 6:1–8:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; and the train of His robe filled the temple...

Then I said: "Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And with it he touched my mouth and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?"

And I said: "Here am I. Send me!"

Here we have an account of the visionary presence of a prophet in the heavenly council. In this case, however, the prophet participates in the deliberations and thereby receives a prophetic commission. Though few prophets have left accounts of their divine commissions, most of them appear to have been conscious of having been "sent" by God (Isaiah 48:16; Hosea 8:1; Amos 7:14–15). According to Jeremiah, false prophets did not receive such divine commissions (Jeremiah 23:21, 32; 28:15).

The Message of the Prophets

The Form of the Message

The most common opening formula for prophetic oracles in the Old Testament is the phrase "Thus says the Lord." This phrase occurs hundreds of times in prophetic contexts. This formula clearly implies that the message so introduced is not the word of the prophet who speaks the oracle but of the God of Israel who delivered his word to his prophet. The use of this formula also reiterates the prophet's sense of divine commission. In oracles introduced in this manner, God speaks in the first person. In fact, virtually all Israelite prophetic utterance is formulated as the direct speech of the God of Israel.

The prophets used many literary forms in which to express their oracles. Two of the more widely used forms of prophetic speech are the judgment speech and the oracle of salvation. The judgment speech is composed of at least two central elements: the speech of rebuke or invective, and the pronouncement of judgment (see 2 Kings 1:3–4). The second common prophetic speech form is the oracle of salvation (see Isaiah 41:8–13). Other fixed forms of prophetic speech include the prophecy of salvation (43:14–21), the proclamation of salvation (41:17–20; 42:14–17; 43:16–21; 49:7–12), and the oracle of sorrow (Isaiah 5:8–10; 10:1–4; Am 5:18–24; 6:1–7; Mi 2:1–5).

The Content of the Message

All of the prophets predict the future. Such prediction, however, is based not on human curiosity of what the future will hold but rather is rooted in the future consequences of past or present violations of the covenant, or on a future act of deliverance that will provide hope for a discouraged people. Most of the prophetic speeches that have been preserved in the Old Testament were originally delivered as public proclamations or sermons. Most of these prophetic proclamations were caused by the iniquity and apostasy of Israel. Hosea and Jeremiah condemned Israel because she had broken the covenant (Jeremiah 11:2–3; Hosea 8:1).

The prophets are frequently associated with social justice and social reform. These elements were unquestionably an important dimension of their

message. Amos denounced the rich who afflicted the poor (Amos 2:6–8; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4–6). He railed against sexual immorality (2:6–8) and against those who take bribes (5:12). Hosea provided a list of prevalent vices, including lying, killing, stealing, adultery, and idolatry (Hosea 4:2). Idolatry was a particular target for his denunciations (8:5; 11:2). The background for such heated denunciations of Israel's behavior is God's unending love for Israel (Isaiah 43:4; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 3:1; 11:1–4; 14:4; Malachi 1:2), which is inseparable from his election of Israel (Isaiah 43:1; Jeremiah 33:24; Ezekiel 20:5; Hosea 3).

The prophets were concerned not only with the transgressions of Israel and the historical judgment that would inevitably follow but also with the achievement of a final future time of bliss. The message of many of the prophets is thoroughly concerned with the end times. One such end-time concept is that of the Day of the Lord. The concept of the Day of the Lord first appears in Amos, where the emphasis lies on the disaster that will fall upon Israel on that day. In spite of Amos's emphasis on disaster, the Day of the Lord is a conception that had both salvation and judgment overtones for Israel. The disaster that will occur in the Day of the Lord can be viewed in terms of a literal historical fulfillment in the tragic events of 722 BC (the fall of Samaria) and 586 BC (the fall of Judah). But there are nevertheless features of these predictions that go beyond historical fulfillment and reach toward end-time fulfillment.

Since the Israelite conception of "salvation" was largely temporal in its dimensions, it included such blessings as length of life, fruitfulness of the womb and field, peace and victory over one's enemies, the abundance of water, and so on. In harmony with this conception of salvation, the future age is conceived in precisely those terms, as in Amos 9:13–15.

The prophets pictured a time when David himself, or someone very much like him, would return and inaugurate a golden era reminiscent of the great Davidic and Solomonic period. The covenant of God with David was not a conditional covenant but rather one that was absolutely inviolable (2 Samuel 7:4–17; Psalm 89; Jeremiah 33:19–22). It was with this knowledge that the prophets could look forward confidently to a restoration of David's throne (Jeremiah 17:24–26; 23:5–6; 33:14–15).

Prophecy in the New Testament

In contrast to the few self-proclaimed prophets of the period between the Old and New Testaments, early Christianity began with a short intense period of prophetic activity. This period lasted well into the second century AD. Jesus, his disciples and followers, and the early Christians were convinced that the times in which they lived were times in which Old Testament prophecy was being fulfilled (Mark 1:14–15; Acts 2:16–21; Romans 16:25–27; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Yet this era was not only one of fulfillment but also one of the renewal of the prophetic gift.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist is remembered in the New Testament primarily as the forerunner of Jesus whose coming was predicted by Malachi (Malachi 4:5–6). Yet, in his own right, John proclaimed the imminent judgment of God with a sense of denunciation and rebuke reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets. John's clothes, consisting of a hairy cloak and a leather girdle (Mark 1:6), were reminiscent of the typical clothing of Old Testament prophets (1 Kings 19:19; 2 Kings 1:8; 2:13–14; Zechariah 13:4). John was regarded as a prophet by people everywhere (Matthew 14:5; 17:10–13; Mark 9:11–13; 11:32; Luke 1:76; 7:26). Luke reports, in a style similar to the Old Testament prophetic narratives, that "the word of God came to John" (Luke 3:2).

Two short prophetic speeches have been preserved in Matthew 3:7–10 (compare Luke 3:7–9) and Mark 1:7–8 (compare Matthew 3:11–12; Luke 3:15–18). In the first speech, John denounced those of his generation who had transgressed the covenant law and urged them to change their manner of life. In the second speech, John predicted the coming of the Mighty One, Jesus (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:15, 27, 30; Acts 13:25). John's style, however, was not precisely that of the Old Testament prophets. His statements were made on his own authority. He never used formulas such as "thus says the Lord," or presented his prophetic utterances as if they were speeches made by God. Yet, in spite of these differences, John is appropriately regarded as the last representative of the Old Testament prophetic tradition (Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16).

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus was popularly regarded as a prophet (Matthew 16:14; 21:10–11; Mark 6:14–15; 8:28;

Luke 7:16, 39; 9:8, 19; John 6:14; 7:40, 52). This assessment was based as much on the mighty deeds Jesus performed as on his prophetic speeches and predictions. Though Jesus nowhere claimed prophetic status directly, that claim is implicit in Mark 6:4: "Only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household is a prophet without honor" (compare Matthew 13:57; Luke 4:24). It is implicit as well in Luke 13:33: "Nevertheless, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day, for it is not admissible for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem." In Acts, Jesus is regarded as "the prophet like Moses" predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18 (Acts 3:22; 7:37). Matthew presents Jesus as the New Moses, but he does not particularly emphasize his prophetic role. John, however, like Luke, emphasizes Jesus's role as the prophet (John 4:19; 6:14–15; 7:40).

While the canonical gospels and Acts reflect the notion that Jesus was a prophet, they also emphasize the fact that he was much more than a prophet. Nevertheless, the role of prophet was important enough in early Judaism that Jesus's recognition as a prophet is very significant. There are 12 solid reasons for regarding Jesus as a prophet in the Old Testament tradition:

1. The ultimate authority of Jesus's teaching (Mark 1:27). This feature is underlined by his use of the introductory formula "(Amen) I say to you," which is reminiscent of the formula "thus says the Lord" used by the Old Testament prophets.
2. The poetic character of many of Jesus's sayings is unlike contemporary rabbinic teaching but is similar to the poetic rhetoric of the Old Testament prophets.
3. Jesus experienced visions (Luke 10:18) like the ancient prophets.
4. Jesus, like the prophets, made many predictions (Matthew 23:38; Mark 13:2; 14:58; Luke 13:35; and others).
5. Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus performed symbolic acts (such as the cleansing of the temple, the entry into Jerusalem, and the Last Supper).
6. Jesus, like the prophets, when necessary, rejected the formal observance of religious ritual and emphasized the moral and spiritual dimensions of obedience to God.
7. Jesus announced the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God—an end-time proclamation similar to those made by the prophets.
8. Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus functioned as a preacher of repentance.
9. Jesus, like many of the prophets, was conscious of a special calling of God (Matthew 15:24; Mark 8:31; 9:37; 14:36; Luke 4:18–26).
10. Jesus, like the prophets, received divine revelation through intimate communion with God (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).
11. Like the prophets, Jesus represented God. To obey Jesus was to obey God, and to reject him was to reject God (Mark 9:37; compare Ezekiel 33:30–33).
12. Like the prophets, Jesus was conscious of a mission to all Israel (Matthew 15:24; 19:28; Luke 22:30).

Among the many prophetic predictions of Jesus are the following:

1. Predictions of the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God (Matthew 10:7–8, 23; 23:39; Mark 1:15; 9:1; 13:28–29)
2. Predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Matthew 23:37–39; 24:2; 26:61; 27:40; Mark 13:2; 14:58; 15:29; Luke 13:34–35; 21:6; John 2:19–21)
3. Predictions of the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 10:23, 32–33; 12:40; 13:40–41; 16:27; 24:27, 37–39; Mark 8:38; 13:26–27; 14:62; Luke 9:26; 11:30; 12:8–9; 17:24, 26)

4. Predictions of the end of the age. The longest prophetic section in the gospels is the end-time discourse of Jesus in Mark 13:1–32 (compare Matthew 24:1–36; Luke 21:5–33). A number of predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age are woven into a long discourse to the disciples.

Prophecy as a Gift for the Believers

According to Acts, the beginning of prophetic activity in early Christianity coincided with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the earliest Christians on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21). Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost indicates that the outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:4, 17–21; compare Joel 2:28–32). Further, since the Spirit had been poured out upon all early Christians (that Spirit being a Spirit of prophecy), all are actual or potential prophets.

According to 1 Corinthians 12:28 (see also Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11), God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, and third teachers. The names of several early Christian prophets have been preserved. These include Agabus (Acts 11:27–28; 21:10–11); Judas and Silas (15:32); Barnabas, Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and Paul (13:1); and the four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist (21:8–9). John, the author of Revelation, was certainly a prophet (Revelation 1:3; 22:9, 18), though he never directly assumed that title.

The Role of the Christian Prophet

Christian prophets were leaders in early Christian communities (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11), who exercised their gift [of prophecy] in church gatherings (Acts 13:1–3; 11:27–28; 1 Corinthians 12–14; Revelation 1:10). Since the Spirit of God was particularly active in Christian worship, prophecy was a major means whereby God communicated with his people. Prophets, like apostles and teachers, did not hold offices in local communities like bishops, elders, and deacons. Rather, they were chosen, not by individual congregations, but by divine commission. So they were honored and accepted in all local communities.

Early Christian prophets were both itinerant and settled. Itinerant prophets [who travel from place to place] seem to have been more prevalent in Syria-Palestine and Asia Minor than in the European churches.

The Function of Prophecy

According to Paul, the central purpose of prophecy (as of all other spiritual gifts) is that of building up or edifying the church. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, one "who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort." Again, in 1 Corinthians 14:4, Paul states that the "one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church." Paul discussed the subject of spiritual gifts, particularly prophecy and speaking in tongues, because the Corinthians had placed an excessive emphasis on speaking in tongues. Paul did not object to speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18, 39), but he did point out that the church could not be edified by it because it was generally incomprehensible. Prophecy, which consisted of comprehensible speech inspired by the Holy Spirit, contributed to the mutual edification, encouragement, and consolation of all present (1 Corinthians 14:20–25, 39).

The Content of Christian Prophecy

We know only a little about the content of prophecies given in the first-century church. Prophecies occasionally provided divine guidance in making important decisions in early Christianity. Through a prophetic message, Paul and Barnabas were selected for a particular mission (Acts 13:1–3; compare 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14). Probably through a prophecy, Paul and Timothy were forbidden to preach the gospel in Asia (Acts 16:6). They were similarly forbidden by the Spirit of Jesus to go into Bithynia (verse 7).

Perhaps the most frequent use of prophecy is the prediction of the future. Agabus predicted a universal famine (11:28) and the imminent arrest of Paul (21:11). Other prophets had also predicted his impending imprisonment (20:23). The prophecies contained in the Revelation of John are all oriented toward the future events that will gradually unfold in the last days. Yet the purpose of John's elaborate prophecy is not to satisfy the curiosity of his audience but rather to comfort and encourage them as they go through persecution.

The Form of Christian Prophecy

Unlike the prophets of the Old Testament, Christian prophets did not always present their message in the form of a direct speech from God or Jesus. There are few, if any, formal indicators of the presence of

Prophet, Prophetess

prophetic speech in early Christian literature. The book of Revelation is one notable exception.

See also Dreams; Oracle; Promise; Prophet, Prophetess; Prophets, False; Visions.

Prophet, Prophetess

A man or woman chosen by God to speak for him and to foretell events in the divine plan.

Preview

Introduction

When Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead, the onlookers responded by saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" (Lk 7:16; cf. Mk 6:15; 8:28). In Jewish religious thought, the most vivid and formative religious happenings found their focus in the call and ministry of a prophet, through whom God communicated his word to his people. In their appraisal of Jesus, the people were in fact more correct than they knew, for in him God had in reality visited them and he, though so much more than a prophet, was in fact the crown and climax of the prophetic order predicted by Moses (Dt 18:15–19).

The Titles and History of the Prophets

The main words used to describe such individuals in the OT are "prophet" (see Jgs 6:8), "man of God" (see 2 Kgs 4:9) and "seer" (see 1 Sm 9:9; 2 Sm 24:11).

The word translated "prophet" seems to have the idea "called" as its first emphasis: God takes the initiative, selects, summons, and sends the prophet (e.g., Jer 1:4–5; 7:25; Am 7:14). "Man of God" speaks of the relationship into which the prophet is brought by his call: he is now "God's man" and is recognized as belonging to him (2 Kgs 4:9). "Seer" indicates the new and remarkable powers of perception granted to the prophet. In Hebrew, as in English, the ordinary verb "to see" is used also of understanding ("I see what you mean") and of the power of perception into the nature and meaning of things ("He sees things very clearly"). In the case of the prophets, their powers of "perception" were raised far above normal because the Lord inspired them to become vehicles of his message.

The line of great prophets upon whose shoulders the story of the OT moves forward began with Moses, who is recognized as the prophet par excellence (Dt 34:10). This was a correct perception, for all the distinctive marks of a prophet belonged to Moses: the call (Ex 3:1–4:17; cf. Is 6; Jer 1:4–19; Ez 1–3; Hos 1:2; Am 7:14–15), the awareness of the importance of historical events as the acts of God in which he confirmed his word (Ex 3:12; 4:21–23), ethical and social concern (2:11–13), and championship of the helpless (v 17).

But the comment in Deuteronomy 34:10 not only looks back to the greatness of Moses but also looks forward to the coming of a prophet like Moses. This accords with his own prediction (Dt 18:15–19), which undoubtedly anticipates a single, great individual prophet. Moses makes a striking comparison with himself—the coming prophet will fill just such a role as Moses filled at Mt Sinai (Dt 18:16). On that occasion, Moses acted as the prophetic mediator of the voice of God in a unique sense, for at Sinai God fashioned the old covenant into its completed form. In expecting a prophet cast in this mold, Moses was therefore looking forward to another covenant-mediator, Jesus Christ himself.

The expectation for this great prophet was kept alive as God kept sending prophets to his people. In each case, such a prophet was known to be true by his likeness to Moses; in each case he would be viewed with excitement by genuine believers to see whether he was the great one come at last. In this light we can understand the excitement of the people who saw Jesus raise the dead (Lk 7:16).

The OT mentions the existence of prophetic groups, sometimes called "schools." Elisha clearly had such a group under his instruction (2 Kgs 6:1), and "sons of the prophets" (e.g., 2 Kgs 2:3, 5; Am 7:14) probably refers to "prophet in training" under the care of a master prophet. "Guilds" would be a better description of the groups in 1 Samuel 10:5–11. Such groups enjoyed an enthusiastic, ecstatic worship of the Lord, touched with a marked activity of the Spirit of God. But at the heart of their devotion was "prophecy"—that is, a declaration of the truth about God himself. After this early period, the prophetic groups seem to have diminished in significance (judging by the disappearance of plain references similar to those in 1 Samuel), and the

Prophet, Prophetess

gradual change of things from ecstasy to a more direct ministry of the word could well lie behind the comment in 1 Samuel 9:9.

Inspiration

The Spirit of the Lord whose inspiration lay behind the activities of the ecstatic groups (1 Sm 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23) was active in all the prophets, and the claim to divine inspiration is plainly registered from time to time (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:24; Neh 9:30; Hos 9:7; Jl 2:28–29; Mi 3:8; cf. 1 Chr 12:18; 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14; 24:20). The Spirit inspired men and women to speak the very words of God (cf. 2 Pt 1:21).

Jeremiah claims that the hand of God was laid on his mouth, putting the words of God into his lips (Jer 1:9); Ezekiel records how he was made to eat a scroll, by which means he received the words the Lord had written and was thus enabled to speak what the Lord called "my words" (Ez 2:7–4:4). The miracle is stated in a nutshell at the beginning of Amos (1:1, 3): "The words of Amos . . . Thus saith the Lord." Though the words were truly Amos's words, the words were also the Lord's.

True and False Prophets

False prophets were to be separated from true prophets by means of three tests. The first test was doctrinal. In Deuteronomy 13 the motive of the false prophet was to draw the people away from the God who had revealed himself in the exodus (Dt 13:2, 5–7, 10). Notwithstanding that the word of the false prophet might be supported by apparent signs and wonders (vv 1–2), it was to be refused—not simply because it introduced novelty (vv 2, 6) but because that novelty contradicted the revelation of the Lord at the exodus (vv 5, 10). The first test was thus doctrinal and required that the people of God have knowledge of the truth whereby they could, by comparison, recognize error.

The second test was practical and required patience. It is stated in Deuteronomy 18:21–22: the word of the Lord always comes to pass. This requires patience because, as Deuteronomy 13:1–2 indicates, a false word may be supported by an apparent spiritual proof. The call of Deuteronomy 18:21–22 is a call for patience. Should there be any real doubt about whether a prophetic word is true or false, wait for the confirmatory turn of events.

The third test is moral and calls for watchful discernment. Jeremiah, of all the prophets, was most afflicted in his spirit by the presence of false prophets and gave the longest and most sustained consideration to the problem (Jer 23:9–40). His answer is striking and challenging: the false prophet will be found out as a man of unholy life (vv 11–14) whose message has no note of moral rebuke but rather encourages men in their sin (vv 16–22).

The Function of the Prophet

It is sometimes said that prophets are not "foretellers" but "forthtellers." As far as the OT is concerned, however, the prophets are forthtellers (declaring the truth about God) by being foretellers (predicting what God will do). Prediction is neither an occasional nor a marginal activity in the OT; it is the way the prophet went about his work. Deuteronomy 18:9–15 explains the function of the prophet in Israel: the surrounding nations are revealed as probing into the future by means of a variety of fortune-telling techniques (vv 10–11); these things are forbidden to Israel on the ground of being abominable to the Lord (v 12). Israel's distinctiveness is maintained in that the nations probe the future by diviners, whereas the Lord gives Israel a prophet (vv 13–15). Elisha (2 Kgs 4:27) is surprised when foreknowledge is denied him; Amos teaches that foreknowledge is the privilege of the prophets in their fellowship with God (Am 3:7). But prediction in Israel was totally unlike prognostication among the nations, for in no way was it motivated by a mere curiosity about the future.

First, biblical prediction arose out of the needs of the present. In Isaiah 39 it is the faithless commitment of Hezekiah to rely for security on a military understanding with Babylon that prompts Isaiah to announce the future Babylonian captivity. Isaiah does not snatch the name Babylon out of thin air; it is given to him within the situation in which he was called to minister.

Second, prediction aimed at giving knowledge of the future was to result in moral reformation in the present. The moral exhortations of the prophets find their explanation in what the Lord is about to do (e.g., Is 31:6–7; Am 5:6).

Third, the predicted course of events was aimed at stabilizing the faith of the true believer in dark times. For example, various passages in Isaiah (Is 9:1–7; 11:1–16; 40:1–3) have the effect of lifting the eyes out of the immediately preceding grim tragedy to the coming glory.

Methods of Communication

In foretelling, the prophets were forthtelling—they were proclaiming the wonderful works of God (cf. the definition of prophecy in Acts 2:11, 17). For the most part, this proclamation was by direct word of mouth. The prophets were men of the word. Their words were like messengers sent by God (Is 55:11), endowed with all the divine efficacy of the creative word of Genesis 1:3 (cf. Ps 33:6). Sometimes the efficacy of the word was enhanced by being accompanied by a sign or symbolic action (e.g., Jer 13:1–11; 19; Ez 4:1–17; 24:15–24), or identified intimately with a person (Is 7:3; cf. 8:1–4). Such things were like visual aids, whereby the word would be made clearer to those present. But it would seem that the intention of the symbolic action (sometimes called an "acted oracle") was not so much to make understanding easier but to give more power and effect to the word as it was sent like a messenger into that situation. This is the conclusion to be drawn from 2 Kings 13:14–19, where the extent to which the king "embodied" the word in action determined the extent to which the word would prove effective in bringing events to pass.

The final embodiment of the words of the prophets is in the books that have been preserved. Jeremiah 36 may be taken as an object lesson in the fact that the prophets took the time and trouble to record their spoken messages in writing: there was stress on careful word-by-word dictation (Jer 36:6, 17–18). But the actual literary form of the messages themselves tells the same tale. What we find in the books of the prophets cannot be the preached form of their words but rather the studied wording in which they preserved (and filed away) their sermons. It stands to reason that men who were conscious of communicating the very words of God would see to it that those words were not lost. We may take it for granted that every prophet preserved a written record of his ministry. Whether each of the named prophets was himself directly responsible for the final form of his book, we are not told and have no way of knowing. The careful way in which the books of Isaiah or Amos, for example, are arranged is best suited by assuming that the author was also his own editor.

See also Prophecy; Prophets, False.

Prophets, False

False prophets are spokesmen, heralds, or messengers who wrongly claim to speak for someone else, often God. These prophets are usually driven by a desire for popularity rather than loyalty to God. This was the key difference between the prophet Jeremiah and his contemporaries. While Jeremiah warned of disaster (Jeremiah 4:19), the false prophets promised peace (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). The people preferred the comforting lies of the false prophets. They even said, "Do not prophesy to us the truth! Speak to us pleasant words; prophesy illusions" (Isaiah 30:10).

The message of a false prophet often appealed to national pride. They would remind the people that Israel was God's chosen nation. His temple was among them so that everything would be fine (Jeremiah 7:10). But Jeremiah warned them not to be deceived into thinking they were safe just because of the temple (Jeremiah 7:12–15). This conflict between God's true prophet and the national religion is seen in the story of Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Amaziah accused Amos of plotting against Israel (Amos 7:10–13). But, Amos was right. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BC and exiled the Israelites.

The false prophet's message aimed to please the people. It was driven by self-interest. Even if the false prophet did not mean to lie, his message often became false. It was based on wrong motives. This shows that even a true prophet could become false, and sometimes, a false prophet could be used by God for a good purpose. For example, God gave a vision to Balaam, a non-Israelite. He was caught between pleasing Balak, who hired him, and obeying the God of Israel, who spoke to him (Numbers 22–23). A story in 1 Kings 13 describes two nameless prophets. One is true, the other false. They suddenly switch roles. The false prophet speaks the truth. The true prophet is false due to his disobedience.

In another example, Jeremiah confronts Hananiah, the son of Azzur, in the temple. The two prophets deliver conflicting prophecies. A man from Gibeon, Hananiah, seemed a true prophet. He prophesied what the people wanted to hear: Babylon would soon fall. However, later events proved Hananiah's prophecy to be wishful thinking. So, we can say that false prophecy is self-centred, misleading, and unrealistic.

The concept of the false prophet continues into the New Testament. Jesus warns of those who seem like harmless sheep. They are, in fact, wolves ready to destroy. He also cautioned his disciples that false messiahs would arise, trying to deceive even God's chosen people (Matthew 24:24). The early church must have faced many such false prophets because the apostolic letters also warn against them (compare 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). In these letters, "prophets" and "teachers" are often interchangeable. But, the original text calls them "false prophets." These false teachers pretend to be Christians but spread deceptive teachings. They may even perform miracles, but their power comes from evil spirits, not from the Spirit of Christ (compare Revelation 13:11–15).

False prophets, fraudulent spirits, and wrong teachings are ongoing problems in the church. Believers should always be on guard against those who cleverly distort the truth (compare Ephesians 4:14–16). They should test the spirits of prophets to see if they are from God or the evil one (1 Corinthians 12:10–11). We must not believe everyone who claims to have a message from God. We must "test" the spirits. We need to see if their message comes from the Holy Spirit. It should align with the truth that Jesus is the Son of God in human form (compare 1 John 4:1–3).

See also Antichrist; False Christs, False Messiahs; Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess.

Propitiation

The act of appeasing another person's anger by the offering of a gift. The word was often used by the pagans in antiquity, for they thought of their gods as unpredictable beings, liable to become angry with their worshipers for any trifle. When disaster struck, it was often thought that a god was angry and was therefore punishing his worshipers. The remedy was to offer a sacrifice without delay. A well-chosen offering would appease the god and put him in a good mood again. This process was called propitiation.

Understandably, some modern theologians have reacted against using the term in reference to the God of the Bible. They do not see him as one who can be bribed to become favorable, so they reject the whole idea. When they come to the term in the Greek NT, they translate it by "expiation" or some equivalent term that lacks any reference to anger. This is an unjustified avoidance because, in the first place, the Greek term for propitiation occurs in some important biblical passages (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10). In the second place, the idea of the wrath of God is found throughout the Bible; it must be taken into account in the way sin is forgiven.

The idea that God cannot be angry is not based on the OT or the NT. God does have anger for the sins of the human race. Whenever his children sin, they provoke the anger of God. Of course, his anger is not an irrational lack of self-control, as it so often is with humans. His anger is the settled opposition of his holy nature to everything that is evil. Such opposition to sin cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand. It requires something much more substantial. And the Bible states that it was only the cross that did this. Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2, kjv). This is not the only way of looking at the cross, but it is an important way. If God's anger is real, then it must be taken into account in the way that sin, which caused that wrath, is dealt with. When the NT speaks of "propitiation," it means that Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of mankind put away God's wrath against his people once and for all.

See also Atonement; Expiation; Wrath of God.

Proselyte

A Gentile who converted to Judaism by:

1. Being circumcised
2. Being baptized
3. Offering a sacrifice in the temple

In Old Testament times, foreigners in Palestine were encouraged to join Israel's religion. They had to be circumcised (Exodus 12:48).

However, "proselytizing," or converting willing Gentiles, was more common in Jewish communities outside Palestine. Jewish people lived in many parts of the world because they were exiled or due to business or military service. They naturally brought their religious beliefs and practices with them. The Jewish way of life attracted many Gentiles. They were used to worshiping many gods (polytheism). They admired Judaism's belief in one God (monotheism) and its high ethics. Many Gentiles connected with the Jewish faith through synagogue life (see Isaiah 56:1–8; Malachi 1:11). Jews sought to convert Gentiles before Christ and

in the early New Testament era. Both non-biblical Jewish sources, like Philo and Josephus and Roman writers, such as Horace, Seneca, and Tacitus confirm this. This continued until the life of Christ (see Matthew 23:15).

The most committed seekers of Judaism became full Jews through a three-step ritual:

1. **Circumcision** (for males)
2. **Baptism** to break from their non-Jewish past
3. **Sacrifice** at the Jerusalem temple

These converts were called "proselytes." They were true Jews, fully obligated to follow all the Old Testament laws.

Some Gentiles admired Judaism's monotheism and morals. They were drawn to synagogue life but did not want to be circumcised. These people were known as "God-fearers" (see Acts 10:22; 13:16, 26) or "devout" ones (Acts 10:2; 17:4, 17). Some Jews viewed them favorably, but others considered them no better than other Gentiles.

See also Diaspora of the Jews; God-fearer; Jew.

Prosperity

See Bless, Blessing; Money.

Prostitute, Prostitution

A person guilty of unlawful or forbidden sexual relationships. A prostitute is sometimes used to represent someone who worships an idol.

It translates four distinct words with different meanings:

1. The man or woman, married or unmarried, who engaged in unlawful sexual behavior (Genesis 34:31; Judges 19:2; Proverbs 23:27).
2. The temple prostitute of a pagan religion which used sexual practice as part of worship (Genesis 38:21–22; Deuteronomy 23:17; Hosea 4:14). The law of Moses forbade this practice (Leviticus 19:29; 21:9).
3. The "strange woman" was another kind of prostitute (1 Kings 11:1; Proverbs 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 23:27). There are different opinions for why that name was given to prostitutes. It may have referred to a woman who was not one's own wife (Proverbs 5:17–20) or a foreign woman (Numbers 25:1; Joshua 23:13).
4. Any woman, married or single, who engages in unlawful sexual activity for lust or money (Matthew 21:31–32; Luke 15:30; 1 Corinthians 6:15–16; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25).

Prostitution appeared early in Israel's history and continued throughout the biblical period. The Bible generally condemns prostitution. For instance, a priest's daughter who practiced prostitution was to be burned to death (Leviticus 21:9). Priests could not marry prostitutes (Leviticus 19:29), and the earnings from prostitution could not be used in the temple (Deuteronomy 23:18). These rules kept the worship of the Lord free from cult prostitution.

Jacob's sons killed Hamor and Shechem, saying: "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?" (Genesis 34:31). Amaziah's wife was punished by becoming a prostitute for his mistreatment of the prophet Amos (Amos 7:17).

In the first century, prostitutes and tax collectors were both despised by the Jews (Matthew 21:32). Paul taught that a Christian's body belongs to Christ and should not be joined with a prostitute (1 Corinthians 6:15–16). Proverbs also warns against engaging with prostitutes.

However, some biblical stories show prostitutes in a more positive light. Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute to remind her father-in-law of his promise (Genesis 38:14–15). Rahab, a prostitute, played a significant role in Hebrew history by helping the spies (Joshua 2:4–16; Hebrews 11:31).

Figuratively, "prostitute" and "prostitution" are used to describe idolatry, especially in the prophetic books (Jeremiah 2:20; Revelation 17:1, 5, 15–16; 19:2). This metaphor is based on the relationship between the Lord and His people (Jeremiah 3:20). When people worshipped other gods, they were seen as being unfaithful or "prostitutes" (Judges 8:33). The same idea is found in the New Testament (Revelation 17).

Protevangelium

A word that means "first gospel." It is a combination of two Greek words: *protos* (meaning "first") and *evangelion* (meaning "gospel" or "good news").

It refers to the first message of redemption God spoke after the fall of man (when humans first sinned). Speaking to Satan (embodied in a serpent), God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

In this protevangelium (or first gospel), we have the first revelation of both the humanity (her offspring) and the divinity (crushing the head of the serpent) of the great Deliverer. God promises a Deliverer who will destroy Satan but will suffer in the process. This refers to Jesus's death on the cross. In suffering that death, Jesus defeated the devil who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

Protoevangelium of James

This is an apocryphal gospel that tells about the marriage of Mary, her pregnancy, and the birth and childhood of Jesus. It also describes the early years of Jesus as he grew up.

The word *Protoevangelium* means "First Gospel" in Greek. The book was rediscovered in the 16th century by Guillaume Postel, a French scholar.

See Gospel of the Birth of Mary*; see also* Apocrypha.

Proverbs, Book of

Third poetical book in the OT. A collection of striking, epigrammatic expressions concerning practical wisdom by example, warning, or precept.

Preview

Authors

While there is an underlying unity of thought in the book of Proverbs, there is no presumption of unity of authorship, since the writers of the seven or more sections into which the book is divided are, in most cases, clearly noted.

1:1–9:18

There is a division of opinion as to whether the opening verse refers to the Solomonic authorship of this section or whether it simply underscores the name of the main contributor to the entire book. It is objected that the man who wrote so carefully about the danger of promiscuous relationships with immoral women—one of the main themes of this section—is not likely to be Solomon, who failed significantly in the matter of mixed marriages (1 Kgs 11:1–8). There are flaws in such an argument. One may be capable of giving excellent advice without necessarily having the strength of character to follow it oneself, and there is a distinction between the seductive prostitutes or adulteresses of Proverbs 5:1–21, 6:20–35, 7:1–27 and Solomon's polygamous but respectable relationships. However, the question of authorship is probably best left open. Those who question the Solomonic origin of this section regard 1:2–7 as setting out the purpose of the whole book. Proverbs 1:8–9:18 is a series of 13 practical discourses on wisdom, lovingly and honestly given as by a father to a son. This provides an indispensable foundation for the more popular proverbial teaching in the remainder of the book.

10:1–22:16

Solomon is specifically noted as the author or compiler of this main section of Proverbs. The probability that he played a major part in the production of the book of Proverbs finds strong support in the historical books. Soon after his coronation he was endowed with the spirit of wisdom—in response to his request (1 Kgs 3:5–14). The incident concerning the two prostitutes (vv 16–28) provided public proof of this. His universal reputation, especially in connection with proverbial wisdom, is attested to in 1 Kings 4:29–34 and in the visit of the queen of Sheba (10:1–13).

22:17–24:34

The title "the words of the wise" (Prv 22:17, neb) is incorporated into the opening verse of this section. An evident difference of style, replacing the simple, one-verse proverb by a more discursive approach

that deals with a subject over several verses, and the title of the next subsection "These also are sayings of the wise" (24:23), strongly suggest the independence of this collection. Of major interest is the remarkably close parallel between 22:17–23:11 and the Egyptian book of Amenemope, which has been dated variously between the 13th and 7th centuries BC. Scholars have detected as many as 30 connections between the two. Most think that this section in Proverbs is an adaptation of an Egyptian original (such selection and modification being entirely congruous with the doctrine of inspiration). However, a minority of scholars, including several prominent Egyptologists, argue persuasively on the basis of grammatical structure that Amenemope is derived from a Hebrew original.

25:1–29:27

Some material of Solomon's has here been edited and incorporated by "the men of Hezekiah king of Judah" (25:1). In this section there is a tendency to group together proverbs dealing with specific subjects—for example, the relationship between a king and his subjects (vv 2–7), the lazy man (26:13–16), and the mischief maker (vv 17–27). Solomon and Hezekiah were frequently linked together in Jewish thought (e.g., 2 Chr 30:26), and rabbinic tradition credited Hezekiah with the production of both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The national prestige during the reigns of both kings would have been conducive to literary pursuits.

30:1–33

Nothing is known of Agur, of his father, Jakeh of Massa, or of the two other characters mentioned, Ithiel and Ucal. According to Genesis 25:14, Massa was one of the 12 sons of Ishmael, and it is likely that Agur came from north Arabia, an area traditionally renowned for its wisdom.

31:1–9

Lemuel, the author of this section, also came from Massa, but apart from this is unknown. The inclusion of wisdom sayings from sources outside Israel illustrates the international connections of the wisdom movement during the period of the monarchy.

31:10–31

It is possible that Lemuel's authorship includes this superb acrostic poem on the ideal wife; its inspiration may have come from his mother, like the earlier section. But the pattern of life would fit more easily into the context of a prosperous, agricultural community in Palestine rather than in an Arabian nomadic or seminomadic community. For this reason, most scholars regard the poem as anonymous.

Date

The larger part of the book may, with confidence, be ascribed to Solomon (ruled c. 970–930 BC). But the considerable contribution of Hezekiah and his men rules out a date for the completion of the book before 700 BC. The inclusion of sections by non-Israelites, like Agur and Lemuel, is more likely in the preexilic period, with its wider international interests, than in the more particularistic atmosphere of postexilic Judaism. Probably the final, sophisticated acrostic poem was the last section to be included, but there is nothing in the book that demands a date later than the early seventh century BC. In rabbinic tradition Proverbs was invariably grouped with Psalms and Job in the third section of the Jewish canon, the Writings or Holy Books. While the content of the Writings was not authoritatively finalized until the end of the first century AD, it is likely that Proverbs was accepted as inspired long before this, as witnessed by its inclusion in the Septuagint, the principal Greek translation. The order in our English versions may have been influenced by the rabbinic tradition that linked the books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs with Moses, David, and Hezekiah, respectively.

Background

The book of Proverbs is included in the OT corpus of books known as the Wisdom Literature. This corpus is further represented in Scripture by the books of Job and Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalms (e.g., Pss 1, 37, 73, 119). Proverbs represents one major class of this literature. Individual proverbs contain sharp, practical applications of wisdom covering many facets of life. Job and Ecclesiastes focus on one major problem, or a group of interrelated problems, in monologue or dialogue form.

In the ancient Near East, wisdom was originally connected with all skills, manual as well as intellectual, and was considered to be the gift of the gods. Gradually it acquired a dominantly intellectual significance, particularly in a cultic setting, in such magical or semimagical arts as exorcism. A wide range of wisdom literature from

Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia, of the two basic types noted in the preceding paragraph, has survived, making it possible to see its Hebrew counterpart against this background. There is no duplication, however, and the spirit of the Hebrew Wisdom Literature is markedly superior to anything comparable in the ancient world. This is due principally to the strong religious foundation in Israel, where wisdom's first step was to trust and revere the Lord (Prv 1:7).

When Israel emerged as a nation in the Mosaic period, it was in a world where individuals or groups of "the wise" already existed. Israel shared this inheritance, with both men and women being involved, as witnessed by the wise women of Tekoa and Abel in Beth-maacah (2 Sm 14:2; 20:16) and the professional military or civic court counselors Ahithophel and Hushai (2 Sm 15:1–2, 31; 16:15–19). Proverbs shows this group of "the wise" at its best; the life of uprightness, diligence, honesty, and self-control that it advocates sets a standard of morality that accords with the law on which it was based. But it is probable that many proverbs predate the emergence of a class of the wise. Most communities develop their own collections of short, witty sayings that express practical wisdom and form a store of primitive philosophy. Solomon's part in giving definitive shape to Israel's proverbs (1 Kgs 4:32) has already been noted. The antithetic form of Hebrew poetry, where the parallelism of the second line allows either a sharp contrast (as generally in Proverbs 10–15) or further support (i.e., synonymous parallelism, as in chs 16–22) is an ideal medium for the proverb. When the class of "the wise" developed, this popular wisdom became part of their provenance.

Purpose and Theology

The Close Relationship between Religion and Everyday Life

While the general tone of Proverbs is dominantly rational, the importance of fearing (showing reverence to) the Lord is stressed throughout the book (1:7; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; etc.). This "fear of the Lord" is one of the main definitions of religion in the OT, the other being "the knowledge of God" stressed especially by Hosea and Jeremiah (Jer 9:24; Hos 4:1). Both are found in parallel in Proverbs 2:5 and 9:10. Far from there being an unbridgeable gap between religion and the secular world, Proverbs shows the results, in noble character and harmonious, happy homes, when the whole of life is brought under God's control. A danger exists when the moral elements are taken in isolation from the religious foundation that is assumed throughout. Then the pursuit for happiness or success can become selfish, inward-looking, and ultimately self-defeating.

Proverbs and the Prophetic Movement

There are many similarities between Proverbs and the Prophets, including a down-to-earth realism; a championing of the poor and underprivileged groups (e.g., 14:31); a realization of the inefficacy of sacrifice apart from morality (15:8; 21:27); and an emphasis on the individual, which was sometimes overlooked because of the strong sense of corporate identity within the covenant community. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, especially, restated strongly the theme of individual responsibility (Jer 31:29–30; Ez 18). But there is a vital difference that Proverbs shares with the remainder of biblical Wisdom Literature, namely, the absence of any clear, historical reference to Israel's election and covenant relationship with God. This was the consistent point of appeal of the great preexilic prophets. Similarly, Jerusalem and its temple theology are not mentioned, although the wisdom movement, especially as reflected in Proverbs, flourished under the patronage of the Davidic monarchy. Even the name Israel does not occur. This has lent strength to the view that Proverbs is the clearest and most comprehensive manual of universal, practical ethics existing in the ancient world. An educated contemporary Egyptian would have found Proverbs readily comprehensible and uplifting, and although this was not its primary purpose, the book still has a strong appeal to the moral non-Christian.

Proverbs and Deuteronomy

Proverbs shares many features with the book of Deuteronomy, especially its emphasis on retribution and reward (Prv 2:22; 3:9–10; 10:27–30; cf. Dt 28). This doctrine could be perverted into an invariable equation: the righteous are always rewarded and the wicked are always punished. That is a view against which Job (Jb 21:7–34) and Jeremiah (Jer 12:1–4) protested strongly. It could also result in a hypocritical, self-seeking approach; I want the blessings promised (e.g., Prv 3:9–10), therefore I will "honor" God in the matter of tithes. This substitution of an outward show for the inward dynamic of love, gratitude, and faith was often the curse of Israel's formalized religion. However, the principle itself—that those who honor God and live in cooperation with him and his

laws are generally those who are God-blessed (not necessarily in material terms)—is a scriptural one, and the authors of Proverbs must not be blamed for the perversions that arose subsequently.

Content

Introduction: 1:1–7

Proverbs 1:1–7 sets out the purpose of the wisdom movement in Israel. The subtitle of the whole book is found in verse 2: "The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings" (nlt). The question of the authorship of this section has already been discussed, but there is certainly nothing incongruous about Solomon's authorship. In the earlier part of his reign, Solomon showed a deep longing for the wisdom that was required to govern his people rightly (1 Kgs 3:7–9), and there is the earnest desire here that his subjects might have a similar understanding. Verses 1–6 form one sentence in Hebrew and include no fewer than 11 different aspects of wisdom. The first of them, "wisdom," occurs 37 times in Proverbs and indicates an informed, skillful use of knowledge. It is only by taking the first step of trusting in the Lord that a person can enter into wisdom. Morality is not situational, nor an absolute in itself; it requires an unchanging point of reference that can only be found in God.

Lessons on Wisdom: 1:8–9:18

This section is composed of 13 distinct lessons on wisdom, most of which are introduced by "My son" or something similar. The final lesson (8:1–9:18) is given by Wisdom herself. This method indicates the warm, personal relationship between the teacher and his pupils, who, in the ancient Near East, would be exclusively male. A similar style is found in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian wisdom literature and could well have been adopted by Solomon, who, in the humility and God-fearing concern for the national well-being of his earlier years, would have been a teacher par excellence.

Lesson 1: Avoiding Evil Companions (1:8–33)

Three voices are raised: (1) the specious voice of those who promise quick gains by violence (vv 10–14); (2) the wise man himself (vv 15–19), who reinforces the advice of parents patiently given over the years (vv 8–9) and who advocates a clean break with violent men doomed to a violent end; and (3) Wisdom (vv 20–33), whose appeal is not furtive but open and who seeks to give others her own spirit of wisdom (v 23). Those who spurn the voice of wisdom will experience judgment (vv 29–33).

Lesson 2: The Rewards of Wisdom (2:1–22)

While wisdom is ultimately God-given (v 6), people must seek it with an intensity of desire that characterized the psalmist (Prv 2:2–4; cf. Ps 63:1). There is no contradiction here, but a paradox that underlines the fact that God's gifts are not given lightly but are given to those who, by their attitude of heart and will, merit them. The benefits of wisdom outlined (Prv 2:7–22) have both negative and positive and both material and spiritual elements. The peril of associating with immoral women, which is referred to so frequently in Proverbs, is mentioned for the first time (vv 16–19).

Lesson 3: The Rewards of Complete Trust in God (3:1–10)

For the Jew there was always the temptation to try to ensure blessing by an outward show of religion, and verses 9–10 could be misinterpreted. But the context stresses the requirement of heart loyalty and obedience (vv 1–8). "God first" (v 6) is the fundamental need; without this an individual or a nation is impoverished (cf. Hg 1:1–11).

Lesson 4: The Need for Discipline (3:11–20)

One of the major themes in Proverbs is discipline, especially that of a father chastising his son (Prv 3:11–12; cf. Heb 12:5–11). The other theme here is the praise of wisdom and the benefits it bestows.

Lesson 5: Wisdom and Common Sense (3:21–35)

Wisdom and common sense will result in safety (vv 23–26) and guard against unwise acts (vv 27–32). But the underlying security is found in verse 26: "The Lord is your security."

Lesson 6: Determination (4:1–9)

Here the teacher gives his own testimony and shows that he is drawing on the accumulated wisdom of an earlier generation (vv 1–6). There is an emphasis upon determination, with the will resolutely set to gain wisdom, as the verbs in verses 5–9 show.

Lesson 7: The Straight Path (4:10–19)

An equal determination is necessary to keep clear of evil men and their pursuits (vv 14–17). Note the graphic description, both beautiful and frightening, of the two paths (vv 18–19).

Lesson 8: Pursuing Righteousness and Avoiding Evil (4:20–27)

The single-minded pursuit of righteousness and its corollary, the avoidance of every kind of evil (cf. 1 Thes 5:22), involves our hearing (Prv 4:20), memories (v 21), hearts (vv 21, 23), sight (v 25), and wills (vv 26–27). It means total commitment to God.

Lesson 9: Sexual Purity (5:1–23)

In blunt language that cannot possibly be misunderstood, the perils of sexual prostitution and the wisdom of faithfulness within marriage are underscored. In sexual relationships there can be no purely private morality; others are necessarily involved, and God is more than a concerned spectator (v 21).

Lesson 10: The Things God Hates (6:1–19)

First (vv 1–5), there is straightforward advice about the need to avoid rash pledges. If one is foolish enough to be already involved, the sensible thing is to swallow one's pride and extricate oneself as soon as possible. The second lesson—to emulate the ants in their diligent preparation for future need (vv 6–11)—anticipates the contrasting attention later given to the sluggard (22:13; 26:13–16). The third lesson describes in detail the slick, deceitful "con man" (6:12–19). He is to be avoided.

Lesson 11: Illicit Sexual Relationships (6:20–35)

This section continues with the subject of illicit sexual relationships, showing God's attitude to this particular form of sin. The wounded husband will prove a formidable adversary, should he discover infidelity (vv 33–35), and the effect upon the adulterer himself will be utterly disastrous (vv 26–32).

Lesson 12: The Wiles of the Prostitute (7:1–27)

This chapter gives a graphic illustration of the wiles of a prostitute. Speciously, the pleasures she offers appear alluring, enhanced by the element of risk, but in fact the night's adventure invariably proves to be the road to hell (v 27).

Lesson 13: Wisdom's Direct Appeal (8:1–9:18)

In contrast to the smooth-tongued, deadly seductress of chapter 7 and the brazen, loud-mouthed prostitute of 9:13–18, there are two complementary pictures of Wisdom. The first, in 8:1–36, is one of the most remarkable examples of personification in the OT. Wisdom seeks not the ruin of one but the welfare of all (vv 1–5). Wisdom and integrity, righteous conduct and frankness are pictured as inseparable entities (vv 6–13). But there remains an emphasis on the blessings that result from the quest for wisdom (vv 14–21). Kings, judges, and rulers are dependent on her, and success of the most desirable kind is her gift to her followers. Verses 22–31 are virtually a theological explanation for the preeminence of Wisdom, showing her close association with God's creative activity.

Understandably, many Christians have seen in these verses an anticipation of Christ himself. The NT sees Christ as the answer to two of the most vital religious issues: how does God approach mankind, and how did he create the world? Here is the answer—by Wisdom. The connection may be carried into the next section (vv 33–36), where Wisdom, like Christ in the NT, is seen as the one absolutely essential and desirable thing.

In the second picture of Wisdom (9:1–6), she is seen as a gracious, generous hostess, offering a banquet that issues in life (cf. Jesus' parable in Lk 14:15–24). A further contrast with the immoral woman in Proverbs 9:13–18 notes, pointedly, that the latter's guests end up in hell. A series of proverbs on the contrast between the wise and foolish (vv 7–12) come between the two pictures. They show how teachable the wise man is, in contrast to the fool. Once more the true foundation of life is clearly defined (v 10).

The Collected Proverbs of Solomon: 10:1–22:16

The 375 proverbs in this section were probably selected from the 3,000 for which Solomon is credited (1 Kgs 4:32). Each verse is a unit, with a contrast or a comparison between its two lines. There are understandable repetitions (e.g., Prv 14:12; 16:25), almost inevitable in a large collection of this kind. The common sense of the proverbial sayings, each of which has been proved in experience, is evident, but one must allow for varying levels; some appear rather mundane and close to worldly wisdom. But taken as a whole, they provide a practical guide, sanctioned by God, for everyday life. Again, it must be stressed that the religious life, based on the law and the covenant relationship, is assumed. God is vitally concerned with the minute details of life, and religious issues are not entirely bypassed (e.g., 10:27–29; 14:27; 15:16, 33; 18:10). This section in Proverbs cannot be read quickly; each verse demands a pause to allow its point to penetrate the mind. Since there is

no systematic arrangement of the proverbs, the most helpful way of approach into this section may be by a consideration of the principal themes. It would be a valuable study to collate the references to each subject:

1. The rewards of the righteous and the end of the ungodly (10:2, 7, 16, 27–30; 11:3–9).

2. The fool. The three Hebrew words translated "fool" can all have the sense of stubborn rebelliousness as well as dullness of intellect, so "rebel" is often an apt rendering. The fool gives his parents grief and is a menace to society. His mind is completely closed to reason and his unbridled words cause untold damage. In his case, correction is pointless; he is beyond hope.

3. The simple. The reference here is to the large, uncommitted group, neither fools nor wise, but those who are open to the gentle persuasion of concerned wisdom teachers. The main appeal of this section is to this group rather than to the wise and prudent, who have already "graduated."

4. The lazy. This person is often contrasted with the industrious (e.g., 10:4–5) and is mercilessly satirized for his apathy and weak excuses.

5. The power of words. They can wound or heal (12:18). The stress on honest speech, in contrast to deceitful, thoughtless words, is well illustrated in the same chapter (e.g., 12:6, 13–14, 17–19, 22).

6. Wisdom. Chapter 13 shows how it may be derived from parents (v 1), the Scriptures (v 13), the class of the wise (v 14), and good company (v 20).

7. Justice. The stress on this echoes the great prophets. In particular, bribery is condemned (17:8, 23; 18:16), as are false witnesses (19:5, 9, 28), while open-mindedness is commended (18:17).

8. Neighborliness. Fair-weather "friends" are often referred to (e.g., 19:4–7) and contrasted with the true friend (17:17; 18:24).

9. Riches and poverty. These conditions are approached in a variety of ways, but always with an emphasis on moral and spiritual rather than merely material prosperity (e.g., 21:6; 22:1, 4). Care for the poor is frequently demanded (21:13)—to be accompanied with the highest motives (22:2).

10. Family life. There is an attractive picture of an ideal family, with its industrious husband, an understanding wife who is a blessing to him (12:4; 14:1; 18:22; 19:14), and obedient children, disciplined when necessary by punishment (13:24; 19:18; 23:13–14).

The Final Section—More Wise Advice: 22:17–31:31

While the subjects considered and the general outlook are unchanged, the proverbs in this section are generally longer and there is an evident attempt to group together proverbs dealing with particular subjects—for example, the perils of strong drink (23:29–35). The religious motive of the editor of this section is evident; he writes that people should trust in the Lord (22:19).

Additional Proverbs: 22:17–24:34

This may be viewed as a supplement to the previous section dealing further with the subjects of justice, wise business policy, slander, and laziness. The humorous but pointed proverb of the lazy man's field is the longest in the book.

Additional Solomonic Proverbs: 25:1–29:27

From the many Solomonic proverbs not included in the main collection (10:1–22:16), the aides of Hezekiah selected and edited a further group of Solomon's proverbs. Again, there is evidence of an effort to group related proverbs—for example, the place of kings (25:2–7); unwise litigation (vv 8–10); the fool (26:1–12); laziness (vv 13–16); and the troublemaker (vv 17–27).

The Wisdom of Agur: 30:1–33

The humility of the wise man in the presence of an all-wise God emerges clearly in Agur's introduction (vv 1–4), a passage paralleled in Job 38–39. His teaching method was apparently to confront his students with a number of examples of a point under discussion, the "two . . . three . . . four" method, indicating that the catalogue was not complete and encouraging them to add further illustrations from their own experience. Agur was evidently in close and perceptive touch with life at every level.

The Wisdom of Lemuel: 31:1–9

This section, inspired by his mother, deals yet again with sexual relationships, the perils of intoxication, and the need to champion the poor and oppressed. Lemuel's name, meaning "belonging to God," probably tells us still more about his mother.

The Ideal Wife: 31:10–31

Every verse of this poem, which was possibly anonymous, begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a device that often signified completeness. Coming at the end of Proverbs (a book that is forthright when dealing with the subject of the immoral woman), it gives, in antithesis, a refreshing picture of a cultured, well-to-do housewife and mother. At the same time, it provides an enlightening insight into several facets of contemporary life. As elsewhere in the book, her underlying relationship to God (v 30) results in desirable virtues that include trustworthiness (v 11), immense application (vv 13–19, 24, 27), charity (vv 19–20), foresight (vv 21, 25), wisdom, and kindness (v 26).

See also Poetry, Biblical; Solomon (Person); Wisdom; Wisdom Literature.

Providence

The way God helps human beings throughout history, especially those who believe in him.

Significance of Providence

Throughout history, many people have found comfort in God's care. God does not leave Earth alone in the universe or forget about humans for a moment. God visits, communicates, controls, and intervenes in our lives and meets our needs. Providence is a reason to be thankful.

False Ideas about Providence

There are many false ideas about providence, showing that it is an important issue. Errors arise in ideas about providence that are not based on teachings from the Bible when people deny God's personhood. All that is left is an unfriendly force that dominates us and controls everything. There are many contradictions in these false ideas, including:

1. **Fate**: Some people think life is controlled by a fate that cannot be predicted, saying things like "As fate would have it."
2. **Luck**: Others speak about "fortune" or "luck." But since luck is not a person, fortune-tellers attempt to understand it, and some create concepts such as "lady luck" (the idea of luck as a magical woman who controls events).
3. **Serendipity**: Taking credit for accidentally discovering good things. This ignores God's role and does not give thanks.
4. **History**: Some groups have believed that history supports their ideas. For example:
    - Supporters of Marxism (followers of Karl Marx's ideas) have said, "History is on our side." They believed that future events would inevitably lead to a world ruled by Communism.
    - Some American leaders believed in "manifest destiny." This idea claimed that the United States was meant to become the most powerful country in its region or even the world.
1. **Progress**: Advances in science, technology, education, and society lead some to believe in progress as a great force. In a way, this views providence as progress but takes the glory from God.
2. **Nature**: Certain figures, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, attributed providence to nature. But nature is uncaring.
3. **Natural Selection**: Charles Darwin's classic on biological evolution, *The Origin of the Species,* popularized natural selection. For many, the force behind "natural selection" became more important than God's providence. The idea that "the fit survive" makes providence unnecessary.

These views cannot all be true. They also don't satisfy people who look for a providence that meets their unique needs. Only the Christian doctrine of providence provides that.

Biblical Meaning of Providence

Providence is the help God gives for people's needs.

Abraham's test of faith is a classic example. God told him to sacrifice his son—a gift he could not afford. Abraham struggled with this decision, not wanting to lose either his son or God's friendship. When Isaac asked about the sacrifice, Abraham responded, "God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:8). God did provide a suitable sacrifice, "a ram in a thicket, caught by its horns" (Genesis 22:13).

The word "providence" means "to see before," and to do something about the situation. To Abraham, it was clear that God placed the ram at the place of sacrifice for his use. "Provision" and "providence" are related to the word, "provide." However, providence has come to mean God's provision.

In the New Testament, Paul praised the Philippians' support of his missionary work. He was confident that God's providence would support them: "And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Jesus' sacrifice confirms God's providence. God asked for Abraham's son but did not accept the sacrifice. Two thousand years later, he gave his own son as a sacrifice. It is God's nature to foresee human needs and to provide for them.

Providence and the Nature of God

Following his words to the Philippians ("his riches in glory"—Philippians 4:19), Paul wrote a doxology to "our God and Father" (verse 20). Providence is like a father providing and guiding. God is our Father, and his providence is how that is expressed. Fathers give their children opportunities without taking away their freedom. They lead their children through caring for them. Providence flows naturally from God's fatherly nature.

See also Foreordination; God, Being and Attributes of.

Psalm 151

A psalm that is accepted as Scripture by the Eastern Orthodox churches but not by Jews, Roman Catholics, or Protestants. Psalm 151 was known only through ancient translations (Greek, Latin, and Syriac) until it was found in a manuscript at Qumran. At Qumran, the psalm was included in the Hebrew Psalm Scroll (11Q). The Hebrew text includes two different poems. The first poem (called 151A) is a commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1–13. It relates how David watched his father's flocks but was made king over God's people because of his heart. The second poem (called 151B) is a commentary on 1 Samuel 17 and discusses David and Goliath. Some think it shows the bravery of David rather than his humility as in 151A.

Psalm Titles

Superscriptions to numerous psalms. *See* Music; Psalms, Book of.

Psalms of Solomon

The Psalms of Solomon are a collection of 18 songs that claim to be written by King Solomon. They belong to a group of writings called the *pseudepigrapha* (ancient works that falsely claim to be written by a well-known person). The psalms were probably written by one author who lived during the middle of the first century BC and wrote in Hebrew. The author's beliefs reflect the views of the Pharisees, especially about the law, judgment, and the future of Israel.

Style and Themes

These psalms are written in the same style as the Psalms in the Bible. Like the biblical psalms, they describe the contrast between righteous and wicked people. In this collection, the "wicked" are gentiles who have dishonored the holy things of the Lord (2:3) and Jewish people who have turned away from God (3:11, 13).

The sinner is described as a fool, like in the biblical wisdom writings. The fool does not care about the Lord (4:1). His words and actions show his unrighteousness (4:2–4). He lies, judges others unfairly, makes false oaths, commits sexual sin, acts without respect for the law, and seeks his own success even if others are harmed (12).

In contrast, the righteous person is wise and shows respect and awe for the Lord (4:26). The righteous person is not frightened by bad dreams or dangerous times (6:4–5). He is filled with passion for the Lord's righteousness when he sees the temple and the law being dishonored (8:28).

The Lord shows love for the righteous through discipline, and the righteous respond with repentance. The author compares them to the "tree of life" in Paradise. They are stable and will not be

uprooted (14:2–4). The wicked, however, will be forgotten, and God will bring judgment upon them, sending them into Sheol (the place of the dead) and destruction (14:6; 15:10).

God's Rule and Care

The author sees God as the King who mightily rules over nations (2:34 and following). God is ready to judge his enemies and those who faithfully follow him (2:38 and following; 4:9). He will vindicate the righteous (2:39). God shows his care by sustaining creation (5:11–12) and raising up kings, rulers, and nations (5:13). In the same way, the author assures readers that God's care extends particularly to poor people and to those who call on him (5:2–3, 13). He is the hope of the righteous (8:37).

Because of this belief in God's just rule, the psalmist has confidence that God will overcome evil and rescue the righteous.

Historical Setting and Messianic Hope

The historical context of these psalms is the entrance of Pompey into Jerusalem and his desecration of the temple in 63 BC. There was hope that at the death of Pompey (48 BC, compare 2:30 and following), the messianic age would begin.

He reminds God of his covenant with King David and asks for forgiveness for Israel's sins. The nation had suffered under foreign control as punishment for its disobedience (17:6). With the death of Pompey, the author prays that God will bring back the kingdom of Israel under a new king from the family line of David.:

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David. All the time in the which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant" (17:23). By means of the Davidic Messiah, the land will be purged of sinners, godless nations, and the righteous will be sanctified.

The author believes this Messiah (God's chosen one) will cleanse the land from sin and from godless nations. Only the righteous remnant (small faithful group) will live under his rule. When God brings them back to the land, he will divide them again into the 12 tribes. The Messiah will rule Israel and the nations "in the wisdom of his righteousness" (17:29–31). Foreigners will serve but will not share in the kingdom's glory.

Future Hope

The Psalms of Solomon express a hope for a new and righteous future. Though they arise from a real historical situation, they also look forward to God's final judgment and the restoration of Israel. The psalmist blesses those who will live to see God's mercy and justice:

"Blessed are those who will be there to see Israel's good fortune when God gathers the tribes. May the Lord quickly show mercy to Israel! The Lord is our king forever and ever" (17:50–51).

See also Apocrypha; Solomon (Person).

Psalms, Book of

Poems sung to musical accompaniment, originally the harp. The alternative title, the Psalter, refers to a collection of songs sung to harp accompaniment. The English title, therefore, broadly defines the form employed, whereas the Hebrew title of the book, "Praises," or "Book of Praises," suggests the content.

Preview

- Authors
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Authors

The Evidence of the Titles

The Hebrew Bible credits David with 73 psalms, compared with 84 in the Septuagint and 85 in the Latin Vulgate. Korah and Asaph, the leaders of the Levitical singing groups, are connected with 11 and 12 psalms, respectively (although Ps 43 is almost certainly to be attributed to Korah also). Two psalms are ascribed to Solomon (Pss 72; 127), one to Moses (Ps 90), and one to Ethan (Ps 89), while Heman shares the credit for one psalm with the sons of Korah (Ps 88). The remainder are sometimes called "orphan psalms" because of their anonymity.

The preposition "of" found in the titles (for example, "A Psalm of David") usually indicates authorship. But in the case of groups, such as the sons of Asaph or Korah, it may simply indicate that the psalms were included in their repertoire. Less plausible is the idea that it may also be rendered "for the use of." For example, some of the "Psalms of David" might be "for the use of" the Davidic king on some occasion.

Historical Allusions in the Titles

Many of the titles refer to specific events in the life of David (e.g., Pss 3; 7; 18; 30; 34; 51). There is evidence that the titles were added at an early date. When the psalms were translated into Greek, there appears to have been some difficulty in translating the titles, possibly because of their antiquity. If the historical references were added at a late date, there is no reason why plausible backgrounds could not have been supplied for all the Davidic psalms, instead of only a few. Moreover, the apparent disparity between the title and the actual content of some psalms (e.g., Ps 30) indicates that the titles were supplied by those who knew about a connection unknown to a later editor. Admittedly, there are minor discrepancies between the titles and the references in the historical books. For example, in Psalm 34 David acts the madman before Abimelech, whereas in 1 Samuel it is before Achish. But probably Abimelech was the general name (like Pharaoh for the kings of Egypt) for all the Philistine kings (e.g., Gn 21:32; 26:26).

Evidence of authorship and historical background in the titles, therefore, may be taken as a reasonably reliable guide. But the internal difficulties, together with the freedom exercised by successive translators into Greek, Syriac, and Latin, indicates that they were not regarded as inspired.

The Case for Davidic Authorship

Five points can be offered to support David's authorship of several psalms:

1. The authenticity of David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sm 1:19–27) is generally accepted. This indicates a deeply poetic spirit and a generous temperament that prepares us to accept those psalms ascribed to David that evidence similar characteristics. "The last words of David" is another Davidic poem in the historical books (2 Sm 23:1–7).

2. David had a reputation as a skillful musician at Saul's court (1 Sm 16:16–18). Amos comments on his inventiveness as a musician (Am 6:5), while the Chronicler repeatedly stresses his contribution to the musical aspect of temple worship (e.g., 1 Chr 6:31; 16:7; Ezr 3:10). The Jewish historian Josephus said that David composed songs and hymns to God in varied meters. The probability is that David, as well as amassing materials and preparing the plans for Solomon's temple, also gave attention to the temple worship. This is his place in Jewish tradition.

3. The early monarchy, with a freshly secured independence, national prestige, and a new prosperity, would most likely be a time of artistic creativity. David was at the heart of this movement.

4. There is a close correspondence between David's life as described in the historical books and certain psalms, for example, his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sm 11:2–12:25) and Psalm 51, as witnessed in the title. David's lapses and genuine repentance, as well as the varied aspects of his career—shepherd, fugitive, warrior, and so on—find expression in many of the psalms attributed to him. The correspondence between the David of the psalms and the David of the historical books is close, especially in the display of strong faith in God.

5. Although some scholars believe that when "David" is mentioned in the NT, it is simply a reference to the book of Psalms and not an ascription of authorship, a straightforward interpretation of the NT text strengthens the case for Davidic authorship. David is specifically named as the author of various psalms in Matthew 22:41–45; Acts 1:16; 2:25, 34; Romans 4:6; 11:9.

In conclusion, there is strong support for the view that the substantial nucleus of the Psalter is Davidic. Moreover, it is probable that some of the anonymous psalms were the work of the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sm 23:1). Hebrews 4:7 refers one of these, Psalm 95, to David (see also Acts 4:25 and Ps 2).

Date

Once David's authorship of several psalms is established, then it must follow that these psalms are dated during David's life. Thus, most of the psalms formed the hymnbook of Israel in the period of the monarchy. Other psalms were written later. For example, Psalm 137 is clearly exilic, and Psalms 107:2–3 and 126:1 allude to the return from captivity. Psalms 44 and 79 are probably, but not conclusively, postexilic.

The book of Psalms was probably the product of a considerable period of growth. The incidence of Davidic psalms in the first section indicates that it was completed early, possibly toward the end of David's reign. The remainder of the process of compilation is difficult to reconstruct, but the fact that the titles, with their allusions to authors, events, and musical directions, become less frequent in the two final collections (Pss 90–150) lends support to the probability that the collections were combined chronologically in the sequence in which they are found today. Ezra is traditionally credited with the final grouping and editing of the psalms, a hypothesis that appears reasonable in light of his vital contribution to the systematic reshaping of the national religious life. In any case, the process was completed before the translation of the Psalter into Greek (the Septuagint) at the end of the third century BC, since the traditional order is found there. General, but not complete, support comes also from the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. At some point minor dislocations occurred. Psalms 9 and 10 may have originally formed one psalm (as in the Septuagint), and there is a strong case for combining Psalms 42 and 43.

Background

As the book of Psalms lies before us, its connection with temple worship is apparent. Fifty-five psalms are addressed to the choirmaster, and as we have noted, 23 or 24 are linked with the two main guilds of Levitical singers, Asaph and Korah. The musical instruments, such as stringed instruments (Ps 55 title) and flutes (Ps 5 title) are noted. Probably other terms concern musical directions: Selah, which occurs 71 times, may indicate a pause or crescendo; Higgaion (Ps 9:16) may recommend a meditative attitude. Seemingly obscure references like "The Hind of the Dawn" (Ps 22 title), "Lilies" (Pss 45 title; 80 title) and "The Dove on Far-off Terebinths" (Ps 56 title) may indicate the tunes to which the psalms were to be sung. The precise meaning of other terms, such as Shiggaion (Ps 7 title) or Alamoth (conjecturally a choir of ladies, Ps 46 title), may also be in the realm of musical directions.

Structure

The Psalter, possibly in conscious imitation of the five books of Moses in the Law, is divided into five sections (Pss 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; 107–150), separated by four doxologies (41:13; 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48). While the editorial comment in Psalm 72:20 notes that the psalms of David were ended, Davidic psalms are found later in the book (Pss 86; 101; 103), suggesting that at least some of these sections circulated independently until their inclusion in the final collection. Such independence is further indicated by the duplications in the various sections (e.g., Pss 14 and 53; 40:13–17 and 70) and by the use of different names for God, who is usually referred to as "Lord" in the first collection and as "God" in the second.

Canonicity

In the various recensions of the third section of the Hebrew canon, the Writings or Holy Books, the book of Psalms is almost invariably placed first. It was clearly regarded as the most important book in this section, and in Luke 24:44, "Psalms" is synonymous with "Writings" as its title. While the canonicity of all the contents of the Writings was not finalized until the end of the first century AD, it is likely that the book of Psalms was accepted as inspired long before this, probably by 300 BC.

It must not be inferred that all the psalms had their origin in the cultic life of the community, but the sanctuary was the focal point of Israel's worship for the greater part of the OT period. Prayer was possible elsewhere, but whenever practicable, it was customary for the worshiper to present his petitions at the main sanctuary. And thanksgiving in ancient Israel was almost invariably connected with a thank offering, vow offering, or freewill offering. The psalms could have been composed by individuals, like David, who had the requisite technical ability. And it must be appreciated that poetry, an unfamiliar medium to most Western civilizations, was the natural way for the ancient Easterner to express his emotions. Or the individual could have engaged a member of the Levitical guilds of musicians to frame either his supplication or his thanksgiving. Gradually, a comprehensive collection of psalms would be available for the use of individuals, the congregation, and even the entire nation in any conceivable situation. Once finalized, this collection served not only the subsequent needs of Israel but the devotional requirements of successive generations of Christians as well. Whatever the origin of an individual psalm, each has finally been incorporated in a cultic setting, and it may be assumed that the best of Israel's psalmody has thus been preserved.

Purpose and Theology

The Doctrine of God

In both adversity and prosperity, the psalmists indicate a strong faith in God and a clear conception of his attributes. Understandably, anthropomorphisms (ascribing human characteristics to nonhuman things) abound, with references to God's voice, words, ears, eyes, face, or hands and fingers. No exception needs to be taken to this. Anthropomorphisms of this kind are, in fact, widely used by present-day Christians. Their great value is that they make God real to the worshiper. How else could humans describe God, except in terms of their own understanding?

The monotheism of the psalms emerges clearly in Psalms 115:3–8; 135:15–18; 139. God is viewed as the Creator (Pss 8:3; 89:11; 95:3–5), with references to the creation mythology of surrounding nations (e.g., Ps 89:10) serving merely as illustrations of his almighty creative power. He is proclaimed as the Lord of history (Pss 44, 78, 80, 81, 105, 106) and as the sovereign controller of nature (Pss 18:7; 19:1–6; 65:8–13; 105:26–42; 135:5–7). The psalmists never tired of celebrating God's absolute greatness.

The Human Perspective

The Psalter is a God-centered book, but humanity has a worthy place, in spite of the vast gulf between them and their Creator (Pss 8:3–4; 145:3–4) and the limitations of their earthly life (Ps 90:9–10). By the will of God, humans occupy a responsible, mediating position between God and all other created beings (Ps 8:5–8). The relationship with a righteous God is endangered by sin (Ps 106), but God is gracious and long-suffering (Ps 103), faithful and forgiving (Ps 130). While references to the sacrificial system are not lacking (Pss 20:3; 50:8–9), the emphasis is upon a personal piety that demands obedience and a surrendered heart (Ps 40:6–8). Psalm 51 indicates a depth of sin with which the sacrificial system was totally inadequate to cope; the psalmist could only cast himself, in total penitence, upon God's mercy. Man's moral obligations (Pss 15; 24:3–5) and loyalty to the law (Pss 19:7–11; 119) are fully accepted. Throughout, there is the revelation of a strong personal relationship that encourages prayer and praise and invites trust.

The Afterlife

The Psalms maintain the traditional Hebrew view of Sheol as the abode of the departed, without distinction between the good and evil, where all but mere existence has perished. The chief complaint of the devout man was that, in Sheol, all meaningful relationship with God ceased (Pss 6:5; 88:10–12). However, it was recognized that, since God was almighty, even Sheol was not exempt from his reach (Ps 139:8). Added to this was the preciousness and strength of fellowship with God, which could not be terminated even by death. Psalms 16:9–11, 49:15, and 73:23–26 well illustrate this insight. The Psalter, therefore, witnesses to an important transitional phase in Israel's belief.

Universal Recognition of God

Passages like Psalms 9:11; 47:1–2, 7–9; 66:8; 67; and 117:1 call upon all nations to acknowledge and praise God and show an awareness of his sovereignty over all nations. But this universalism does not appear to involve any desire to convert the heathen nations and, indeed, it is balanced by strong particularistic elements. God's covenant relationship with his people and his mighty deeds on their behalf are the chief items for which the praise of all nations is summoned (Pss 47:3–4; 66:8–9; 126:2). As elsewhere in the OT, the role of Israel is passive; her continued existence witnesses to God's faithfulness and brings glory to him.

Lasting Value

Whatever the emotion of the psalmists, be it bitter complaint, anguished lament, or joyous exultation, all the psalms reflect one or other of the many aspects of communion with God. The reader may look "into the heart of all the saints" (so said Luther) as they faced life's experiences in the awareness of a God who was all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful. The strength of that personal relationship with God that typified OT worship at its best is exemplified here, and the many echoes of the psalms elsewhere in Israel's literature show the powerful influence of these testimonies on the faithful. The fact that, almost invariably, little specific detail is given of the psalmists' actual conditions has made it easier for the Psalter to become the universal hymnbook and devotional treasury of God's people, in both public and private worship, until and including the present day. Modern life, materially, is vastly different from that of ancient Israel, but God

remains unchanged and so do the basic needs of the human heart. The Holy Spirit, therefore, can still use this spiritual treasury as a means of revelation and communication between God and man. Few books in the Bible have exercised so profound an influence or been so widely used.

Content

Introduction

It is more helpful to describe the psalms in categories than to explain them one by one in canonical order. The psalms can be categorized as follows:

Psalms of praise

Royal, messianic psalms

Passion psalms

Psalms about Zion

Laments

Imprecatory psalms

Penitential psalms

Wisdom psalms and historical psalms

Psalms of trust

Psalms of Praise

The Hebrew title, "Praises," defines accurately a large part of the contents of the book. Each of the first four sections concludes with a doxology, while the fifth section concludes with five psalms, each of which begins and ends with one or two "Hallelujahs." The last of these, Psalm 150, sounds the call to total praise. God is to be praised for his being, for his great acts in creation, nature, and history on both the individual and the communal level.

1. Individual praise. In comparison with the number of individual laments, there are relatively few psalms in this category. Those normally included are Psalms 9, 18, 32, 34, 116, and 138. This may, in part, be due to the universal tendency to complain rather than to express thanks. But a number of the laments do, in fact, include the note of thanksgiving for the anticipated deliverance, and the normal round of congregational thanksgiving would allow the individual to express his personal praise. However, it was customary in temple worship to give a verbal act of thanksgiving before the whole assembly whenever a vow offering or a thank offering was made. Such public testimony, and the communal meal associated with this type of sacrifice, is indicated in Psalms 22:22–26; 66:13–20; 116:17–19. The inclusion of such opportunities for personal praise and testimony must have added warmth and significance to worship. Each act of deliverance and every experience of God's mercy became part of salvation history, which was a cumulative, ongoing concept, not simply a recital of God's deeds in earlier centuries.

2. General communal praise. This is sometimes entitled "hymns" or "descriptive praise," its main feature being linked to a particular act of deliverance. God is usually referred to in the third person, not directly. Psalm 103 may be taken as representative of this group. It begins and ends with individual references (vv 1–5, 22b), but the central section (esp. vv 6–14) shows that the psalmist was part of a worshiping community. There is first of all the imperative call to praise God for the full range of his mercy to each individual, including physical and spiritual deliverance and his sustaining and satisfying grace. Then the focus changes to his great works in history (vv 6–7). This forms a natural basis for the recital of those gracious qualities revealed so consistently during the course of the national history, especially his tender, fatherly care (vv 8–14). The frailty of humanity contrasts with God's constancy (vv 15–18), and his rule, being universal and absolute (v 19), merits the praise of all things, living and inanimate, in heaven and on earth (vv 19–22). There is, however, a great number of possible variations in the way in which God is celebrated, as Psalms 113 and 136, which come within this class, illustrate.

3. Specific communal praise. Occasionally termed "declarative praise," this type of psalm connects with a particular outstanding evidence of God's mercy and would most naturally follow soon after the event itself. Deliverance from an enemy provides the occasion for most of the psalms in this category (e.g., Pss 124, 129). Psalm 66:8–12, now the nucleus of an expanded recital of God's goodness, was possibly once complete in itself. Psalms 46–48 may form a trilogy connected with the remarkable deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's Assyrians in 701 BC (2 Kgs 18:17–19:37). Psalm 67 was probably composed in gratitude for a particular harvest. It is easy to see how psalms of this type could, in the process of time, acquire a more general usage.

4. Praise for the God of nature. The first part of Psalm 19 pictures the praise of God sounding from the heavens; Psalm 29 celebrates him as the God of the thunderstorm, which, sweeping in from the Mediterranean near Lebanon, pursues its awe-inspiring path southward into the wilderness of Kadesh, with the result that "in his temple" (the created world?) all are praising, "Glory, glory to the Lord" (v 9). His sovereignty and self-sufficiency in this world are celebrated in Psalm 50:10–12; he is the God of growth and harvest (Ps 65:9–13); in Psalm 104, often called the "Hymn of Creation," he sustains and supplies everything on the earth and in the seas and is the absolute Lord of all life (vv 29–30). There is no confusion between God and his creation; even the seemingly permanent heaven and earth will perish, but "you go on forever" (Ps 102:25–27). Nature's role is to proclaim the glory of God (Ps 19:1) and to praise him (Ps 148). People see themselves as insignificant when set against those forces of nature, which are themselves dwarfed by God—hence, the awareness of the immeasurable gulf between God and people that God has bridged by his grace (Ps 8).

5. Praise for God's kingship. A relatively small group of psalms (Pss 47, 93, 96–99) celebrate the kingship of God in a way that goes beyond the ascription of praise noted in the foregoing groups. They are marked by acclamation, by both shouting and clapping when God "ascends." Presumably, the reference is to his throne (Ps 47:1–5; cf. 99:1–2). "The Lord reigns" (Pss 93:1; 97:1; 99:1) is the frequent cry, and the nature of his reign is extolled (Ps 99:4–5).

Royal, Messianic Psalms

Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144 are usually included as the royal psalms. They do not form a literary category, since psalms of various types are included, but they all have some reference to the king, the nature of his rule, and his relationship to God. Since the Davidic monarchy was terminated in 586 BC, these psalms, almost certainly, were composed before that date. The language in these psalms often shows the king as being God's vice-regent. For example, Psalm 45, a royal marriage psalm, contains the assertion "Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever" (45:6). But this is best understood in terms of the throne being regarded as the Lord's, occupied by the king as his representative. Similarly, the wording in Psalm 110:1, "Sit at my right hand," indicates the privileges and prerogatives that the king enjoys as God's vice-regent. The balance of the OT evidence concerning the king shows that the monarchy in Israel was qualified by the nature of God's covenantal relationship with his people; the king did not enjoy the absolutism claimed by most of the rulers of surrounding kingdoms.

Most of the royal psalms can also be called messianic psalms. They were interpreted as such in the early Christian church, as witnessed in Jesus Christ's general statement that the psalmists wrote of him (Lk 24:44) and by particular NT quotations. The main psalms concerned, and the NT references, are the following:

1. Psalm 2 (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), while linked with the Davidic king, nevertheless speaks of a universal vindication and rule, which far transcended even David's rule. Further, the picture of the Davidic king, anointed to rule on the earth as the representative of God, who is enthroned in heaven, strongly suggests Christ's mediating, incarnate ministry.

2. Psalm 45 (Heb 1:8–9), a marriage psalm for one of the Davidic kings, possibly Solomon, speaks not only of love and marriage but also a permanence and quality of rule. In the most obvious translation of verse 6, the writer addresses God, "Your divine throne endures for ever and ever." The writer to the Hebrews clearly accepted this interpretation (Heb 1:8–9) and used it in contrast to the exalted status of even the angels, reinforcing it with two other quotations from the psalms that originally applied to God (Ps 97:7; 102:25–27; cf. Heb 1:6, 10–12).

3. Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted messianic psalm (Mt 22:43–45; Acts 2:34–35; Heb 1:13; 5:5–10; 6:20; 7:21). The language, speaking of the privileges, universal victory and continuing priesthood of David and his successors, would be considered hyperbolic and possibly misleading except for its fulfillment in "great David's greater Son." In contrast to the angels, who are privileged to stand in God's presence (Lk 1:19), Christ the Son sits in the place of power and authority (Heb 1:13).

Other psalms that could also be designated messianic but are not specifically included among the royal psalms are Psalm 8 (1 Cor 15:27); Psalm 40 (Heb 10:5–10); Psalm 72, with its idealized picture of the nature, consequences, and extent of the rule of God's representative; Psalm 118:22–23; and Psalm 132 (Acts 2:30).

Passion Psalms

The four psalms in this group (Pss 16; 22; 40; 69; some scholars would also include Pss 102; 109) may also be regarded as messianic. They connect with that line of OT prophecy that interprets the Messiah's ministry in terms of the Suffering Servant who features prominently in Isaiah (e.g., Is 42:1–9; 52:13–53:12). Of these four, Psalm 22 is the most remarkable. Jesus recited part of it when he was on the cross (Ps 22:1; cf. Mt 27:46), and other connections with the crucifixion scene are noteworthy (e.g., Ps 22:6–8, 14–18). Some further considerations are even more significant: there is no suggestion of any awareness of sin; the suffering of the psalmist appears completely unjustified; there is no imprecatory element, even in the face of bitter persecution. This connects with the sinless Christ (2 Cor 5:21), who could even pray for his executioners (Lk 23:34). Psalm 16:10 anticipates the triumph of the incorruptible Christ over the grave (cf. Acts 2:24–31). Psalm 40:6–8 foreshadows the Incarnation and self-giving redemptive work of Christ (Heb 10:5–10). Psalm 69 refers to the isolation resulting from a commitment to God's cause (Ps 69:8–9) and anticipates the part played by Judas in what was fundamentally God's work in Christ (Ps 69:25–26; cf. Ps 109:8; Is 53:10; Acts 1:20).

Psalms about Zion

This group could have been classified as a subsection of communal praise, but due to the close historical connection between God's choice of the house of David and Jerusalem (Pss 78:68–72; 132:11–13), and their subsequent interrelated fortunes, we consider them at this point. There was a biting satire in the request of the Babylonians to the refugees of a shattered city to "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (Ps 137:3, niv), but it witnesses to the existence of such a collection. Praise of Zion was, in fact, almost synonymous with the praise of the Lord who dwelt there. Jerusalem's continued survival, in spite of its difficulties, was ample demonstration of God's enduring greatness (Ps 48:11–14) and peculiar affection for the city that housed his temple (Ps 87:1–3). Psalms 48, 76, 84, 87 and 122 are the main psalms in this category, but the theme itself appears widely throughout the psalms (e.g., 102:16; 125:1; 126:1–3; 133:3; 147:2). The basis of the NT concept of a heavenly Jerusalem, the spiritual home of the regenerate of all nations, finds its origin in this concept, especially in Psalm 87.

Laments

These are associated with specific occasions of distress and are of two types:

1. National. The prophetic and historical books give several examples of the kind of occasion, such as drought, locust infestation, or enemy attack, that could prompt national laments, and also the inward and outward attitudes that accompanied them (e.g., Jgs 20:23, 26; Jer 14:1–12; 36:9; Jl 1:13–14; 2:12–17; Jon 3:5). There is a regular structure in the psalms of this class: the distressing situation is first described; God is petitioned to come to the aid of his people, often with the reminder of his past mercies for Israel; finally, there is often an expression of confidence that God would heed their cry. Israel's adversaries are clearly in mind in Psalms 14, 44, 60, 74, 80, and 83, while Psalms 58, 106, and 125 reflect situations less critical.

2. Individual. There are so many of this type (approximately 50) that it is frequently described as the backbone of the Psalter. Their most obvious features are the sharpness of complaint and the bitterness of attack upon those responsible. As in the national laments, there is often complaint against God, especially for his lack of attention or his tardiness in intervening. The basic components of this type are almost identical to the national laments, except that they often conclude with the avowal to praise God in anticipation of deliverance (e.g., Ps 13:5–6). Frequently, the lament is accompanied by thanksgiving for the deliverance sought and experienced, as illustrated in the two sections of Psalms 22:1–21 and 28:1–9.

Imprecatory Psalms

Approximately 20 psalms contain passionate pleas for the overthrow of the wicked, in language that is often shocking. Any instant condemnation of this attitude must, however, be tempered by certain relevant considerations:

The cry for vengeance was not purely personal; it was firmly believed that God's honor was at stake (e.g., Ps 109:21). In an age where there was a less developed view of an afterlife, it was axiomatic that rewards and punishments resulting from obedience or disobedience to God, must be observable within this lifetime. Whenever this was not apparent, it would seem that no righteous God existed, and the name of God was dishonored (e.g., Ps 74:10). This burning desire for the eradication of evil and evil men sprang from a consciousness of

a moral God and virtually demanded the triumph of truth.

The poetic language is also prone to hyperbole—a feature not confined to the psalms (e.g., Neh 4:4–5; Jer 20:14–18; Am 7:17). Such language is startling; indeed, part of its function was probably to startle—to express and promote a sense of outrage.

In the pre-Christian period, therefore, such outbursts were not completely unjustifiable. But in the light of the fuller revelation in the NT, such an attitude cannot be condoned. The Christian is to love as Christ loved (Jn 13:34), to pray for his enemies and to forgive them (Mt 5:38–48; Col 3:13). The theme of judgment continues into the NT and is indeed heightened there, since Christ's coming has left people without excuse to live in sin (Jn 16:8–11), but there can be no place for purely private vengeance.

Penitential Psalms

Psalms 32, 38, 51, and 130 are the clearest examples of penitential psalms, although traditionally the church has also included Psalms 6, 102, 143, where there is no explicit confession of sin. In an age when adversity in its various forms was seen as God's judgment for wrongdoing, the admission of distress was tantamount to a confession of guilt. In the four main examples there is an intensity of feeling and a deep sense of the enormity of sin in God's sight, although, as elsewhere, there is no indication of specific sin, even in Psalm 51, which is surely to be connected with David's sin against Bathsheba (2 Sm 11–12). Significantly, David bypasses the sacrificial system, which was totally inefficacious in his case, casting himself entirely on the mercy of God (Ps 51:1, 16). The burden of unconfessed sin is clearly revealed in Psalm 32, and sin's searing and corrupting effect in Psalm 38.

Wisdom Psalms and Historical Psalms

While it is accepted that prophets, priests, and wise men all functioned at the major sanctuaries, some overlap in their modes of expression is to be expected. Proverbial forms are not infrequently found in the psalms (Pss 37:5, 8, 16, 21–22; 111:10; 127:1–5). Psalm 1, probably an introduction to the whole Psalter, contrasts the diverging paths of the righteous and ungodly (cf. Ps 112), while Psalms 127 and 128 concentrate on the blessings given to the godly. Psalm 133 is written in praise of unity. The problem of explaining the sufferings of a righteous person and the apparent prosperity of evil people, dealt with in the Wisdom Literature in the book of Job and in the prophets also (e.g., Jer 12:1–4), is taken up in Psalms 37, 49, and 73.

The historical psalms should be included in this category, since they underscore the lessons arising from the favored nation's often bitter experience. It is apparent that Israel delighted in the recital of salvation history. The main psalms, and the periods covered are Psalm 78, from the exodus to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy (note the declared intention to teach in vv 1–4); Psalm 105, from Abraham to the conquest of Canaan; Psalm 106, from Egypt to the judges; and Psalm 136, from the Creation to the Promised Land.

Psalms of Trust

While some of these may also be classified as laments, the dominant feature of this group is the serene trust in God revealed, which makes them particularly suitable for devotional use. Many of these psalms begin with an affirmation of gratitude to and affection for God. Psalms 23 and 27 are the outstanding examples of this type, which could also include Psalms 11, 16, 62, 116, 131, and 138.

Conclusion

The difficulties in any precise categorization of psalms are obvious; many do not neatly fall into one group—hence, the occasional overlap. What is clearly evident is a pulsating, vital devotional life that has found its clearest expression in the book of Psalms. To say that it expresses the worship and devotion of the ordinary person is a simplification; kings and priests, wise men and prophets all contributed to this remarkable collection. Yet there remains the truth that, in God's sight, all people, regardless of human achievement or privilege, are "ordinary," for all are sinners in need of God's grace and goodness. So the worshiping community of ancient Israel, and the saints of every succeeding generation, in the vastness of their diversity, have found the expression of their own hearts' condition, desires, and devotion in this unique treasury—the Psalms.

See also David; Messiah; Music; Poetry, Biblical; Singers in the Temple; Tabernacle; Temple; Wisdom; Wisdom Literature.

Psaltery

KJV rendering of harp. *See* Musical Instruments (Nebel).

Psychics

Psychics are people who claim to have contact with supernatural forces and say they can interpret what these forces want. The Old Testament groups psychics with "mediums." These were people who claimed to enable communication between supernatural forces and human beings. The Scriptures clearly prohibit the people of God to use the services of psychics or mediums (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27).

See also Magic.

Ptolemaic Empire

An empire named after Ptolemy I Soter. Ptolemy was a Macedonian general of Alexander the Great. He was appointed satrap (governor) of Egypt shortly after Alexander died in 323 BC. The empire was strongest during the third century BC. It included Egypt, Cyrenaica (Cyrene), south Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, the south coast of Asia Minor, and some Aegean islands. All the rulers of the empire came from the same family, called the Ptolemaic dynasty. Every ruler used the name Ptolemy.

Ptolemy I Soter

Ptolemy fought many battles against other leaders who had ruled parts of Alexander's empire. He won most of these battles. In 305 BC, he became so powerful that he made himself king. Later, he helped protect the island of Rhodes when Macedonia tried to take control of it. Because he saved Rhodes, people gave him the name 'Soter,' which means 'savior.' Today, we use numbers to tell different kings with the same name apart (like Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II). But in ancient times, people used special titles instead of numbers to identify their kings.

In 301 BC, Ptolemy Soter took control of Palestine after attacking the area four times. His family would rule this land for more than 100 years. In 285 BC, he chose to no longer be king. He had built a strong kingdom where Greek people were loyal to him. He also worked hard to make peace with the Egyptian people (the original inhabitants of the land). He made Alexandria his capital city. There he built a famous library and museum and supported artists and scholars.

Ptolemy II

Ptolemy II Philadelphus ruled Egypt from 285 to 246 BC. He lived in a grand palace in Alexandria with great wealth and luxury. He supported the arts and scientific research. He made the library in Alexandria even bigger. Ptolemy II was also very powerful. His ships controlled much of the Mediterranean Sea and Aegean Sea. He increased trade throughout his kingdom. He even built a canal to connect the Nile River to the Red Sea, which helped ships travel and trade more easily.

Ptolemy III

Ptolemy III Euergetes ruled from 246 to 221 BC. He kept control of the empire's powerful ships. Early in his rule, he won battles against the Seleucid kingdom in Mesopotamia (the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers). After these victories, he did not keep the army as strong as before. Under Ptolemy III, the empire reached its greatest power. Like his father, he supported the arts and built many public buildings and temples.

Ptolemy IV

Ptolemy IV Philopater ruled from 221 to around 203 BC. He lived an unhealthy lifestyle and was not a good ruler. Under his leadership, the empire began to grow weaker. The fighting with the Seleucid kingdom continued during his time. In 217 BC, Egypt won a major battle against Syria's king, Antiochus III. To win this battle, the Greek leaders gave weapons to Egyptian soldiers. This decision led to several rebellions over the next 30 years, as the Egyptian people began fighting against their Greek rulers.

Ptolemy V

Ptolemy V Epiphanes became king in 203 BC when he was only five years old. Because Egypt had such a young ruler, it was weak. Two powerful kings saw a chance to take parts of Egypt's empire: Antiochus III of Syria and Philip V of Macedonia. They divided parts of the empire between themselves. Syria took control of Palestine, which Egypt had ruled for more than 100 years. During this difficult time, Egypt began working closely with Rome for protection. Rome helped Egypt because it did not want Syria and Macedonia to become too powerful.

Ptolemy VI

Ptolemy VI Philometor became king in 181 BC when he was still a child. Because he was too young to rule, other people governed Egypt for him. This made Egypt even weaker. These temporary rulers tried to take Palestine back from Syria, but they failed. In 170 BC, Syria attacked Egypt and captured Ptolemy VI. Rome stepped in to help and put him back on the throne. Later, in 163 BC, Ptolemy VII tried to take power from Ptolemy VI. Again, Rome helped Ptolemy VI keep his position as king. People thought Ptolemy VI was a good ruler because he was kind and made wise decisions. Many say he was the best of all the Ptolemaic kings.

Ptolemy VII

Ptolemy VII Physcon ruled Egypt from 145 to 116 BC. He was very different from Ptolemy VI, who ruled before him. While Ptolemy VI had been kind and wise, Ptolemy VII was cruel and did not care for his people. He was also very overweight and had poor health.

The End of the Ptolemaic Empire

After Ptolemy VII died, the royal family had many conflicts with each other. The empire became unstable. During the 100s BC, Rome began to interfere more and more in Egyptian matters, claiming to help the Ptolemaic rulers. Several weak kings followed. By the time of Ptolemy XII and his daughter Cleopatra VII, Rome had gained much control over Egypt. When Cleopatra died by suicide in 30 BC, Rome took complete control of Egypt. This marked the end of the Ptolemaic Empire.

Ptolemais

Another name for Acco, a city in northern Palestine (Acts 21:7).

See Accho, Acco.

Pua

The King James Version form of Puvah, son of Issachar (Numbers 26:23).

See Puvah.

Puah

1. One of two Hebrew midwives ordered by Pharaoh to kill Hebrew males at birth. However, she feared God and did not follow the order (Exodus 1:15).
2. The father of Tola, a judge of Israel (Judges 10:1).
3. An alternate form of Puvah, Issachar's son, in 1 Chronicles 7:1.
   See Puvah.

Publican

KJV translation for "tax collector."

Publius

Publius was an important official who lived on the island of Malta. The Bible mentions him in Acts 28:7–8. Paul and his companions were shipwrecked on Malta during their journey to Rome. Publius welcomed them and gave them a place to stay for a short time. Publius had a father who was very sick. During Paul's visit, he healed Publius's father.

Pudens

A companion of Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:21. At the close of the letter Pudens sends personal greetings to Timothy. Paul names three other companions who also send greetings: Eubulus, Linus, and Claudia.

Puhite

KJV spelling of Puthite, a member of a family of Judah's tribe, in 1 Chronicles 2:53. *See* Puthite.

Puite

A member of the Punite clan.

See Punite.

Pul

1. A name given to Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian ruler from 745 to 727 BC, when he became King of Babylon in 729 BC. He ruled Babylon until 727 BC. (2 Kings 15:19; 1 Chronicles 5:26). The meaning of the name is unknown, and Assyrian manuscripts do not mention it. Some scholars suggest that Pul was the original name of Tiglath-pileser.
   See Tiglath-pileser.
2. An African people mentioned only in the King James Version of Isaiah 66:19. Their connection with Tarshish and Lud gives strong support that "Pul" is a copyist error for "Put" (as in various Greek manuscripts). They were a people related to the Egyptians and could be a subculture of Libyans.
   See Put (Place).

Pulse

A Hebrew word perhaps better translated as "vegetable" (Daniel 1:12, 16). The King James Version translates it as pulse. Not wishing to eat the king's unclean food, Daniel and his friends requested permission to live on a diet of vegetables and water. The Hebrew word translated as "vegetable" literally means "things sown" and probably includes any kind of seed that can be eaten.

See Plants.

Punishment

Punishment is when someone with authority causes pain or loss to another person who has done something wrong. This could include taking away their freedom or money. For there to be punishment, two things must exist:

- someone with the authority to give the punishment
- someone who has done wrong

Punishment as Prevention

Some people say punishment is right if it stops people from doing wrong things again. They believe punishment should either:

- help the person who did wrong learn to be better (reform)
- stop that person and others from doing wrong things in the future (deter)

These people think that if punishment does not help someone improve or stop bad behavior, then it should not be used.

Punishment as Retribution

Others say that people who do wrong should be punished simply because they did wrong. This view is called "retribution" (giving someone what they deserve). It is based on God's moral law and basic ideas about justice.

This view is different from revenge or wanting to hurt someone out of anger. It is about making sure wrongdoing has fair consequences. In favor of the view that punishment should be retributive, the following arguments have been offered:

1. The Bible gives clear instructions about punishing someone by killing them (Genesis 9:5–6). These are not among the moral and ceremonial laws that Christians believe were abolished through Jesus. The New Testament also says that governments have the right to punish wrongdoing ("carry the sword," Romans 13:1–5).

2. In addition to arguments from the Bible, we can also look at basic principles of fairness and justice. One important principle is that punishment should match the crime. This helps protect people from unfair government power by setting clear limits on how the government can punish someone who breaks the law.

   For example, the just and fair government cannot keep someone in prison forever just for "treatment." It also cannot respond to crimes with extreme and unlimited punishment.

This approach to punishment treats each person as responsible for their own actions. It also assumes people are free until they commit a crime. This helps everyone know what to expect from the law. Some people say that executing criminals is wrong because it adds another death to the first one. However, this same argument could be used against all types of punishment.

The Problem of How Much to Punish

Both views have the same problem of how much punishment is right for each wrong action. Small wrongs could be stopped by very harsh punishments, but that might not be fair. And a punishment rarely matches the wrong that was done exactly.

Punishment Only When It Benefits Society

Some people disagree with punishment that aims to balance out wrongdoing. They believe punishment should only be used when it will lead to better results than not punishing someone. This view focuses on what works best for society rather than on responding to the wrong action itself. Another argument against punishment says that all humans are part of one family, so no person or group should have the right to punish others.

However, both of these views have problems. The first view could allow very harsh punishments if someone thought the results would be good for society. The second view would make it impossible to have any kind of government over people who sometimes do wrong things.

Different Views of Jesus's Death

Jesus's death is understood by many Christians as a sacrificial offering. It is often seen as vicarious and penal, where he took the penalty for sin on behalf of humanity to satisfy divine justice. This view emphasizes that his death removes the guilt of sin and restores the relationship between humanity and God (Romans 5:8; Galatians 3:13).

However, another view focuses more on Jesus's death and resurrection as a victory over death and sin, emphasizing his role in healing, restoring humanity, and reconciling people to God. This view places less emphasis on suffering punishment in place of sinners.

While some Christian traditions emphasize the retributive aspects of justice, others focus on the restorative aspect of justice shown in Jesus's work of healing, victory, and reconciliation. The debate continues about how retributive justice should be understood or applied in modern contexts.

Modern Ideas About Punishment

Another important question is what types of punishment should be allowed in a justice system. In earlier centuries, many offenders experienced cruel punishments like being hanged, having body parts cut off, or being killed in painful ways (even for small crimes). Today, most people think these punishments were cruel and took away human dignity.

What people think is right or wrong punishment can change over time. For example, some argue that certain types of physical punishment might be less harmful than putting people in dirty prisons with other criminals.

The Bible teaches that after death, God will judge all people fairly. Because of what the Bible says about God's perfect wisdom, justice, and mercy, we can trust that this judgement will be equitable and just.

See also Criminal Law and Punishment.

Punishment, Eternal

See Hell.

Punite

A Punite was a member of a family group in the tribe of Issachar. Puvah was the leader of this family group (Numbers 26:23).

See Puvah.

Punon

Punon was one of the places the Israelites camped during their wilderness wanderings. Scholars identify it with modern Feinan. Punon was built along the road that connected Edom through the Negev to Egypt. The town had plenty of water and copper resources. It became an important center for melting copper (around 2000 BC). People either mined the copper nearby or brought it to Punon from other places.

The Israelites passed by Punon on their way into Transjordan (the region east of the Jordan River)(Numbers 33:42–43). At that time, the town's industrial activity was at a low point. Large piles of slag (waste material from melting metal) can still be found in the area today.

Archaeological evidence shows that Punon was a large settlement during the time of the patriarchs (middle Bronze Age). After about 500 years with no people living there, settlers returned around 1300 BC. The mining and copper melting operations continued until 700 BC. These activities started again during the time of the Nabateans.

Eusebius, an early church historian, reports that Christians worked in the mines at Punon alongside criminals. During the Byzantine period, Christians built a church (basilica) and monastery in this location. Researchers found an inscription with the name of Bishop Theodore (around AD 587) in the monastery ruins.

Pur

A Hebrew word that means “lot” (used in the casting of lots to decide on something). The name of the Jewish festival Purim comes from this word. Haman, an enemy of the Jews, cast the *pur* (lot) to choose a day to destroy the Jewish people. The festival Purim celebrates the rescue of the Jews from Haman's plan (Esther 3:7; 9:24–26).

See Feasts and Festivals of Israel.

Purah

Gideon’s servant, who accompanied his master on a secret night visit to the Midianite camp, where they were encouraged by the Lord (Jgs 7:10–11).

Purgatory

According to the Roman Catholic Church, the place of temporal punishment and cleansing before entry into heaven. *See* Intermediate State.

Purification

See Cleanness and Uncleanness, Regulations Concerning.

Purim

The Hebrew name for the Jewish festival celebrating the Jewish people's rescue from Haman (Esther 9:26–32). Purim means "lots," small objects used for making decisions.

See Feasts and Festivals of Israel.

Purple

A highly prized dye extracted from sea snails. Purple was used to dye fabrics for the tabernacle. It was also used for the clothes of the wealthy (Exodus 25:4; Judges 8:26).

See also Animals (Snail); Color.

Purse

A small bag people used to carry money and often other small objects. There are three Hebrew words and three Greek words referring to such a purse or pouch. The first refers to a purse or bag in which money or stone weights used with balance scales were carried (Deuteronomy 25:13; Proverbs 1:14; Isaiah 46:6; Micah 6:11). Purses could be made of leather or stout cotton.

Another Hebrew word referring to a similar kind of pouch is found in 2 Kings 5:23. This same word also appears in a list of ladies’ finery in Isaiah 3:22 and may have been a more ornamental pouch than the

first described above. The third Hebrew word appears in Genesis 42:35 and refers to a little bag with an open mouth. This was the small bag or purse in which Joseph's brothers' money had been placed before it was put into their sacks of grain.

The Greek word used to translate the Hebrew means money bag or purse. When Jesus sent out his disciples two by two, he told them not to take, among other things, a purse (Luke 10:4; 22:35–36). In Luke 12:33 this same word for purse is used figuratively for treasure in heaven that cannot be exhausted, stolen, or destroyed.

Another Greek word identifies the usual place for carrying money as the girdle or the belt. Belts were an essential part of dress for both men and women in the ancient East. When made of leather, they were made hollow or with slots for carrying coins. When made of cloth, they were folded in such a manner that money could be carried in the folds, which served as pockets (Matthew 10:9; Mark 6:8).

The Greek word for the "money bag" that Judas kept for the disciples refers to a case or container for the mouthpiece of a wind instrument. By New Testament times it had become the Greek word for a money box or possibly a money bag (John 12:6; 13:29).

Put (Person)

Third of Ham's four sons, who most likely settled in northern Africa and is perhaps the forefather of the peoples of Egypt and Libya (Gn 10:6; 1 Chr 1:8).

See also Put (Place).

Put (Place)

Put was a region in ancient North Africa, likely in the area of modern-day Libya. Some scholars think Put might have been the land of Punt, a region mentioned in ancient Egyptian records. Punt was likely along Africa's northeast coast, possibly in modern-day Somalia.

The people of Put had connections with Egypt, Cush (another name for ancient northeast Africa), and Canaan. However, the way the name "Put" is used in the Old Testament suggests it was in Libya. The Libyan people in the Old Testament are called "Lubim," which is always in the plural form.

Put started as the name of a person and later became the name of the nation that came from his family.

Ancient Libya

Ancient Libya was west of Egypt, along the Mediterranean Sea in modern-day Libya. Egyptian records mention three main groups of Libyans:

- Tjehenu: These people lived along the coast and were primarily herdsmen. They were represented in Egyptian art as having long hair and wore only a belt and a cloth covering. They were listed among the Nine Bows, a term the Egyptians used for their main enemies.
- Tjemehu: These people were nomads who moved from place to place. They had light-colored hair and blue eyes, making them look different from other African groups. They interacted with Egypt since the time of the Old Kingdom (around 2700–2200 BC). They sometimes tried to move into Egyptian territory.
- Libu: This group gave Libya its name. They and the Meshwesh tribe were described as fair-skinned, tattooed, and wearing leather garments.

Egypt and Libya had many interactions throughout their history, both in trade and in war. The Libyan people often tried to move into Egypt from the northwest. From the Middle Kingdom there is the story of Sinuhe (c. 2000 BC), which begins with the death of Amenemhet I while his son, Senusert (Sesostris), was fighting the Libyans in the western Delta.

As time went on, the Libyan people gradually moved into the Nile Delta area. Two Egyptian kings, Seti I and Ramses II, fought to keep control of this region. Later, King Merneptah recorded a victory over the Libyans on a large stone monument called the Merneptah Stele (from about 1224–1214 BC). Another Egyptian king, Ramses III, later fought against the Libyans and drove them out of the western Delta region. This happened during a time when Egypt was also fighting against a group called the Sea Peoples, both on land and at sea.

Later, the Libyans grew more powerful and eventually took control of Egypt itself. They ruled Egypt through two royal families (or dynasties). The first was called the Bubastite dynasty (around 946–720 BC), and the second was the Tanitic dynasty (around 792–720 BC). These Libyan kings had names that were different from traditional Egyptian names, such as Sheshonk, Osorkon, and Takelot. One of these kings, Sheshonk, is mentioned in the Old Testament under the name Shishak (1 Kings 11:40; 14:25; 2 Chronicles 12:2–9).

Put in the Bible

The Bible first mentions Put in the table of nations (Genesis 10). Put is listed as a son of Ham, along with Cush (Nubia, Ethiopia), Egypt, and Canaan (Genesis 10:6; compare 1 Chronicles 1:8).

The prophet Jeremiah describes soldiers from Put and Cush (ancient Ethiopia) as skilled warriors who carried shields in Egypt's army at the battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:9). The prophet Ezekiel tells us that Put's soldiers also served in the army of the city of Tyre, along with warriors from Persia and Lud (Ezekiel 27:10). In another account, the prophet Nahum mentions that Put and the Libyans were allies of the Egyptian city of Thebes, but they could not protect it from being conquered by the Assyrian army (Nahum 3:9). The book of Daniel includes a prophecy that says a future powerful ruler who will gain control over Libya, Egypt, Cush, and other lands (Daniel 11:43).

The book of Isaiah mentions a place called "Pul" in the Hebrew text, but the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses "Put" instead (Isaiah 66:19). Most English translations follow the Greek version. In this passage, Put appears in a list of nations between Tarshish and Lud. These nations will hear about God's glory.

In the book of Ezekiel, scholars have different opinions about names referring to Libya. Some think the word "Put" means Libya (Ezekiel 30:5). Others believe another word in the same verse, "Cub," refers to Libya.

Other Historical Records

Historical records from outside the Bible also mention Libya. Documents from King Xerxes of Persia, who ruled from 485–465 BC, list Libya as one of the nations under his control.

Puteoli

An Italian seaport town on the Bay of Naples. It was a normal stopping place for people traveling by sea and for cargo going to Rome. After the apostle Paul landed at Rhegium, he stayed with Christians in Puteoli. He was there for seven days before they took him to Rome (Acts 28:13). The modern city is called Pozzuoli.

Puthite

Family of Judah's tribe from Kiriath-jearim mentioned only in 1 Chronicles 2:53.

Putiel

The father of Eleazer's wife and the grandfather of Phinehas (Exodus 6:25).

Puvah

Issachar's son, who went with Jacob and his household to Egypt, where they sought refuge from the severe famine in Palestine (Gn 46:13; nlt "Puah"). Puvah founded the Punite family (Nm 26:23) and is alternately called Puah in 1 Chronicles 7:1.

Pygarg

The King James Version translation for "antelope," in Deuteronomy 14:5.

See Animals (Antelope).

Pyramids

See Egypt, Egyptian.

Pyrrhus

The father of Sopater of Berea. His son Sopater was one of several men who traveled with the apostle Paul on his return trip through Macedonia (Acts 20:4).