

Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

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Gaal, Gaash, Gaba, Gabael, Gabatha, Gabbai, Gabbatha, Gabri, Gabrias, Gabriel, Gad (Idol), Gad (Person), Gad, Tribe of, Gadara, Gadarenes, Gaddi, Gaddiel, Gadfly, Gadi, Gadite, Gaham, Gahar, Gaius, Galal, Galatia, Galba, Galbanum, Galeed, Galilee, Galilee, Sea of, Gall, Gallim, Gallio, Gallio Inscription, Gallows, Gamaliel, Gammad, Gammadims, Gamul, Gangrene, Garden House, Garden of Eden, Gareb (Person), Gareb (Place), Garlic, Garmite, Gashmu, Gaspar, Gatam, Gate, Gate between the Two Walls, Gatekeepers, Gath, Gath-Hepher, Gath-Rimmon, Gaulanitis, Gaza, Gazara, Gazathites, Gazelle, Gazer, Gazez, Gazites, Gazzam, Ge-Harashim, Geba, Gebal, Gebalite, Geber, Gebim, Gecko, Gedaliah, Geddalti, Gedeon, Geder, Gederah, Gederathites, Gederoth, Gederothaim, Gedor (Person), Gedor (Place), Gehazi, Gehenna, Geliloth, Gemalli, Gemara, Gemariah, Gematria, Genealogy, Genealogy of Jesus Christ, Genesis Apocryphon, Genesis, Book of, Geneva Bible, Gennaeus, Genneus, Gennesaret, Gennesaret, Lake of, Gentiles, Gentiles, Court of the, Gentleness, Genubath, Gera, Gerah, Gerar, Gerasa, Gerasenes, Gergesa, Gergesenes, Gerizim, Mount, Geron, Gershom, Gershon, Gershonites, Geruth-kimham, Geshan, Geshem, Geshur, Geshurites, Gether, Gethsemane, Geuel, Gezer, Gezrite, Ghost, Holy, Giah, Giants, Giants, Valley of the, Gibbar, Gibbethon, Gibe, Gibeah, Gibeath, Gibeath-Elohim, Gibeath-Haaraloth, Gibeathite, Gibeon, Gibeonites, Gible, Giddalti, Giddel, Gideon, Gideoni, Gidom, Gier Eagle, Gifts, Spiritual, Gihon, Spring of, Gilalai, Gilead (Person), Gilead (Place), Gilead, Balm of, Gileadite, Gilgal, Gilgamesh Epic, Gilo, Giloh, Gilonite, Gimzo, Ginath, Ginnethon, Girdle, Girgashites, Girzites, Gishpa, Gispa, Gittah-Hepher, Gittaim, Gittite, Gittith, Gizon, Gizonite, Glass, Glean, Gleaning, Glede, Glorification, Glory, Glossolalia, Gnat, Gnosticism, Goad, Goah, Goat, Goath, Gob, God As Father, God-Fearer, God, Being and Attributes of, God, Names of, Gods and Goddesses, Gog, Goiim, Golan, Gold, Golden Calf, Golden Calf, Goldsmith, Golgotha, Goliath, Gomer, Gomorrah, Goose, Gopher Wood, Gorgias, Gortyna, Goshen, Gospel, Gospel of Barnabas, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of Basilides, Gospel of Eve, Gospel of Judas Iscariot, Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of the Birth of Mary, Gospel of the Ebionites, Gospel of the Egyptians, Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Truth, Gouging, Gourd, Governor, Goyim, Gozan, Grace, Grain, Granary, Grape, Grasshopper, Grate, Grating, Gratitude, Grave, Graveclothes, Graven Image, Great Lizard, Great Owl, Greaves, Greece, Greek, Greek Language, Greyhound, Grief, Grove, Guard, Courtyard of the, Guard, Gate of the, Guardian, Guardian Angel, Gudgodah, Guilt Offering, Gulf of Aqaba, Gull, Gum, Guni, Gunite, Gur, Ascent of, Gurbaal, Gymnasium

Gaal

Ebed's son, who persuaded the men of Shechem to revolt against Abimelech, the judge of Israel. The revolt, however, was quickly crushed and Shechem was destroyed ([Jgs 9:26-41](#)).

Gaash

1. A mountain about 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) southwest of Shechem. The Israelites buried Joshua at Timnath-serah (Timnath-heres). This was in the hill country of Ephraim, near Mount Gaash ([Joshua 24:30](#); [Judges 2:9](#)).

2. A stream near the mountain of Gaash. It was the home of Hiddai (or Hurai). Hiddai was one of the mighty men of King David ([2 Samuel 23:30](#); [1 Chronicles 11:32](#)).

Gaba

KJV spelling of the Benjamite city, Geba, in [Joshua 18:24](#), [Ezra 2:26](#), and [Nehemiah 7:30](#). See Geba.

Gabael

1. Ancestor of Tobit and a member of the tribe of Naphtali ([Tb 1:1](#)).
2. Brother or son of Gabrias and resident of Rages, a city in Media, with whom Tobit left in trust 10

talents of silver ([Tb 1:14](#)). Tobit later told his son Tobias about the money, and Tobias was led by the angel Raphael to Gabael ([4:1, 20](#); [5:6](#); [6:9](#); [10:2](#)).

Gabatha

Alternate name for Bigthan, one of Ahasuerus's eunuchs ([Add Est 12:1](#)). *See* Bigthan, Bighana.

Gabbai

Head of a family that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile ([Neh 11:8](#)).

Gabbatha

Transliteration of an uncertain Aramaic expression, which is rendered in Greek as "paved with stones" and refers to the raised area before the palace in Jerusalem where formal sentencing by the governor occurred. Pilate seated himself on the elevated judgment seat here in order to preside over the trial of Jesus ([Jn 19:13](#)).

Gabri, Gabrias

Brother or father of Gabael. The genitive case of the original does not make the exact relationship certain; it simply specifies that there is a relationship ([Tb 1:14](#); [4:20](#)).

See also Gabael #2.

Gabriel

One of the two angels mentioned by name in the Bible (the other is Michael). Gabriel appeared in He appeared to a man named Daniel to explain the meaning of a special vision Daniel had received. Gabriel also told Daniel what would happen on Judgment Day (the time when God will judge all people) and gave Daniel wisdom and understanding ([Daniel 8:16](#); [9:21-22](#)).

In the New Testament, Gabriel appeared to a priest named Zechariah. This happened while Zechariah was serving in the temple. He announced the birth of Zechariah's son, John the Baptist ([Luke 1:11-20](#)). Six months later, Gabriel appeared to Mary. He announced she would be the mother of Jesus, who

was the Messiah (God's chosen one) that people had been waiting for ([Luke 1:26-33](#)).

Many people call Gabriel an archangel (a chief or leading angel), but the Bible itself never uses this title for him.

Jewish religious texts that are not part of the Bible also tell us about Gabriel. In the books of Enoch, he is described as one of the four chief angels, along with Michael, Raphael, and Uriel (1 Enoch 40:3, 6). He is one of the holy angels (1 Enoch 20:7) who looks down from heaven and is a main mediator (1 Enoch 9:1; 40:6; 2 Enoch 21:3). He is to destroy the wicked (1 Enoch 9:9-10) and cast them into the furnace (54:6) and is set over all powers (40:9). Michael sits at God's right hand. Gabriel sits on the left (2 Enoch 24:1). Michael, as the guardian angel of Israel (compare [Daniel 12:1](#)) and a high priest of heaven, is more concerned with affairs in heaven. But, Gabriel is God's messenger. He goes from heaven to execute God's will on earth.

See also Angel.

Gad (Idol)

Canaanite god of fortune or fate whom the Israelites worshiped ([Is 65:11](#)).

See also Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Gad (Person)

1. One of the 12 sons of Jacob ([Genesis 35:26](#); [1 Chronicles 2:2](#)). His mother was Zilpah, who served as a maid to Jacob's wife Leah. When Gad was born, Leah was very happy and named him Gad, which means "good fortune" ([Genesis 30:11](#)). Later, Gad and his family moved with Jacob to Egypt ([Exodus 1:4](#)). Before Jacob died, he gave special blessings to each of his sons. He told Gad that enemies would often attack his people, but they would fight back successfully and win (see [Genesis 49:19](#) and the article Gad, Tribe of). Gad had seven sons ([Genesis 46:16](#)). His descendants became known as the Gadites ([Deuteronomy 3:12, 16](#)). The Gadites formed one of the 12 tribes of Israel ([Numbers 2:14](#)).
See also Gad, Tribe of.
2. A prophet and seer during the reign of David. He gave David advice from God about where to go and what to do. When David was hiding from his enemies, Gad told him to leave the town of Mizpeh in Moab and go back to the land of Judah ([1 Samuel 22:5](#)). Later, when David counted his soldiers against God's wishes, Gad told him about his punishment from God ([2 Samuel 24:11-14, 18-19](#); [1 Chronicles 21:9-19](#)). Gad also helped David and another prophet named Nathan organize how people would worship God in the temple ([2 Chronicles 29:25](#)). He wrote down the events of David's life as a record for future generations ([1 Chronicles 29:29](#)).

Gad, Tribe of

The Beginning of the Tribe of Gad

The Israelite tribe descended from Jacob's seventh son, Gad ([Genesis 30:11](#); [Numbers 1:24-25](#)). It was

the eighth largest tribe among those that left Egypt with Moses, based on the number of warriors counted ([Numbers 1:1-3, 24-25](#)). The tribe was known for raising livestock and had a reputation for being fierce in battle ([Numbers 32:1](#); [Deuteronomy 33:20](#)).

During the wilderness period, the tribe of Gad was led by Eliasaph, son of Deuel ([Numbers 1:14](#); [2:14](#); [7:42](#); [10:20](#)). When the Israelites encamped, Gad was positioned south of the tabernacle, behind the tribes of Reuben and Simeon ([Numbers 2:14-15](#)). The tribe is mentioned during the tribal offering to the tabernacle and in the aftermath of the plague that God brought upon Israel ([Numbers 7:42-47](#); [26:15, 18](#)). Geuel, the son of Maki, represented the tribe of Gad as one of the 12 spies sent by Moses to scout the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:15](#)).

The Territory of the Tribe of Gad

As the Israelites approached the promised land, the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to live east of the Jordan River. The land there was suitable for their livestock ([Numbers 32:1-2](#)). Moses granted this request on the condition that they would assist in the conquest of Canaan ([Numbers 32:20-22](#); [Joshua 1:12-18](#)). During the conquest under Joshua, the tribe of Gad is mentioned specifically at the battle of Jericho ([Joshua 4:12](#)). After the conquest, Gad, along with Reuben and half of Manasseh, settled in their land east of the Jordan River (compare [Numbers 34:13-14](#); [Joshua 12:6](#); [13:8](#)).

Gad's inheritance was between the tribe of Manasseh to the north and the tribe of Reuben to the south. Its eastern border was the Arabian Desert, and its western border was the Jordan River. The region had no clearly defined borders between the two and a half tribes. The entire area was commonly referred to as Gilead and Bashan ([2 Kings 10:33](#)). Gad's territory extended north to the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee) and south to the cities of Aroer and Heshbon, with the Jabbok River being the eastern border in the mountains ([Deuteronomy 3:12-13](#); [Joshua 12:1-6](#); [13:24-28](#)).

Gad's Interaction with Other Tribes

The history of Gad, from its settlement to the Babylonian captivity, was closely tied to the tribes of Reuben and Manasseh. Shortly after settling in their land, these tribes nearly caused a civil war by building a large altar ([Joshua 22:10-34](#)). During the time of the judges, the Gadites, along with other inhabitants of Gilead, were threatened by the

Ammonites until they were defeated by Jephthah (Judges 11). Some members of the tribe of Gad joined David at Ziklag during his exile ([1 Chronicles 12:14, 37](#)). In the 14th year of David's reign, Gad and the other two-and-a-half tribes were organized under an overseer named Jerijah ([1 Chronicles 26:30-32](#)).

Later History

During the time of the divided kingdom, the tribes east of the Jordan were frequently attacked. During the reign of Jehu from 841 to 814 BC, the Aramean king Hazael took control of all the land east of the Jordan, including Gad's territory. Later, the Gadites were carried into captivity by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria ([2 Kings 15:29](#); [1 Chronicles 5:26-27](#)). Following this, the Ammonites occupied the land of Gad ([Jeremiah 49:1](#)).

In the time after the exile in Babylon, Gad is mentioned only once, in Ezekiel's vision of the restoration of Israel ([Ezekiel 48:1, 27-28, 34](#)). In the New Testament, the tribe of Gad is listed among the tribes sealed by God in the book of Revelation ([Revelation 7:5](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Gad (Person) #1.

Gadara, Gadarenes

Gadara was an important Greek city in the Decapolis region. The name "Decapolis" comes from the Greek words *deca* (which means "ten") and *polis* (which means "city"). These cities shared Greek culture and language, even though they were under Roman control. Each city managed its own affairs but worked together as a group.

The Gadarenes were the people who lived in and around Gadara. This area appears in the story where Jesus healed a man possessed by evil spirits. In the ancient copies of the Bible that scholars consider most reliable, this location is mentioned only once.

The man was possessed by a demon named Legion. Jesus met the man in "the country of the Gadarenes" ([Matthew 8:28](#)). The other versions in [Mark 5:1](#) and [Luke 8:26, 37](#) say "Gerasenes."

The King James Version of [Matthew 8:28](#) used older copies of Matthew. The King James Version used the name "Gergesenes." In Mark and Luke, the King James Version reads "Gadarenes." The different names used by the Gospel writers may be because

Gerasa was the wider geographical area and Gadara was a major city in the area.

Where Was Gadara Located?

Geographers conclude that the most likely location for where the pigs jumped into the sea would have been a piece of steep coastline near Gergesa. This was a smaller and less important town in the area. It would fit another suggestion that Matthew was a native of the region. Because of his knowledge of the area, he could identify the exact place. Mark and Luke were only able to name the general location for their Greek and Roman readers. Since Gergesa was small and relatively unknown, they identified Gadara. It was a Greek city of some importance.

History of Gadara

The name Gadara suggests that the city was of Semitic origin (the Semitic peoples of the ancient Near East, such as the Hebrews, Arameans, Phoenicians, or other groups whose languages belonged to the Semitic family). Gadara was located 8 to 10 kilometers (five to six miles) southeast of the Sea of Galilee. This area included the hot springs of el Hamme, north of the Yarmuk River.

The first reference to Gadara in history was in 218 BC, when King Antiochus III captured it. About 115 years later, in 103 BC, a Jewish ruler named Alexander Janneus took control of the city. He destroyed Gadara and forced its people to become slaves and follow Jewish religious laws.

In 63 BC, a Roman leader named Pompey rebuilt the city. Under his rule, Gadara became a free city, which meant they governed themselves. The city then joined a group of ten Greek cities in the Transjordan (east of the Jordan River) called the Decapolis.

Augustus Caesar added Gadara to the land controlled by Herod the Great in 30 BC. When Herod died in 4 BC, Gadara was given to Syria. During the attempted Jewish revolution in AD 66-70, Vespasian took the city. It continued to grow for many years. It was the seat of a Christian bishop from AD 325 until the Muslim conquest.

See Decapolis; Gerasa, Gerasenes; Gergesa, Gergesenes.

Gaddi

A man from the tribe of Manasseh. Moses sent him to search out the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:11](#)).

Gaddiel

The son of Sodi from the tribe of Zebulun. Moses sent Gaddiel to search out the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:10](#)).

Gadfly

Any of a number of large flies, including the horsefly and botfly, that irritate livestock. King Nebuchadnezzar is called a gadfly in the only biblical reference to this insect ([Jer 46:20](#)). See Animals (Fly).

Gadi

Father of Menahem. Menahem revolted and killed Shallum, king of Israel, placing himself on the throne as king ([2 Kgs 15:14, 17](#)).

Gadite

A member of the tribe of Gad ([Deuteronomy 3:12, 16](#)).

See Gad (Person) #1; Gad, Tribe of.

Gaham

Son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and his concubine Reumah ([Gn 22:24](#)).

Gahar

Ancestor of a group of temple assistants that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Ezr 2:47](#); [Neh 7:49](#)).

Gaius

1. A man from Macedonia who traveled with the apostle Paul during the apostle's third missionary journey. Rioters seized Gaius and Aristarchus at Ephesus. Demetrius the silversmith started the riot ([Acts 19:29](#)).
2. A man from Derbe in Lycaonia (a region in what is now Turkey). He traveled with the apostle Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia ([Acts 20:4](#)). Some have identified him with #1 above.
3. An important Christian in Corinth. He hosted Paul and the whole church there ([Romans 16:23](#)). Paul wrote the letter of Romans at Corinth. So, the Gaius mentioned in [1 Corinthians 1:14](#) is probably the same person. If so, Paul baptized him.
4. A man to whom the apostle John addressed his third letter ([3 John 1:1](#)).

Galal

1. Levite and Mica's son, who returned from exile in Babylon ([1 Chr 9:15](#)).
2. Levite and forefather of Obadiah (Abda). Obadiah returned from exile in Babylon ([1 Chr 9:16](#); [Neh 11:17](#)).

Galatia

Galatia was an ancient kingdom in the central plains of Asia Minor (today's Turkey). It was created when people called Gauls moved there from western Europe.

Early History

The Gauls (also called Celts) were a group of people known for their military power. In 390 BC, they captured the city of Rome. Later, they tried to take over Greece but were defeated. After this defeat, they moved into Asia Minor instead. The Gauls spread across much of Asia Minor at first. However, in 230 BC, a ruler named Attalus I defeated them. After this defeat, they had to live in a smaller area,

which became known as Galatia. At that time, the Gauls were made up of three tribes: the Trocmi, Tolistobogii, and Tectosages. These tribes settled into the towns of Tavium, Pessinus, and Ancyra. In 189 BC, these Galatians came under the control of the Romans but were allowed to govern themselves.

Roman History

After the death of King Amyntas in 25 BC, Galatia became a Roman province. Its boundaries consisted of the ethnic areas of Galatia proper. Also, Lycaonia, Isauria, and parts of Phrygia and Pisidia belonged to it. This included the towns of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. The apostle Paul visited all these towns on his first missionary journey. People use the term "Galatia" in two different ways. It can describe the area occupied by the Gauls in the north. Or it can describe the whole Roman province, which included the southern towns. So, there is debate about the destination of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

The people who first lived north of Galatia were Phrygians. Many still lived there in the first century AD. Some Greeks and a large Jewish community also lived there. While many different groups lived there, the Celtic people became the largest and most influential group. The Celtic people were known for being very independent. However, they also had a reputation for drinking too much and having wild celebrations. In their religious beliefs, they were very superstitious. They were especially drawn to worship a goddess named Cybele, whose religious ceremonies included wild and intense rituals.

The northern and southern parts of Galatia were different from each other. In the southern towns, Greek culture had a stronger influence, especially among educated people. These people often spoke Greek and followed Greek customs.

However, the common people in southern Galatia kept many Phrygian traditions. Like the people in the north, they also worshipped the goddess Cybele, but they worshipped her differently. The Greek culture had changed how people practiced this religion in the south. For example, at Antioch of Pisidia, they called Cybele the "Genius of Antioch." But in Iconium, they called her "Athena Polias."

The Land of Galatia

The northern and southern regions of Galatia were very different in their landscape and location. The northern towns sat on a high, flat area called a plateau. This area had plenty of water and was crossed by an important road that connected to the Aegean Sea in the west. Because of this good location, the northern towns became wealthy trading centers.

But access to the towns from north to south was difficult. Mountains separated the two regions, making it hard for people to communicate and trade between the north and south. They built the southern towns on the road between Syria and Asia. The location of the southern towns helped them become important in early Christian history. Paul established churches in these southern towns during his first missionary journey (compare [Acts 13-14](#)).

Galatia is mentioned in [Acts 16:6](#) and [18:23](#) along with Phrygia. But it is not clear if Paul ever visited or established churches in the northern area. The only other references to Galatia in the New Testament seem to refer to the southern towns ([1 Corinthians 16:1](#); [2 Timothy 4:10](#); [1 Peter 1:1](#)).

See Galatians, Letter to the.

Galba

Galba was a Roman emperor who lived from 3 BC to AD 69. He became emperor of Rome after Nero died. He ruled for only a short time, from AD 68 to 69.

Rise to Power

Galba's full name was Servius Sulpicius Galba. Before becoming emperor, he had served as a governor in several Roman provinces, including France, Germany, Spain, and Africa. After Nero's death in AD 68, the emperor's special military force (called the Praetorian Guard) chose Galba as the new emperor.

Galba's Short Rule

Galba was not popular with the army or the people. He tried to save money and avoided the fancy ceremonies that many Romans expected. His actions made people dislike him.

The Roman army in Germany never fully accepted Galba as their emperor. In AD 69, they withdrew

their support and chose another leader, Aulus Vitellius.

Galba's Fall

Galba made a serious mistake when he did not choose Marcus Salvius Otho to succeed him. Otho then gained support from the Praetorian Guard. Otho was declared emperor, and Galba was killed. The Roman Senate accepted Otho as the new ruler.

See also Caesars, the.

Galbanum

Galbanum is a sticky, aromatic resin that comes from a tall plant in the *Apiaceae* family, which also includes carrots and parsley. It was one of the ingredients in the special incense used in the tabernacle ([Exodus 30:34](#)).

The galbanum plant (*Ferula galbaniflua* or *Ferula gummosa*) grows naturally in regions such as Syria and Persia. It has small, greenish-white flowers and fruit that grow in clusters at the top of its stem. Its leaves are divided into many small parts, resembling those of parsley or carrot plants.

To collect galbanum, people cut the plant's stem near the ground. This releases a milky liquid. This liquid hardens into a waxy, brownish resin. Today, galbanum is sometimes used in making varnish and perfumes.

[Sirach 24:15](#) describes galbanum as having a pleasing aroma. By itself, galbanum has a strong, pungent smell when burned. But it was evidently mixed with other substances to make a pleasant-smelling ointment.

Galeed

Name meaning literally "a heap of witness." Jacob gave this name to a pile of stones erected as a witness to the pact of friendship made between himself and his father-in-law, Laban, who named the cairn Jegar-sahadutha ([Gn 31:47-48](#)). Its location is unknown. The name Galeed is not to be confused with the name Gilead, designation of the territory east of the Jordan.

Galilee

An area in northern Palestine. Early in Israel's history, Galilee's boundaries were not clearly defined. These boundaries became more defined in the period of Roman rule. The English name Galilee comes from two Hebrew words meaning "circuit" or "district."

History of Galilee

In Old Testament times, Galilee was not an important area in Israelite life. However, by New Testament times, it had become a major center where many Jewish people lived. The Bible first mentions Galilee when describing Kedesh, which was located in the hills of Naphtali's territory. Kedesh was a special city where people could find safety ([Joshua 20:7](#); compare [21:32](#); [1 Chronicles 6:76](#)).

Galilee was first home to the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun ([Isaiah 9:1](#)). The tribe of Asher may have also lived in the area of Galilee if Cabul in [Joshua 19:27](#) is the same city as in [1 Kings 9:11-13](#). These tribes could not remove all the Canaanite people who already lived in the land ([Judges 1:30-33](#); [2:1-4](#)). Because of this, both Israelites and non-Israelites lived together in Galilee.

King Solomon gave some cities in Galilee to Hiram, who was the gentile (non-Jewish) king of Tyre ([1 Kings 9:11](#)). Solomon may have chosen these cities as a gift because many gentiles already lived there. This mix of Jewish and non-Jewish people is likely why Isaiah called it "Galilee of the nations" ([Isaiah 9:1](#); compare [Matthew 4:15](#); [1 Maccabees 5:15](#)).

During the time of Israel's kings, Galilee was between Israel and Syria. Because of this location, Syria often attacked Galilee first when invading Israel. The prophet Isaiah wrote about this ([Isaiah 9:1](#)), but he saw it as a sign that better times would come when God's chosen king (the Messiah) would rule. Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, conquered Galilee ([1 Kings 15:20](#)). Later, King Ahab of Israel probably won it back. Then Hazael, the leader of the Aramean people, took control of Galilee ([2 Kings 10:32](#); [12:18](#); [13:22](#)). After this, King Jeroboam II brought it back under Israel's control ([2 Kings 14:23-25](#)).

In 732 BC, the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III conquered both Damascus and Galilee ([2 Kings 15:29](#)). The Assyrians forced many Jewish people to leave Galilee and brought in gentiles to live there.

instead. This led to gentiles having more influence in the area.

Over time, different empires ruled Galilee: Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Syria. As each empire ruled, more gentiles moved into the area. From the time the Assyrians conquered Israel until about the end of the second century BC, most people living in Galilee were not Jewish. Only a small number of Jewish people remained there.

In 164 BC, Simon Maccabeus moved the remaining Jewish people from Galilee to Judea ([1 Maccabees 5:21-23](#)). Later, between 104 and 103 BC, a ruler named Aristobulus I conquered Galilee. He made the people living there follow Jewish laws and customs. He also required all men to be circumcised, which is a religious surgery that removes the foreskin of a male. This process of making people follow Jewish laws may have started earlier under another ruler, John Hyrcanus, who ruled from 134 to 104 BC.

Herod the Great was a ruler under Rome from 37–4 BC. Herod added Galilee to his kingdom, and more Jews were attracted there. Josephus recorded that Galilee had 240 cities and villages and 100,000 men available to fight against the Romans.

After Herod the Great died, his son Herod Antipas ruled Galilee from 4 BC to AD 39. When Herod Antipas was removed from Galilee in AD 39, Galilee was added to the territory of Herod Agrippa I. He ruled it until he died in AD 44.

Rome directly ruled Galilee until it was put under the rule of Herod Agrippa II. By siding with the Romans during the Jewish revolts, he was able to keep his position until AD 100. The Galileans fought to be free from Roman rule, but they were defeated by Emperor Vespasian in AD 67. After Herod Agrippa II's death, Galilee became part of the Roman province of Syria.

After Jerusalem fell to the Romans in AD 70, the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) and many other Jews of southern Palestine moved to Galilee. As a result, cities like Tiberias and Sepphoris became Jewish cities. Jews who lived in different parts of the world began to see Galilee as their center.

Tiberias became a center for Jewish learning. It was there that such major contributions as the Tiberian system of vowel pointing the Hebrew consonantal text were made. Hebrew vowels are small symbols placed around the consonant letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Tiberias was also the location of the

formulation of the Mishnah and the Palestinian Talmud.

In AD 451, the Council of Chalcedon set up a Christian office (called the patriarchate) in Jerusalem. Christians ruled over Galilee from about AD 451 until the Muslim rule in the seventh century. Muslim rule continued except for the intervals caused by the twelfth-century Crusades and World War I. All of Galilee has been included in the modern state of Israel since its establishment in 1948.

Boundaries

On the east, the Galilee region extends to the upper Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. On the south, it extends to the plain of Esdraelon. This large flat area of land served as a natural boundary between Galilee and Samaria. At times the plain was included in Galilee. This was true during the time between the Old and New Testament ([1 Maccabees 10:30](#); [12:47-49](#)). The northern boundary was not clear. It changed during Galilee's history. In New Testament times, it reached to Lake Huleh. The western boundary followed the Mediterranean Sea to Mt Carmel.

It was the northernmost part of the kingdom of Israel from the time of the divided kingdom after King Solomon until the Assyrian conquest of Galilee in 734 BC. The area was divided into upper Galilee and lower Galilee by the plain of Ramah, which ran between Capernaum and Ptolemais (compare [Judith 1:8](#); [1 Maccabees 12:49](#); Josephus's *War* 3.3.1).

In the Mishnah (a written collection of Jewish oral laws), Galilee is divided into three parts. The three parts are based on the natural divisions of plain, hill country, and mountain. Under Roman rule, Galilee extended 40 to 50 kilometers (25 to 30 miles) from east to west. It extended 55 to 65 kilometers (35 to 40 miles) from north to south.

Geography

The beautiful Galilean landscape is made up of volcanic limestone hills with fertile plains with soil which is good for growing plants. Its climate is cooler than any other part of Palestine. Its beauty and ability to grow plants contrast with the dry hills of southern Palestine where few plants grow.

The features of the land range from the high mountains in the north to the plain of Esdraelon in the south. Mount Tabor marks the east. Mount Carmel marks the west. Much of upper Galilee is

914.4 meters (3,000 feet) above sea level. In New Testament times, it was mostly forested. Fewer people lived there than in lower Galilee. Lower Galilee starts at 450 to 600 meters (1,500 to 2,000 feet) above sea level and quickly drops to the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is more than 182.9 meters (600 feet) below sea level.

Galilee receives an average of 63.5 centimeters (25 inches) of rain each year. Galilee also receives water from the streams flowing from hills springs. They are the main sources of the beautiful Kishon River at Janin and the streams which form the source of the Jordan River. The Jordan River is the largest river in Palestine. The ground also receives water from heavy dews. Dew is formed on the ground by changes in temperature. The climate creates this dew because of the Lebanon mountain range to the north.

Cities

Kedesh in Naphtali was one of the important cities in Galilee's early history. It was a city of refuge, which means it was a special place where people could find safety ([Joshua 20:7](#); [21:32](#); [1 Chronicles 6:76](#)).

Another important city was Hazor. It was about 16.1 kilometers (10 miles) north of the Sea of Galilee ([Joshua 11:10](#); [1 Kings 9:15](#)).

During the time of Christ, Chorazin ([Matthew 11:21](#)) and Capernaum ([4:13](#); [11:23](#)) were important cities located in the northeast near the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum seems to have been a center for Jesus's ministry in the area ([Matthew 4:13](#); [Mark 2:1](#); [9:33](#)). Nazareth was an important city because of Christ's childhood ([Matthew 2:22-23](#); [Luke 2:39](#); [4:16](#)). Nain was important in Christ's ministry ([Luke 7:11-17](#)). It was located on the northern edge of the mountain now called Little Hermon. Cana of Galilee was also important in Christ's ministry ([John 2:1-11](#)). Sepphoris and Tiberias were important cities during Roman rule.

Roads and Travel

Many roads traveled through Galilee. Roads in New Testament times were better due to Roman construction and maintenance.

Among the best-known trade routes was the Via Maris (the Way of the Sea). The Via Maris ran through Galilee on its way from Damascus to Egypt. Another main road ran from Tiberias near the Sea of Galilee to Acco (Ptolemais), a port on the Phoenician coast. Today in Israel Acco is called

Acre. Major travel routes also connected Galilee with the markets of the East. The area was connected by many roads that branched from the main highways.

Residents

The people who lived in Galilee were called Galileans. They followed the Jewish religion and saw themselves as part of the Jewish people. However, many Galileans came from different cultures and peoples. Their mixed background meant they spoke differently from the people who lived in southern Palestine ([Matthew 26:69, 73](#)).

The Greeks and Romans had more influence on the Galileans than on the Jews who lived in Judea. Because of these differences (their mixed background, their way of speaking, and where they lived) the Judean Jews looked down on the Galileans ([John 1:46](#); [7:41, 52](#)).

Lower Galilee had many villages and was heavily populated in New Testament times. The soil's ability to produce plants and many kinds found in Galilee produced a successful Jewish population. This was true for many years after the time of Christ.

Government

During the time of Christ, Roman emperors Augustus and Tiberius ruled over Galilee. The Romans built walls and buildings throughout Galilee to defend the land. These buildings reminded everyone that the Romans were in control.

During Jesus's ministry, Rome chose Herod Antipas to rule the territory ([Matthew 14:1](#); [Luke 23:5-7](#)). Herod Antipas became ruler when he was 17 years old. He first ruled from the city of Sepphoris. Later, in about AD 22, he built a new city called Tiberias on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He made Tiberias his new capital city and named it after the Roman emperor.

Products

In the middle of the first century AD, Galilee grew many different kinds of food. They sold these crops to nearby cities like Tyre and Sidon. The main crops were:

- grapes
- pomegranates
- olives
- grains

Fishing in the Sea of Galilee was also an important business during New Testament times ([Mark 1:14–20](#)).

Jesus and Galilee

Jesus was raised in Galilee ([Luke 4:16](#)). Eleven of his twelve closest followers were also from Galilee. Only Judas Iscariot came from Judea.

Jesus used examples from daily life in Galilee in his teaching. He talked about the local markets, farming, and fishing ([Matthew 20:1–8](#); [21:33](#); [Mark 4:3](#); [Luke 13:6–9](#)).

The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) mostly tell about his work in Galilee. Jesus spent much of his time around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus spoke most of his parables (19 of 32) there. Jesus performed most of his miracles (25 of 33) in Galilee.

People in Galilee responded to Jesus's teaching more than in any other place. He gave his famous Sermon on the Mount in Galilee. On one of Galilee's mountains, Jesus experienced the transfiguration, when he for a short period changed into a glorious figure.

Many women from Galilee followed Jesus and helped care for his needs ([Matthew 27:55](#)). After Jesus rose from death, two of his most important appearances to his followers happened in Galilee ([Matthew 28:16–20](#); [John 21:1–23](#)). People called Jesus "Jesus of Nazareth" ([John 1:45](#)). This name showed that he was from Galilee.

Galileans

Since Jesus and most of the 12 disciples were from Galilee, people began using the word "Galilean" to describe all of Jesus's followers. Some Jews from Judea thought this meant Jesus's followers were not following Judaism as purely as they did.

Some interpreters believe that [Luke 22:59](#) is an example of "Galilean" being used as a special title for Jesus's followers. However, in [Acts 1:11](#) and [2:7](#), the word is only used to show where people were from.

A Greek writer named Epictetus, who lived from about AD 50 to 135, also used the word "Galilean" when writing about Christians. He wrote about how impressed he was with Christians who were willing to die for their faith. We do not know how widely people used "Galilean" as a title for Christians, but we know the term spread from Judea all the way to Rome, where Epictetus lived.

See also Palestine; Sea of Galilee.

Galilee, Sea of

See Sea of Galilee.

Gall

1. A yellowish-brown bitter substance made by the liver ([Job 16:13](#)) or the organ containing the gall ([20:25](#)).
2. A very bitter, poisonous herb. It might be the same as hemlock, colocynth, or poppy. The Hebrew word for "gall" also refers to:
 3. "Bitter fruit" ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#))
 4. The "venom" of a venomous snake ([Job 20:14, 16](#))
 5. A poison given to a person for food ([Psalm 69:21](#))
 6. A divine punishment as "poisoned water" ([Jeremiah 8:14](#); [9:15](#); [23:15](#))
 7. Israel's bitter experience of divine judgment ([Lamentations 3:5, 19](#))
 8. Divine judgment against Israel sprouting up like "poisonous weeds" in a field ([Hosea 10:4](#))
 9. Israel's perversion of justice by turning "justice into poison" ([Amos 6:12](#)).

10. An unpleasant-tasting substance in the New Testament. [Matthew 27:34](#) mentions the gall mixed with wine that was offered to Christ on the cross. [Mark 15:23](#) calls the substance “myrrh,” which might be the specific substance mixed with the wine. In [Acts 8:23](#), Peter described the spiritual state of Simon the magician as being “poisoned by bitterness.”

See also Plants; Wild Gourd.

Gallim

Village near Gibeah of Saul and Anathoth in Benjamin, north of Jerusalem and close to Bahurim ([1 Sm 25:44](#); [Is 10:30](#)); probably present-day Khirbet Kakul.

Gallio

Gallio was a Roman official in the first century AD. He was born in Cordoba, Spain, in 3 BC. His birth name was Marcus Annaeus Novatus. He died in AD 65. Gallio was the son of Marcus Annaeus Seneca and the older brother of the philosopher Seneca.

Gallio moved to Rome during the reign of the emperor Tiberius. Later, a famous public speaker named Lucius Junius Gallio adopted him. After that, Novatus took the name Gallio. Lucius Junius Gallio was a wealthy man. He trained Gallio for work in government and public service.

Gallio served as the Roman proconsul (governor) of Achaia between AD 51 and 53.

During the apostle Paul’s first visit to Corinth, some Jews brought a complaint against Paul. They told Gallio that Paul was teaching people to worship God in a way that was against the law ([Acts 18:12–17](#)). Gallio quickly rejected their complaint. He said the matter was about Jewish law, not Roman law. Gallio refused to judge a religious dispute. This response was typical of Roman governors. They often avoided getting involved in arguments about religion.

Gallio had to leave Achaia because he became sick. He later returned to Rome and served as *consul suffectus* (a temporary consul) under the emperor Nero. At some point, Gallio was connected to a plot

against Nero. At first, Nero pardoned him. But later, Gallio was forced to take his own life.

Gallio Inscription

A dated Greek inscription found in Delphi, Greece. It identifies Gallio as proconsul (governor) and establishes the time of Paul’s first visit to Corinth (compare [Acts 18:12–17](#)).

See Timeline of the Bible (New Testament); Inscriptions.

Gallows

Upright frame with a crossbeam and a rope for hanging criminals. In the book of Esther, a gibbet is mentioned, upon which men were impaled and left to hang in scorn. *See* Criminal Law and Punishment.

Gamaliel

1. Son of Pedahzur and leader of the tribe of Manasseh ([Numbers 10:23](#)). Moses chose Gamaliel to help count the people in the wilderness near Mount Sinai ([1:10](#)). Moses also chose him to organize the tribe for the journey to the promised land ([2:20](#)). Gamaliel participated in the special 12-day ceremony when the leaders presented offerings at the dedication of the altar after the tabernacle was completed ([7:54, 59](#)).

2. A Jewish scholar. This Gamaliel lived in the first century AD. He died 18 years before the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem (in AD 70). Gamaliel was highly respected by everyone. When Peter and the other apostles were brought before the angry council in Jerusalem, he gave careful advice that probably saved the apostles' lives ([Acts 5:27-40](#)). [Acts 22:3](#) also mentions Gamaliel as the rabbi that Paul studied with when he was young in Jerusalem. A rabbi is a Jewish religious teacher and leader. During that time in Israel, several groups of rabbis developed. Two of the most important were the competing Pharisee schools of Hillel and Shammai. Both teachers had great influence on Jewish thinking. Hillel's school emphasized tradition even above the law. Shammai's school taught that the law was more important than tradition. Hillel's school was more influential, and many later rabbis have followed its teachings. According to tradition, Gamaliel is the grandson of Hillel. He learned the full scope of the philosophy and theology that his grandfather taught. Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the high council of Jews in Jerusalem. He served as president of the Sanhedrin during the time of the Roman emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Unlike other Jewish teachers, he was open to Greek learning. The learning of Gamaliel was so respected and his influence was so great that he is one of only seven Jewish scholars who have been honored with the title Rabban. People called him the "Beauty of the Law." The Talmud (an important collection of Jewish teachings) even says that "since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law has ceased."

Gammad

Home of mercenaries who served in the army of Tyre, according to Ezekiel's prophecy ([Ez 27:11](#)). Gammad may have been located in Syria and is identified as Kumidi in the Tell el-Amarna letters.

Gammadims

The word "Gammadims" is found in the King James Version of the Bible in [Ezekiel 27:11](#). The Berean Standard Bible translates this as "men of Gamad." This refers to people from a place called Gamad.

See Gammad.

Gamul

Priest assigned to temple duty in David's time ([1 Chr 24:17](#)).

Gangrene

Gangrene is when tissue dies due to loss of the vital blood supply to that part of the body. It often happens to the farthest tip of an extremity such as fingertips or toes. The body part will turn black and surgeons will amputate the dead part. They do this so that tissue damage does not extend to more of the limb or harm the life of the person.

The term "gangrene" occurs only once in Scripture ([2 Timothy 2:17](#)). Paul warns Timothy not to allow talk that dishonors God. When people dishonor God in the way they talk, it will encourage more people to dishonor God in the way they act. Paul compares this to the way gangrene tends to spread to surrounding tissues of the body.

The disease in the feet of King Asa ([2 Chronicles 16:12](#)) was not named, but it could have been gangrene. One could compare the leprosy of Miriam the sister of Moses to gangrene. Scripture compares her condition to the deteriorating flesh of a stillborn baby ([Numbers 12:12](#)).

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Garden House

The King James Version translation of Beth-haggan in [2 Kings 9:27](#).

See Beth-haggan.

Garden of Eden

Location in the east of Eden ([Gn 2:8](#)) in the Tigris-Euphrates area of Mesopotamia, referred to 14 times in the OT. The information in [Genesis 2:8-10](#) indicates that it was in the Shinar Plain area, and that four “heads” or branches were formed from the one river flowing through Eden to water the Garden. The heads were the Tigris and Euphrates (both of which are familiar modern rivers) and two rivers that have disappeared—the Pishon and Gihon. The latter were most probably natural water channels, later used as irrigation canals, since in cuneiform there is no separate word for “river” and “irrigation canal.” If Pishon and Gihon were in fact irrigation canals, then Genesis places Adamic man in an actual geographical setting and therefore obviates the notion that Eden was a myth. If the above identification is correct, Cush referred to the land of the ancient Kassites, while Havilah may have indicated Arabia.

Eden was the testing ground of man’s fidelity to God’s commands, and through disobedience, the Garden was lost. It will be regained in the form of the new paradise ([Rv 22:14](#)).

See also Adam (Person); Eve; Fall of Man; Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; Tree of Life.

Gareb (Person)

A warrior among the mighty men of King David ([2 Samuel 23:38](#); [1 Chronicles 11:40](#)).

Gareb (Place)

Hill near Jerusalem mentioned in [Jeremiah 31:39](#) as a future boundary of the city, perhaps on the south or west side.

Garlic

A plant with a bulb that people grow for cooking. The Israelites remembered eating garlic in Egypt

([Numbers 11:5](#)). It has a strong flavor and smell that many people enjoy in their food. People have used garlic for thousands of years, both as food and as medicine.

The common garlic (*Allium sativum*) is a hardy, bulbous perennial plant that is grown in Europe, western Asia, and Egypt. The leaves are narrow, flat, and ribbon-like. Garlic is extremely popular with people who live in the Mediterranean region.

Garlic is closely related to onions (*Allium cepa*).

See Food and Food Preparation; Onion.

Garmite

Designation for Keilah in [1 Chronicles 4:19](#). The word, which means “bony,” seems to denote strength (the same Hebrew word is used in [Jb 40:18](#) and [Prv 25:15](#)).

Gashmu

KJV spelling of Geshem the Arab in [Nehemiah 6:6](#). See Geshem.

Gaspar

The traditional name for one of the wise men who brought a gift to Jesus in [Matthew 2:1-2](#). See Wise Men.

Gatam

Esau’s grandson, the fourth son of Eliphaz and an Edomite chief ([Gn 36:11, 16](#); [1 Chr 1:36](#)).

Gate

See Architecture; City.

Gate between the Two Walls

Entrance in the southeast part of the city of Jerusalem, possibly the same as the Fountain Gate ([2 Kgs 25:4](#); [Jer 39:4](#)). See Jerusalem.

Gatekeepers

The people who guarded the gates of cities and the doors of palaces, temples, and other large buildings. Their task was to decide who could enter and who could not ([2 Kings 7:10–11](#); [11:4–9](#)). In the Bible these people are called by different names such as gatekeepers, porters, doorkeepers, and guards.

Gath

Gath was a walled city in the land of the Philistines ([2 Chronicles 26:6](#)). It was one of five main Philistine cities. The other cities were Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron ([Joshua 13:3](#); [1 Samuel 6:17](#)). These cities were located on or near the southern coast of what is now Israel and Palestine.

Gath often fought with the Israelites. But Israel did not take control of the city until the time of David ([1 Chronicles 18:1](#)). Gath was a Canaanite city. It was the hometown of Goliath, a giant who fought David ([1 Samuel 17:4](#)). Other very tall warriors also came from Gath ([2 Samuel 21:18–22](#)). Some of the Anakim (a group of giants) still lived there, even after Joshua's battles to take the land ([Joshua 10:36–39](#); [11:21–22](#)).

The Philistines once captured the ark of God. They took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, then to Gath, and finally to Ekron ([1 Samuel 5:8](#)). Many Philistines died or got tumors after taking the ark. So they sent it back to Israel. It first went to Beth-shemesh, then to Kiriath-jearim ([6:14](#); [7:1](#)). Later, when David was running away from King Saul, he went to Gath. He pretended to be insane in front of King Achish so they would not harm him ([21:10–15](#)).

During Absalom's rebellion, 600 men from Gath (called Gittites) served as soldiers in David's army ([2 Samuel 15:18](#)). Rehoboam, a king of Judah, made the walls of Gath stronger ([2 Chronicles 11:8](#)). In the 800s BC, King Hazael of Syria captured Gath ([2 Kings 12:17](#)). But later, the Philistines seemed to rule it again. King Uzziah of Judah broke down the walls of Gath during his reign ([2 Chronicles 26:6](#)).

In the 700s BC, Gath was destroyed by Sargon II of Assyria. After that, it disappeared ([Amos 6:2](#)).

See also Philistia, Philistines.

Gath-Hepher

Town in Galilee, in Zebulun's territory, which was the birthplace of Jonah ([Jos 19:13](#); [2 Kgs 14:25](#)). Modern el-Meshad occupies the site of Gath-hepher.

Gath-Rimmon

1. City located in the land allotted to Dan's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 19:45](#)). It was assigned as one of the four Levitical cities for the Kohathites in Dan ([21:24](#)). Lost to the Canaanites, Gath-rimmon was later regained by Ephraim and included as one of its cities for the sons of Levi ([1 Chr 6:69](#)). Its site is identifiable with the modern Tell el-Jerisheh.

See also Levitical Cities.

2. One of two cities given to the Levites in Manasseh west of the Jordan River ([Jos 21:25](#)), suggesting a possible transcription mistake, which is better read as Bileam (cf. [1 Chr 6:70](#)).

Gaulanitis

A small area east of the Sea of Galilee. It was located between Mount Hermon and the Yarmuk River, and possibly reached the Jordan River.

Gaulanitis took its name from the ancient town of Golan. Researchers have found large ruins 27 kilometers (17 miles) east of the Sea of Galilee, which they think are the remains of Golan. Moses chose Golan as a city of refuge for the half-tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan ([Deuteronomy 4:41, 43](#)). Joshua gave it to the members of the Levite family descended from Gershon ([Joshua 20:8; 21:27; 1 Chronicles 6:71](#)).

According to Josephus, the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus lost a major battle here and later destroyed the town (*Antiquities* 8.2.3). Josephus also said a man named Judas who led a tax protest was from Gaulanitis (18.1.1). Luke called him a Galilean ([Acts 5:37](#)). Later, Josephus called him a Galilean, too (*Antiquities* 20.5.2; *War* 2.8.1). It is possible that Judas lived in these places at different times.

After Herod died in 4 BC, Philip inherited Gaulanitis. He made his capital Bethsaida Julias, which he rebuilt and named after Augustus Caesar's daughter. Jesus traveled in this area ([Mark 6:45; 8:22](#)). It stayed under strong Roman control

until AD 66, when the Jewish war started. Jewish fighters later hid in its high areas and the Romans fought several battles here.

See also Golan; Herod, Herodian Family.

Gaza

City near the Palestinian coast, about 50 miles (80.5 kilometers) west-southwest of Jerusalem. It has been occupied almost continuously since ancient times; modern Gaza has played an important part in the conflict between Arabs and Israelis. Gazite and Gazathite are biblical names for the residents of the town.

Set about midpoint of the length of the plain of Philistia, Gaza was a rich agricultural area where wheat and similar grains flourished. Situated some three miles (4.8 kilometers) from the Mediterranean, Gaza's position as the greatest trading center of ancient Palestine did not come from the sea but from the highways, which brought caravans from all parts of the Fertile Crescent. This accessibility was also a handicap, for the roadways along the coast were the easiest route for the armies of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Often Gaza was the victim of their passage.

In the records of secular history, Gaza first shows up in the annals of Thutmose III in the temple of Karnak. Thutmose wisely scheduled his Asiatic campaigns just after the Egyptian harvest and in time to seize the harvest of Palestine.

In Amarna Letter 289, Abdu-Heba of Jerusalem acknowledged that Gaza was loyal to the king of Egypt but complained that Addaya, the Egyptian ruler of Palestine whose residence was at Gaza, had taken the garrison the pharaoh had sent for Jerusalem. From the late 13th century BC, there is a satirical letter that was composed as an exercise for training scribes. In this letter, written from one scribe to belittle another, various itineraries are traced, including one from the frontier of Egypt to Gaza.

Pharaoh Neco (610–595 BC) captured and chastised Gaza and Ashkelon in the reign of Josiah and Judah (cf. [Jer 47:1, 5](#)).

Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC) refers to Hanno of Gaza, who fled to Egypt just prior to the capture of Gaza by the Assyrians. On the Oriental Institute Prism and the Taylor Prism, Sennacherib (705–681

BC) tells of his invasion of Palestine and of how he shut up Hezekiah "like a bird in a cage." He captured 46 of Hezekiah's fortified cities and gave them to three minor kings, including Sillibel of Gaza, who is also mentioned by Esarhaddon (681–669 BC) and Ashurbanipal (669–633 BC). Reference to "the king of Gaza" also appears in the records of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (604–562 BC).

In 332 BC Gaza was captured and punished by Alexander the Great. He was angered because it had held out against him for two months, so he killed all of the men and sold the women and children into slavery. During the Maccabean period, it was taken by Alexander Jannaeus, who slaughtered its inhabitants.

In the Bible, Gaza is first mentioned in [Genesis 10:19](#), where it is said that the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon to Gaza. In a summary of the conquests of Joshua, one of the dimensions of the conquered area is "from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza" ([Jos 10:41](#)). Joshua destroyed all the Anakim in the land, but some remained in Gaza and other Philistine cities ([11:22](#)). Another ancient people, the Avvim, "who lived in villages as far as Gaza," were annihilated and replaced by the Caphtorim from Caphtor, or Crete ([Dt 2:23](#)). Gaza, along with its towns and villages, was listed among the tribal inheritance of Judah ([Jos 15:47](#)). At the time of Joshua's advanced age, Gaza and the other four cities of the Philistine Pentapolis are said to be among the territories not yet taken ([13:3](#)); in [Judges 1:18–19](#), however, it is reported that Judah took it.

During the time of the judges, Midianite raiders swept through Israel, looting and destroying, even as far as Gaza ([Jgs 6:4](#)). In this period the main biblical interest in Gaza centers in the life and exploits of Samson. Philistine women were Samson's weakness. He went to Gaza and found a prostitute with whom he had relations ([16:1](#)). The people of Gaza learned that he was there and determined to kill him in the morning, but Samson arose at midnight and went to the gate of the city, took the doors, posts, and the bar of the gate and carried them to the top of a hill facing Hebron.

His involvement with another Philistine woman, Delilah, resulted in his capture by the Philistines, who gouged out his eyes and took him to Gaza ([Jgs 16:21](#)), where he was bound and forced to grind at a mill in the prison. On a festival day in the temple of Dagon, the reveling worshipers called for Samson to be brought so they could make sport of

him. His strength was returning, and God answered his prayer for vengeance. Samson dislodged the two pillars that were the support of the stone slab roof of the pagan temple, so Samson died, along with a great number of Gazites.

Gaza is named as the southern boundary of Israel during the time of Solomon, who ruled over “all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza” ([1 Kgs 4:24](#)). Hezekiah defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza ([2 Kgs 18:8](#)). When he rebelled against Assyria, Sennacherib came and took 46 of Hezekiah’s cities and gave them to the king of Gaza and two other kings.

[Jeremiah 47](#) records a prophecy against the Philistines, which the Lord gave to the prophet before Pharaoh attacked Gaza (v [1](#); cf. v [5](#); see Neco above). Amos gives specific prophecies of judgment against Gaza ([Am 1:6-7](#)). Zephaniah also states that Gaza would be deserted ([Zep 2:4](#)). [Zechariah 9](#) gives an oracle of judgment in which it is said that Gaza will suffer and that its king shall perish.

In the NT there is only one reference to Gaza ([Acts 8:26](#)). Philip, who was preaching in Samaria, was told by an angel to go south to “the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza.” Here he met the treasurer of Cush, who was reading [Isaiah 53](#) as he rode in his chariot. Philip preached the gospel to this man and baptized him.

See also Philistia, Philistines.

Gazara

Alternate name for the city of Gezer in 1 and 2 Maccabees. See Gezer.

Gazathites

KJV alternate spelling for residents of Gaza ([Jos 13:3](#)). See Gaza; Gazites.

Gazelle

A gazelle is a type of antelope (deer-like animal) that lives in Asia and Africa. These animals are known for their speed and graceful movement.

Palestine and Israel is home to two types of gazelles. Both male and female gazelles have

curved horns. The dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) is pale fawn and up to 56 centimeters (22 inches) tall. Meanwhile, the Arabian gazelle (*Gazella arabica*) is darker and can reach 63.5 centimeters (25 inches).

Gazelles are common in the holy land's deserts and steppes, especially in the Negev Desert. Typically, herds have five to ten animals. However, some migrate in large groups during fall to find new feeding grounds at lower elevations. They eat plants. Being shy, they appoint guards to watch for danger.

In biblical times the gazelle was probably the game animal most hunted by the Jews ([Proverbs 6:5](#); [Isaiah 13:14](#)). Pharaoh Tutankhamen hunted gazelles and ostriches. People brought gazelles to King Solomon's palace for food ([1 Kings 4:23](#)).

Gazelles were not easy to catch because they ran quickly ([2 Samuel 2:18](#); [1 Chronicles 12:8](#); [Proverbs 6:5](#)). They were even faster than the deer. They were trapped in different ways: caught in nets, pushed into pits, or herded into narrow valleys to be shot. The Bedouin hunt gazelles with falcons and dogs. The falcon strikes the gazelle's head, injuring it. This makes it easier for the dogs to catch up.

The gazelle is referred to in Song of Solomon where it is an image of feminine beauty ([Song of Solomon 2:9, 17](#); [4:5](#); [7:3](#); [8:14](#)).

See also Antelope.

Gazer

The King James Version alternate spelling of the town Gezer in [2 Samuel 5:25](#) and [1 Chronicles 14:16](#).

See Gezer.

Gazez

1. Caleb's son by his concubine Ephah, and the brother of Haran ([1 Chr 2:46](#)).

2. Son of Haran and the nephew of #1 above ([1 Chr 2:46](#)).

Gazites

Residents of Gaza ([Jgs 16:2](#)). See Gaza; Gazathites.

Gazzam

Ancestor of a group of temple assistants who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Ezr 2:48](#); [Neh 7:51](#)).

Ge-Harashim

Name for a richly wooded valley near Lod and Ono, settled by Joab from Judah's tribe, whose posterity called the valley Ge-harashim, meaning "valley of craftsmen," after their own trade ([1 Chr 4:14](#), nlt mg). In the fifth century BC the area was resettled by people from Benjamin's tribe ([Neh 11:35](#), "valley of craftsmen").

Geba

Geba was a town in the land given to the tribe of Benjamin. It was one of the towns given to the Levites ([Joshua 18:24](#); [21:17](#)). It was about 11.3 kilometers (7 miles) northeast of Jerusalem and south of Michmash ([1 Samuel 14:5](#); [Isaiah 10:29](#)).

Geba is easy to confuse with Gibeah. Both were in the land of Benjamin, and both names mean "hill." Gibeah was to the southwest of Geba and was the hometown of Saul, Israel's first king. The phrase, "from Geba to Beersheba" was used to show the full length of Judah's land. It referred to the northern and southern extremities of the tribe of Judah ([2 Kings 23:8](#)).

In the time of King Saul, the Philistines had a military post at Geba ([1 Samuel 10:5](#); [13:3](#)). Saul's son Jonathan attacked the post and defeated it. This made the Philistines angry. They brought a huge army into Israel, much larger than Saul's army.

Saul and his men stayed at Geba ([13:16](#)). Later they moved toward Gibeah ([14:2](#)). Meanwhile, the Philistines had built another military post at Michmash, which was close to Geba.

Jonathan told the young man who carried his weapons that they should go over to the Philistine post. He said that if the Philistines called them to come, that would be a sign that God would help them win. The Philistines did call to them, so Jonathan and the young man went forward and killed about 20 Philistines. This caused panic in the camp, and the whole Philistine army ran away.

Later, during the time of King David, he defeated another group of Philistines between Geba and Gezer ([2 Samuel 5:25](#)).

Some men from Geba were among the Jews who returned from exile in Babylon ([Ezra 2:26](#); [Nehemiah 11:31](#)). At the time when the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt and dedicated, singers from the area around Geba took part in the celebration ([Nehemiah 12:29](#)).

Gebal

1. One of the earliest villages in Phoenicia and Syria (along with Ras Shamra and Tell Judeideh); also called Byblos ("books") by the Greeks. It was situated on the Mediterranean about 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) north of modern Beirut and was an important commercial center and outlet for the hardwoods of Lebanon in the period when it was an Egyptian colony and when the diplomatic and commercial interests of Egypt reached all over Syria. It was a city-kingdom according to the Amarna letters (c. 1400–1350 BC), and seal impressions found there from a very early period suggest that it was on a major exchange route through Palestine and Syria. Its inhabitants were called Gebalites ([Jos 13:5](#)). While it was a great commercial center, a more important achievement of the Gebalites was the development of a syllabic script modeled on the Egyptian. Passed on from Phoenicia to Greece, it became the ancestor of our own alphabet.

2. Territory southeast of the Dead Sea, associated with Ammon and Amalek as hostile to Israel ([Ps 83:7](#)).

Gebalite

Inhabitant of Gebal ([Jos 13:5](#)). See Gebal #1.

Geber

1. Alternate name for Ben-geber, one of Solomon's commissariat officers, in [1 Kings 4:13](#). See Ben-geber.

2. Uri's son, who was responsible for providing food for Solomon's household. His territory was probably south of Ramoth-gilead ([1 Kgs 4:19](#)). Perhaps #1 and #2 were related.

Gebim

Small town just north of Jerusalem. [Isaiah 10:31](#) prophesied that its inhabitants would flee when the Assyrian army came to invade. Its exact location is unknown.

Gecko

A gecko is a small lizard that belongs to the scientific family *Gekkonidae*.

In Jewish food law, the gecko was considered ceremonially unclean. The region of Palestine and Israel has seven different types of gecko species, such as *Hemidactylus turcicus* and *Ptyodactylus hasselquistii*. All of these gecko species eat insects. Geckos make a sound that resembles mourning by quickly vibrating their tongues. According to legends, people believed geckos could cause leprosy (a skin disease) by crawling on someone.

Geckos are also called wall lizards. This name comes from their ability to walk on ceilings using suction discs on their toes. However, they often fall into people's homes. Since they were considered ceremonially unclean, their presence was very troublesome for Jewish families ([Leviticus 11:31-38](#)).

In [Leviticus 11:30](#), the translators of the King James Version incorrectly identified the gecko as a ferret.

See also Lizard.

Gedaliah

1. Ahikam's son, and grandson of Shaphan (King Josiah's royal scribe). In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, appointed Gedaliah as governor over the Jews remaining in Israel to work the fields, vineyards, and orchards ([2 Kgs 25:12, 22](#)).

Gedaliah established his headquarters at Mizpah, where he was joined by the prophet Jeremiah and the Jewish commanders and their guerrilla forces who had escaped capture during the fall of Jerusalem ([Jer 40:6-8](#)). Gedaliah assured them that if they would settle down and live in peaceful subjection to Babylon, all would be well ([2 Kgs 25:23-24](#); [Jer 40:9-10](#)). On the basis of that assurance, many of the Jews who were dispersed in

the Transjordan and other countries returned to Israel to work the land into great productivity ([Jer 40:11-12](#)).

Though warned about a plot against him by Ishmael, Gedaliah entertained the schemer at a meal and was killed ([2 Kgs 25:25](#); [Jer 40:11-12; 41:1-3](#)). Along with some pilgrims visiting the temple, Ishmael fled with hostages to Ammon, escaping the vengeance of Johanan ([Jer 41:10-15](#)).

2. Temple musician in the time of King David ([1 Chr 25:3, 9](#)).

3. Jeshua's son and one called to divorce his foreign wife during Ezra's reforms ([Ezr 10:18](#)).

4. Pashhur's son and one of the Jerusalem officials who urged King Zedekiah to put the prophet Jeremiah to death for his pro-Babylonian prophetic pronouncements ([Jer 38:1](#)).

5. Amariah's son, grandson of King Hezekiah, and grandfather of the prophet Zephaniah ([Zep 1:1](#)).

Geddalti

Alternate spelling of Giddalti, son of Heman ([1 Chronicles 25:4](#)).

See Giddalti.

Gedeon

KJV spelling of Gideon, Joash's son and judge of Israel, in [Hebrews 11:32](#). See Gideon.

Geder

One of the 31 royal cities in Canaan, whose kings were defeated by Joshua ([Jos 12:13](#)). Geder is perhaps identifiable with Gedor in the mountains of Judah ([15:58](#)) or with Beth-gader ([1 Chr 2:51](#)).

Gederah, Gederathites

Town and its inhabitants situated in the Shephelah (lowland hills) of the territory allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 15:36](#)). It was a place where potters lived ([1 Chr 4:23](#)). A man from Gederah, Jozabad the Gederathite, is mentioned in [1 Chronicles 12:4](#).

Gederoth

Town (modern Qatra) in the Shephelah (lowland hills) assigned to Judah's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 15:41](#)) and later captured by the Philistines from King Ahaz ([2 Chr 28:18](#)).

Gederothaim

Village in the Judean Shephelah ([Jos 15:36](#)) of unknown location. The Hebrew list contains 14 cities without Gederothaim (vv [33-36](#)), while the Greek version reads, "Gederah and her sheepfolds" (v [36](#)). Gederothaim probably reflects a later scribal error where the copyist accidentally made the term "sheepfold" into a 15th city.

Gedor (Person)

Jeiel's son, who was an ancestor of King Saul. Gedor's family lived in Gibeon ([1 Chr 8:31](#); [9:37](#)).

Gedor (Place)

1. City in the Shephelah (hill country) allotted to Judah's tribe ([Jos 15:58](#)) named with Halhul, Beth-zur, Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon. It has been identified with Khirbet Gedur north of Hebron near Bethlehem.
2. Place founded by Penuel, one of the families of Judah ([1 Chr 4:4](#)).
3. Settlement established by Jered of Judah ([1 Chr 4:18](#)).
4. City and its valley settled by the Simeonites ([1 Chr 4:39](#)).
5. Town in the territory of Benjamin and the home of Joelah and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham ([1 Chr 12:7](#)); perhaps the same as #1 above.

Gehazi

Servant of Elisha ([2 Kgs 5:25](#)) who instructed the prophet how best to recompense the generous Shunammite woman for her kindness to him ([4:11-17](#)). Gehazi took Elisha's staff to use in reviving the woman's dead son, but he was

unsuccessful (v [31](#)), and the prophet himself had to revive the child (vv [32-37](#)). His greed in securing from Naaman presents declined by Elisha resulted in his contracting Naaman's leprosy ([5:20-23, 27](#)). In [2 Kings 8:1-6](#) Gehazi again encountered the Shunammite woman as she was petitioning the king of Israel.

Gehenna

Gehenna is the English spelling of a Greek word that comes from Aramaic. The word originally meant "the Valley of [the son(s) of] Hinnom" in Hebrew. This was a deep valley that marked the border between the lands of two ancient Israelite tribes: Benjamin and Judah ([Joshua 15:8](#); [18:16](#)). Today, people think this valley is the same as Wadi el-Rababi, a deep valley that runs south of the Old City of Jerusalem, starting near its western wall.

Gehenna in the Old Testament

The place became known for worshiping other gods when some of Judah's kings ruled there. Kings Ahaz and King Manasseh allowed people to worship false gods like Molech and even kill babies ([2 Kings 16:3](#); [21:6](#); [2 Chronicles 28:3](#); [33:6](#); [Jeremiah 19:6](#); [32:35](#)).

King Josiah ended these evil acts ([2 Kings 23:10](#)). The prophet Jeremiah talked about this valley when he warned people about God's judgment ([Jeremiah 2:23](#); [7:30-32](#); [19:5-6](#)).

Later, the valley was used to burn trash from the city and the dead bodies of criminals. Some people think Judas, who betrayed Jesus, killed himself near this valley. They also identify the Potter's Field on the south side of this valley.

Because of all the evil things that happened there, people began to use the name "Gehenna" to mean a place where bad people are punished after they die (1 Enoch 18:11-16; 27:1-3; 54:1; 56:3-4; 90:26; [2 Esdras 7:36](#); compare [Isaiah 30:33](#); [66:24](#); [Daniel 7:10](#)).

Gehenna in the New Testament

Jesus used this word to talk about where people who do not follow God will go when they die ([Matthew 5:22](#); [10:28](#); [18:9](#)). Since Gehenna is a place of fire ([Mark 9:43](#)), it is also called the lake of fire ([Matthew 13:42, 50](#); [Revelation 20:14-15](#)). This is the place where evil people will be sent ([Matthew 23:15, 33](#)). Satan and his devils will also

be sent there forever ([Matthew 25:41](#); [Revelation 19:20](#); [20:10](#)).

It is important to understand that Gehenna is different from other words about what happens after death. In the Old Testament, "Sheol" is the place where people go right after they die before the last Day of Judgment. The New Testament name for this place is "Hades." "Gehenna" is the final place where people will be punished forever (compare [Psalms 49:14-15](#) with [Matthew 10:28](#)). The Greek word "Tartarus" is only used once in the Bible ([2 Peter 2:4](#)). It refers to a special place where God sent some angels who rebelled against him a very long time ago. These angels were part of the first rebellion against God that happened before human history began.

See also Dead, Place of the; Death; Hades; Hell; Sheol.

Geliloth

Place mentioned in the boundary line of Benjamin ([Jos 18:17](#)), usually identified with Gilgal. *See* Gilgal #4.

Gemalli

The father of Ammiel. Ammiel was one of the 12 spies sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:12](#)).

Gemara

Summary of the important points of rabbinic discussion on the Mishnah (the oral tradition). The Gemara and Mishnah together form the Talmud (which many Jews consider authoritative for their faith). In Aramaic, *Gemara* means "acquired learning." That meaning reflects the teaching method of the rabbis, who passed on the Gemara by committing it to memory rather than writing it down. The word's Hebrew root means "to complete." Since the Gemara takes the form of a running commentary on the Mishnah, it serves to supplement and complete it.

Pages of the Talmud are arranged with the Mishnah in the middle and the Gemara in blocks of print on the side. The Gemara does not necessarily quote the same sources twice when dealing with similar passages from the Mishnah on the same problem,

nor does it always contain commentary on the Mishnah. The Gemara also includes folklore, astronomy, astrology, medicine, homiletic parables, and examples from great rabbis' lives.

See also Mishnah; Talmud.

Gemariah

1. Hilkiah's son and emissary to Nebuchadnezzar from King Zedekiah. He carried Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon ([Jer 29:3](#)).

2. Son of Shaphan the scribe. In the temple chamber of Gemariah, Baruch read Jeremiah's scroll ([Jer 36:10-12, 25](#)).

Gematria

One of the rabbinic methods used by Jewish teachers for interpreting the Old Testament. It involved analyzing words based on the numerical value of their letters or rearranging letters according to a specific system. For example, some rabbis have argued that Eliezer ([Genesis 15:2](#)) represented all of Abraham's servants combined because Eliezer's name equals 318, which was the number of Abraham's servants ([Genesis 14:14](#)). Another example is how the name "Babylon" is derived in [Jeremiah 25:26](#) and [51:41](#) by changing the last letter of the Hebrew word for Babylon to the first letter of the same word.

In the pseudepigraphal Epistle of Barnabas, the 318 servants of Abraham ([Genesis 14:14](#)) are seen as symbolizing Jesus's death on the cross. This interpretation is based on the Greek letter *Tau*, or "t," which has a numerical value of 300 and is cross-shaped, and 18, which corresponds to the first two letters of the Greek word for Jesus.

In the book of Revelation, the number of the beast is 666 ([Revelation 13:18](#)). In biblical symbolism, the number seven is considered perfect, and three sevens represent complete perfection. Thus, 666 is seen as falling short of this perfection.

Genealogy

Genealogy is the study of family history, tracing ancestry backward or forward for a nation, tribe, family, or individual. The Hebrews were not the only ancient people interested in keeping

genealogical records. The Sumerian king list from the third millennium BC records early Mesopotamian rulers. In Babylonian records, the word "son" often meant "descendant of." King Tirhakah of Egypt called Sesostri III his "father" around 685 BC, even though Sesostri III lived 1,200 years earlier. Greeks and Romans also kept genealogical records. However, biblical genealogies, especially those in [Genesis](#) and [1 Chronicles 1-9](#), are unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. Only at the start of the Islamic age do we find such extensive genealogical records. Even today, among tribal Semites like Arab nomads, there is a strong interest in genealogy. It is common for an Arab to accurately recite the names of ancestors going back ten or 15 generations, covering several hundred years.

Terms Used

The word "genealogy" appears only once as a noun in the Hebrew Old Testament ([Nehemiah 7:5](#)). It refers to a list of those who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile. The verb form of the word appears 20 times in 1—2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The terms "generations" and "book of the generations," used in [Genesis](#) and other parts of the Old Testament, express the same idea. The New Testament uses similar terms in [1 Timothy 1:4](#) and [Titus 3:9](#) ("genealogies") and [Matthew 1:1](#), which refers to the "book of the genealogy" of Jesus Christ.

Purpose of Genealogical Records

Keeping genealogical records in ancient Israel was important for several reasons. God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants required these records to establish and preserve land ownership. A genealogical record proved a legitimate claim to ancestral property. Genealogies were also crucial for maintaining the exclusive priesthood established by Mosaic law. During Josephus's time, every priest had to prove his lineage.

People kept genealogical records to ensure the right of royal succession in Judah through David's family. The belief that the Messiah would come from David's lineage made these records even more important.

These family records also served other purposes, such as assigning military duty based on families ([Numbers 1:2-3](#)). Tribes and families determined positions in camp and during the march from Egypt ([Numbers 2:2, 17; 10:11-28](#)). God's blessings were

passed from one family member to their descendants ([Genesis 27](#)). The focus on keeping the congregation pure ([Deuteronomy 7:1-4; 23:1-8](#)) required complete family records, especially after the exile. Ezra and Nehemiah emphasized racial purity and removed foreign elements from the people ([Ezra 2:59-63; 10:9-44; Nehemiah 13:23-28](#)). Written proof of pure descent became crucial, and interest in compiling genealogies grew after the exile.

Lineage was usually traced through the male family members. Females were rarely mentioned, such as Sarah and Milcah in [Genesis 11:29](#), Rebekah in [Genesis 22:23](#), and the daughters of Zelophehad in [Numbers 26:33-27:11](#) regarding property inheritance. Matthew mentions three women:

- Tamar
- Rahab
- Ruth

He also refers to Bathsheba in the second group (see discussion below).

Principal Genealogical Lists in the Bible

The main sources of genealogical information in the Old Testament are:

- [Genesis](#)
- [Numbers](#)
- [2 Samuel](#)
- [1 Kings](#)
- [1-2 Chronicles](#)

These books have the most genealogical content in the Bible, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The genealogies of Jesus Christ in [Matthew 1](#) and [Luke 3](#) are the only New Testament records. Together, they provide a genealogical record from Adam to Christ.

The main genealogical lists in the Bible are grouped by historical periods:

Before the Flood

There are three lists from this period:

1. The first, found in [Genesis 4:17-22](#), traces Cain's descendants through seven generations. It explains the hereditary origin of certain jobs and crafts.

2. The second, [Genesis 4:25–26](#), begins the account of Seth's descendants. Seth is Adam's faithful son, in contrast to Cain's ungodly line.
3. The third list, [Genesis 5:1–32](#) (see [1 Chronicles 1:1–4](#)), traces Adam's descendants through Seth down to Noah and his sons during the Flood.

From Noah to Abraham

[Genesis 10:1–32](#) (see also [1 Chronicles 1:4–23](#)) is often called the "table of nations." It lists the nations that came from Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. [Genesis 11:10–26](#) (see also [1 Chronicles 1:24–27](#)) follows Shem's descendants up to Abraham's time. [Genesis 11:27–30](#) (see also [Genesis 22:20–24](#)) lists the descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

From Abraham to the Descent into Egypt

The descendants of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah are listed in [Genesis 16:15](#), [21:1–3](#), and [25:1–4](#). These passages introduce the Arabs as Abraham's descendants (see [1 Chronicles 1:28–34](#)). [Genesis 19:37–38](#) connects the Moabites and Ammonites to Abraham through his nephew Lot.

An important genealogical list from this period details the descendants of Jacob. It includes the parentage, birth, and naming of the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel ([Genesis 29:31–30:24](#); [35:16–26](#)). Esau is recognized as the ancestor of the Edomites, with his Edomite descendants traced through his three wives ([Genesis 26:34](#); [36:1–43](#); [1 Chronicles 1:35–54](#)). The list of Jacob's family when he entered Egypt, totaling 70 members, is found in [Genesis 46:1–27](#) (see [Exodus 6:14–16](#); [Numbers 26:1–51](#); [1 Chronicles 2–8](#)). A partial list of the heads of the fathers' houses of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi is in [Exodus 6:14–25](#). The main purpose of this genealogy is to establish Aaron and Moses as members of Levi's tribe.

From the Exodus to the Conquest of Canaan

While the tribes were still in the desert after leaving Egypt, a census counted the total number of Israelites ([Numbers 1:4–54](#); [2:2–33](#)). During this time, a genealogy of Aaron's family was compiled, and a separate census counted the Levites ([Numbers 3:1–39](#)). A list of the 12 spies who explored the land and the tribes they represented is in [Numbers 13:4–16](#); the most important names

are Caleb and Joshua. Near the end of the wilderness journey, another census was ordered; the total number was about the same as the first census almost 40 years earlier ([Numbers 26:4–51](#), [57–62](#)). As the tribes neared the promised land, a list was prepared of the tribal representatives who would help divide the land ([Numbers 34:16–29](#)).

Period of the Kings

During the monarchy, which lasted over 400 years, the only important genealogical records are about David. His descendants include 20 rulers who reigned over Judah until the Babylonians conquered the nation in 586 BC (1—2 Kings; see also [1 Chronicles 11:1–2 Chronicles 36:21](#)). A list of David's children is in [2 Samuel 3:2–5](#) and [5:14–16](#) (see also [1 Chronicles 3:1–9](#); [14:4–7](#)).

David's elite soldiers, known as mighty men, are named in [2 Samuel 23:8–39](#) (see also [1 Chronicles 11:10–47](#)). The recruits who joined him at Ziklag are listed in [1 Chronicles 12:1–22](#). The musicians and doorkeepers who served when the ark was brought to Jerusalem are named in [1 Chronicles 15:1–24](#) (see also [1 Chronicles 16:5–6](#), [37–43](#)). David's organization of the kingdom, including the Levites, priests, singers, porters, other officials, and military officers, is detailed in [1 Chronicles 23–27](#). Despite the literary activity during Solomon's reign, the only preserved genealogical record from that time is of Solomon's princes and 12 officers ([1 Kings 4:1–19](#)). The genealogy of one prophet goes back four generations ([Zephaniah 1:1](#)).

The Postexilic Period

During the period after the exile in Babylon, keeping genealogical records became very important. This was mainly due to Ezra and Nehemiah, who wanted to maintain racial purity and remove foreign influences from the community. A list of exiles who returned with Zerubbabel is in [Ezra 2:1–70](#) (see also [Nehemiah 7:6–73](#) for the same list). A list of those who returned with Ezra is in [Ezra 8:1–20](#). Ezra's own family history is recorded in [Ezra 7:5](#).

There is a list of Jews who married foreign women, including priests, Levites, singers, porters, and other Israelites ([Ezra 10:18–44](#)). [Nehemiah 8:4–7](#) names the Levites and others who helped Ezra when he read the law to the public. Nehemiah also lists those who took part in sealing the covenant ([Nehemiah 10:1–27](#)) and those who lived in Jerusalem and other cities ([11:3–36](#)). His interest in the priesthood is shown in:

- The list of priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel ([Nehemiah 12:1-9](#))
- The high priests from Jeshua to Jaddua ([Nehemiah 12:10-11](#))
- The heads of priestly families ([Nehemiah 12:12-21](#))
- The Levites and porters who served under the high priest ([Nehemiah 12:22-26](#))
- The princes and priests present at the dedication of the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 12:31-42](#))

The last genealogical record to mention is the genealogy from Adam to Saul ([1 Chronicles 1-8](#)), the longest genealogical section in the Bible. It belongs with the genealogies compiled during the period after the exile in Babylon. An unknown chronicler, possibly Ezra, prepared this list around 400 BC using available records and documents. His goal was to preserve the nation's pure lineage and emphasize that the nation's well-being depended on following God's law.

The New Testament Period

The only important genealogies in the New Testament are about Jesus Christ in [Matthew 1:1-17](#) and [Luke 3:23-38](#).

See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Account of Jesus's human ancestry. The New Testament records Jesus's genealogy in detail twice: in [Matthew 1:1-17](#) and in [Luke 3:23-38](#).

Preview

- Matthew's Genealogy
- Luke's Genealogy
- The Relationship between the Two Records

Matthew's Genealogy (1:1-17)

[Matthew 1:1](#) introduces Jesus Christ as "the son of David, the son of Abraham." By mentioning these names, Matthew emphasizes Jesus's connection to the Abrahamic ([Genesis 17:1-8](#)) and Davidic ([2 Samuel 7:12-16](#)) covenants. Starting with

Abraham, Matthew traces Jesus's lineage through King David to Joseph, "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" ([Matthew 1:16](#)). Matthew summarizes: "In all, then, there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ" ([Matthew 1:17](#)).

Examining how Matthew handles this genealogical material reveals several interesting peculiarities:

1. Dividing the names into three groups of 14 appears to be a deliberate choice.
2. To include 14 names in the second group, Matthew leaves out three kings—Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah—between Joram and Uzziah ([Matthew 1:8](#)), and one king, Jehoiakim, between Josiah and Jeconiah ([Matthew 1:11](#)).
3. In the first group, Matthew mentions three women: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. In the second group, he refers to Bathsheba. Including women in genealogies is uncommon, and it is even more unusual because these four women have controversial backgrounds. Tamar was involved in incest, Rahab was a prostitute, Ruth was a Moabite, and Bathsheba was involved in adultery.
4. In the first group, Matthew mentions Judah's brothers and Zerah, who is Perez's brother. In the second group, he refers to Jeconiah's brothers.
5. In [Matthew 1:6](#), the text refers to David as "the king."

From this data, it is clear that Matthew does not aim to present a strict genealogy. The arrangement seems planned, and extra material is included, likely for reasons other than just showing Jesus's ancestors. Matthew organizes the names into groups of 14, probably to show Jesus to Jews as the promised king of Israel and rightful heir to David's throne. This gives the genealogy a historical flow by dividing it into three time periods. These periods highlight the origin, rise to power, and decline of David's house, with the last point shown by the

humble birth of the promised heir to a carpenter from Nazareth.

The 14 names in each group might highlight the royal nature of Mary's son. This is because the Hebrew letters in David's name add up to 14 (d=4, v=6, d=4). The number 14 is also twice the sacred number seven, creating three sets of two sevens each. Alternatively, these groupings might simply help with memorization.

Regarding the second peculiarity, the "missing name" in the third group, one must conclude that either David or Jeconiah is counted twice. These names are key in separating the three groups. Alternatively, a name might have been accidentally omitted in a copy of Matthew's original Gospel.

The third peculiarity is easy to understand. Many genealogies in Scripture leave out some names. Writers in the Ancient Near East often used the phrase "the son of" or the word "begat" in a flexible way. They might connect grandsons or great-grandsons to earlier ancestors without listing every ancestor in between. Modern readers should not expect precise details in ancient records that the original writers did not include.

The women in the genealogy might have been included to address Jewish criticism about Jesus's birth ([Matthew 1:18-25](#)). This shows that unusual unions did not disqualify the Messiah's legal ancestry.

The genealogy includes several brothers at three points, which is the fifth peculiarity, and the reason is not clear. The mention of "Judah and his brothers" ([Matthew 1:2](#)) might just follow the tradition of mentioning the 12 patriarchs together.

Finally, calling David "the king" ([Matthew 1:6](#)) highlights the royal nature of the list.

The sources used for the first group in the genealogy came from records in [1 Chronicles 1:27-2:15](#) and [Ruth 4:18-22](#). The second group used records from 1-2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The third group mainly used public or private records from the intertestamental period. The nine names from Abiud to Jacob are not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Based on this family tree, if a Davidic throne existed in Joseph's time, the humble carpenter would have been the legal heir. Jesus would have been next in line to inherit the royal seat.

Some argue that including Jeconiah in Matthew's genealogy ([Matthew 1:11](#)) weakens, or even

nullifies, the legal claim to the Davidic throne for his descendants. This is because the Lord declared about Jeconiah: "'Enroll this man as childless...None of his descendants will prosper to sit on the throne of David or to rule again in Judah'" ([Jeremiah 22:30](#)). Therefore, some believe Matthew did not intend to show the men from Shealtiel to Joseph as legal heirs to the throne.

This point could challenge the idea that the list shows David's descendants. Shealtiel, listed as Jeconiah's son in Matthew, also appears as Neri's son in Luke ([Luke 3:27](#)). Neri's name is unique to Luke, so we cannot verify Shealtiel's parentage elsewhere. Given [Jeremiah 22:30](#), it is not surprising to see him with different parents in both accounts. Neri was likely Shealtiel's real father. We cannot determine Neri's exact relationship to Jeconiah, but those recording the legal heirs to the Davidic throne might have chosen Shealtiel from Neri's line for legal adoption.

Shealtiel may have died without a son, so Zerubbabel, Pedaiah's son and Shealtiel's adopted brother, became the legal heir. Through these adoptions, Jeconiah's curse was fulfilled, yet his grandson continued the line as Shealtiel's legal son and Neri's actual son. Jeconiah's presence in the genealogy strengthens the idea that Matthew's Gospel aimed to show the legal heirs of the Davidic throne. Only a writer aware of Jeconiah's lineage issues and explanations would present this ancestry to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus was the royal Messiah.

Luke's Family Line (3:23-38)

Luke's genealogy has unique features.

1. Some scholars find it important that Luke's genealogy is at the start of Jesus's ministry, not at the Gospel's beginning.
2. Unlike Matthew, Luke starts with Jesus and traces his family line back through Old Testament history. This is unusual because most genealogies follow the order of succession.
3. Additionally, Luke's account does not stop with Abraham. It traces back to "Adam, the son of God" ([Luke 3:38](#)).

Some people think the first peculiarity shows Luke's wish to end one sacred history period and start another with Jesus, especially his ministry.

The genealogy separates Christ's work from the stories of his birth and preparation.

Many believe the reverse order in the genealogy is Luke's way to highlight Jesus. Luke traced Jesus's ancestry back to Adam, "the son of God," likely because he wrote for Romans and Greeks. By doing this, he shows Jesus is related to all humans. In Luke's genealogy, both Jesus and Adam are "sons of God." Jesus is the son of God by nature, while Adam is the son of God because he was created in God's image.

Regarding his sources, it is quite certain that Luke used the Septuagint version (an ancient Greek version of the Old Testament) of [Genesis 11:12](#). This version adds the name Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad ([Luke 3:36](#)). For the history up to David, Luke likely used the records of [1 Chronicles 1-3](#). For the period from David to Jesus, most experts agree that Luke probably got information directly from Mary or from people close to her. Jewish people often kept genealogical records both publicly and privately. Families of Davidic descent were especially careful to preserve their records because Old Testament prophecies said the Messiah would be born in the house of David.

Luke likely aimed to do more with his list than just show Jesus's ancestors. Since Luke did not emphasize David, he probably did not intend to list legal heirs to the Davidic throne. This does not mean the issue was unimportant to him (see [Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11](#)). Instead, Luke's Gospel focuses on portraying Christ as the Savior of Romans, Greeks, and indeed, the entire world. Although Luke traced Jesus's ancestry through Joseph's line to David, he went further back to Adam. Jesus belongs to the human race, which includes everyone.

The Connection between the Two Records

A quick look at the two genealogies of Jesus shows several differences. Matthew's genealogy has 41 generations, while Luke lists 76. Luke includes the time from Adam to Abraham; Matthew does not. The lists are almost the same from Abraham to David, but they differ from David to Jesus. Matthew traces Jesus's lineage from David through Solomon in 27 generations. Luke traces it from David through Nathan, another son, in 42 generations. The lines meet at only one point during this period: the names of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, who are likely the same men in both lists. Finally, Matthew shows Joseph as the son of Jacob ([Matthew 1:16](#)),

while Luke's account shows him as the son of Heli ([Luke 3:23](#)).

How can we explain these differences? These lists differ because of their purposes and the meanings they aim to convey.

Many people believe that Matthew traces Jesus's ancestry through Joseph, while Luke traces it through Mary. In this view, Jacob was Joseph's biological father, and Heli, likely Mary's father, became Joseph's foster father. Joseph was Heli's "son" or heir through marriage to Mary, assuming Heli had no sons (see [Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12](#)). This interpretation is possible and should not be dismissed. If Mary was a direct descendant of David, then any son of hers could be called the "seed of David."

Many scholars believe Luke's genealogy is Joseph's, not Mary's, because Luke highlights Joseph's ancestry ([Luke 1:27; 2:4](#)). The Bible does not mention Mary as a descendant of David. If Joseph was not Jesus's biological father, why does Luke emphasize Joseph's lineage twice and not mention Mary's at all?

A major challenge with viewing both genealogies as Joseph's is the mention of his two fathers. One solution is that Matthew lists the legal descendants of David, while Luke lists the actual descendants in Joseph's line. This suggests Heli was Joseph's biological father, and Jacob was his legal foster father. This is explainable if we assume Jacob's father, Matthan ([Matthew 1:15](#)), and Heli's father, Matthat ([Luke 3:24](#)), are the same person. If Jacob (the elder) died without a male heir, his nephew, Heli's son, would inherit his position.

If Matthan and Matthat are not the same person, one might suggest that Jacob, the legal heir to the throne, died without children. Joseph, son of Heli, then became the legal heir after Heli's death and was listed as Jacob's son among the legal heirs. It is possible that Heli, a relative, married Jacob's widow, making Joseph the son of both Heli and Jacob through levirate marriage (a custom where a man marries his brother's widow). In short, there are several possible explanations for this difference.

One major objection to viewing both genealogies as Joseph's is that, due to Jesus's virgin birth, Jesus cannot literally be called the seed of David. Scripture seems to insist on this connection. This objection has been addressed because:

1. Jews viewed adoptive fatherhood realistically
2. Jesus's relationship with Joseph was closer than typical adoption, as no earthly father contested Joseph's role

Jesus was seen as Joseph's son and heir, fulfilling the scriptural requirement to be the "seed of David." Therefore, whether Mary was also a descendant of David does not need to be answered to support Jesus's Davidic descent.

Humans cannot fully solve the differences between the two genealogies of Jesus or his exact relationship to them. However, we have shown that they can be reconciled. The purposes suggested here show that both ways honor Jesus's Davidic descent. He is the rightful heir to his ancestor's promised throne and was also born of the Virgin Mary.

See also Family History; Becoming Flesh; Jesus Christ, His Life and Teachings; Jesus' Birth by the Virgin Mary.

Genesis Apocryphon

The Genesis Apocryphon is the name given to one of the seven large Dead Sea Scrolls found in the first Qumran cave in 1947. The Syrian archbishop of Jerusalem obtained this scroll along with three others. However, they could not unroll it or photograph it because it was in poor condition. Unlike other scrolls, it had not been stored in a jar of clay. Some small pieces broke off, and certain words on them suggested it might be an apocryphal Aramaic work related to the patriarch Enoch. Other fragments mentioned Lamech, but researchers waited to identify the scroll until they could learn more.

Later, experts were able to unroll it. The scroll was damaged and incomplete. The beginning and end were missing. The inner part was best preserved, but there was damage to the writing because of the ink it had been written with. The scroll discusses Enoch, Lamech, and other people from the book of Genesis. It is an Aramaic version of the parts of Genesis that tell the story of the patriarchs. However, this version includes legends and other content in a memoir style that are not found in the Hebrew Bible. This style of writing was popular among devout Jews at the start of the Christian era. As a result, scholars have dated the original to the

first century BC. The copy found at Qumran was probably made between 50 BC and AD 70.

The scroll's style makes it hard to classify. Some scholars call it a *targum* (a paraphrase or expanded commentary on Scripture) because it freely adds material not found in the Hebrew Bible. Others call it a *midrash* (a teaching story or sermon-like interpretation). It contains features of both. It can best be described as a creative retelling of parts of Genesis that adds details such as a description of Sarah's beauty, Abraham's dreams, and stories about plagues and travels.

The Aramaic Apocryphon is older than the version used in Palestine during the time of Christ. It contains some Hebrew influences but is mostly written in good Aramaic, mostly similar to biblical Aramaic. The scroll's language is more recent than old Aramaic (from the tenth to eighth centuries BC) or official Aramaic (from the Assyrian and Persian periods), as certain grammar forms indicate. Most scholars consider this language middle Aramaic and date it between the Aramaic of Daniel and later western Aramaic.

Most scholars date Daniel to the second century BC, but this needs to be modified. On the one hand, the fact that practically all the books of the Hebrew Old Testament were discovered at Qumran shows they were written and accepted at an earlier date. Moreover, the Aramaic of Daniel is earlier than that of the Apocryphon and fits the period when official Aramaic was the main form of that language. In other words, the Genesis Apocryphon does not provide valid reasons to date the Aramaic of Daniel or Ezra later than the sixth to fifth centuries BC.

See also Apocrypha; Book of Genesis.

Genesis, Book of

First book of the Bible.

Preview

- Name
- Author
- Date
- Purpose
- Structure
- Content

Name

The name Genesis comes into English as a transliteration of the Greek word meaning “origin” or “beginning.” This name was given to the book in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, known as the Septuagint. Genesis reflects both the content of the book and the Hebrew name for it, which is taken from its first word, *bereshith*, “in the beginning.”

Author

The authorship of Genesis is closely related to the authorship of the entire Pentateuch (lit. “five-volumed,” the first five books of the Bible, which in Hebrew are called the Torah). It is clear that the Bible regards the human author of these books as Moses. On several occasions the Lord commanded Moses to write down various things: “in a book” ([Ex 17:14](#)) “write these words” ([34:27](#)). The Pentateuch reports that “Moses wrote all the words of the Lord” ([24:4](#)); he wrote the itinerary of the exodus wanderings ([Nm 33:2](#)); “Moses wrote this law” ([Dt 31:9](#)). (Here it is not certain that all five books are meant, but it must refer to at least the greater part of Deuteronomy.) In [Exodus 24:7](#) it is said that Moses read the Book of the Covenant, which he must have just completed.

The rest of the OT bears witness to the writing of the Pentateuch by Moses. David referred to “the law of Moses” ([1 Kgs 2:3](#)). In the time of Josiah, there was found in the temple the “Book of the Law of the Lord . . . given through Moses” ([2 Chr 34:14](#), nlt). Day by day Ezra read from “the Book of the Law of God” ([Neh 8:18](#), nlt).

In the NT, Jesus refers to “the book of Moses” ([Mk 12:26](#); [Lk 20:37](#)) and otherwise mentions the commands or statements of Moses ([Mt 8:4](#); [19:8](#); [Mk 7:10](#); cf. [Lk 16:31](#); [24:44](#)). The Jews also quoted from the Torah as coming from Moses, and Jesus did not contradict them.

Of Genesis in particular, it may be said that Moses had the opportunity and ability to write the book. He could have written it during his years in Egypt or while exiled with the Kenites. As the recognized leader of the Israelites, he would have had access to, or perhaps even custody of, the records that Jacob brought from Canaan. He was “instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” ([Acts 7:22](#)) and probably could have written in several languages and in several scripts (hieroglyphic, cuneiform, Old Hebrew). Although Moses was admirably fitted for the task of writing, one must remember that he was

not putting together a human composition but was writing under the inspiration of God ([2 Pt 1:21](#)). We may with confidence conclude that Moses was the human author of Genesis.

The liberal view of the authorship of Genesis is that the book is an editorial composite—a view first put forward by a French physician, Jean Astruc, who suggested that the different names for God indicated different documents or sources for the writing of the book. The German higher critics expanded the view of the use of documents in the writing of Genesis and developed it into the Graf-Wellhausen-Kuenen, or Documentary, Hypothesis, which may also be called the JEDP theory of the authorship of the book. This view holds that there were four basic documents: (1) J, which uses the name YHWH (Jehovah or Yahweh) for God, dates from about the ninth century BC and comes from Judah; (2) E uses the name Elohim, dates from the eighth century, and comes from the northern kingdom; (3) D is Deuteronomy and is supposed to come from the time of Josiah, about 621 BC; and (4) P is the priestly element, which deals with matters of the priesthood and ritual, dating to the fifth century BC or later. Some may date portions of Genesis as late as the Hellenistic period. According to this theory, the various documents were blended together by editors, so that there was a JE, JED, and so on.

The science of archaeology discredited many of the extreme postulations of these critics, and the work of W. F. Albright and his followers did much to restore confidence in the historicity of Genesis. Within the last several decades, the patriarchal narratives and the account of Joseph have again come under strong attack, but these views are extreme, and much of the evidence adduced by Albright and earlier scholars like R. D. Wilson, W. H. Green, and others still has validity.

Date

The date of the book is also a matter of debate. Even among those who accept Mosaic authorship there is debate as to when Moses lived. Based on the biblical data, Moses should have lived in the 15th century BC (cf. [Jgs 11:26](#); [1 Kgs 6:1](#)), but many scholars incline toward a 13th-century date. As outlined above, the liberal view of the date of Genesis would be from the ninth to the fifth centuries BC, with the final editing coming around the fifth century or perhaps even later.

Purpose

Genesis sketches the origin of many things: the universe, the earth, plants, animals, and mankind. It gives the beginnings of human institutions, professions, and crafts. It describes the origin of sin and death, and illustrates the insidious working of Satan in human life. Above all, Genesis relates the beginning of the history of redemption with the announcement of a Redeemer who was to come ([Gn 3:15](#)). It names the early progenitors in the lineage of the Messiah and the beginning of the Hebrew people through whom the Bible and the Savior came. Genesis also gives a selective history of people and events as viewed from the perspective of the purposes of God.

Structure

The book is divided into 11 parts of uneven length, each set off by the expression “these are the generations [descendants, history] of” ([2:4](#); [5:1](#); [6:9](#); [10:1](#); [11:10, 27](#); [25:12, 19](#); [36:1](#); [37:2](#)). Only three times does the formula coincide with the first verse of a chapter. Usually called a heading or superscription, the expression serves as a kind of link between what precedes and what follows.

Content

The Creation ([1:1-2:25](#))

These two chapters have been a scientific-theological battleground for many years, as researchers and students have tried to probe the origins of the universe and of life. Much of the evidence is not subject to scientific scrutiny, for science by definition requires that the evidence must be reproducible by experiment.

The statement of [Genesis 1:1](#) remains the grandest, most precise, and most accurate statement of origins: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” He did this *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”) by his word ([Heb 11:3](#)); he spoke the word of command and it was done ([Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20](#); [Ps 33:6, 9](#)).

The date of the beginning is unknown. Uniformitarian cosmogonists (students of the origins of the universe who believe that natural events have always followed a uniform pattern; cf. [2 Pt 3:3-7](#)) have speculated that the beginning of the universe was billions of years ago. But some creationists posit a world thousands of years old.

To accommodate geological ages and the existence of extinct animals, some interpreters have

proposed a gap between [Genesis 1:1](#) and [1:2](#), with [Genesis 1:2-2:3](#) representing a second or new creation. But this is conjecture. So is the idea that each day represents a geological age.

As the text stands, there is a correlation between the first three days and the second three days. Day one saw the creation of light; day four, the light bearers. Day two was the time of the creation of the firmament (better, “expanse”), which divided the waters; day five, birds and swarming water creatures. On day three, God made the dry land and plants; on day six he created the land animals and man. He made man in the image of God ([Gn 1:26](#)), “a little less than God” ([Ps 8:5](#)), and gave him dominion over the earth. He made everything “according to their kinds,” so that each kind is distinct and unique. The perfection of his work is affirmed in that “God saw that it was good” ([Gn 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21](#); “very good,” v [31](#)). The seventh day was a time of cessation from the activity of creating and served as a type for mankind’s day of rest ([2:1-3](#)).

Critical scholarship eyes [2:4-25](#) as a doublet in conflict with [Genesis 1:1-2:3](#). To conservative scholars, the second chapter is the same account from a different perspective. Chapter [1](#) gives the Creation from the standpoint of sequence; chapter [2](#) shows it in view of the centrality of mankind in God’s creative work.

Chapter [2](#) gives details of the creation of man of “dust from the ground” (v [7](#)) and woman from a rib of the man (vv [21-22](#)). She was created to be “a companion who will help him” (vv [18-20](#)). They were created as mature adults, with the gift of speech and with great intelligence. Adam had imagination and vocabulary sufficient for naming all of the animal species (v [19](#)).

The location of the Garden of Eden is given (vv [10-14](#)). Two of the four rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, can be identified with certainty. So man lived in this beautiful garden in the bliss of innocence.

The History of Humankind from Eden to Babel ([3:1-11:26](#))

The Fall

The loss of Eden and the break in fellowship with God is the saddest chapter in human history. The serpent, the devil, approached Eve with the same philosophy he always uses: doubt of God’s word ([Gn 3:1](#)), denial of death (v [4](#)), and the suggestion of equality with God (v [5](#)). He gained access to her

will by deceiving her with the promise that the fruit would make her as wise as God is ([Gn 3:5](#); cf. [1 Jn 2:16](#)). Eve was deceived, but when she offered the fruit to Adam, he took it willingly, knowing what he was doing ([Gn 3:6](#); cf. [1 Tm 2:14](#)). Later, he tried to blame God for giving him the wife who gave him the fruit ([Gn 3:12](#)). Fellowship with God was broken (v 8), yet God came seeking Adam and found him.

With sin came judgment, and the Lord pronounced righteous judgment on the serpent, the woman, and the man. The earth was also “subjected to frustration” and now groans as it awaits renewal ([Rom 8:21–22](#)). God gave hope to man and a promise of a Redeemer ([Gn 3:15](#)), who was to bruise the serpent’s head. Adam and Eve were forced out of the Garden, and it was made inaccessible to them.

The impatience of humankind is shown in Eve’s expectation that her son Cain was the promised Deliverer. Instead, he developed a wrong-hearted attitude toward God and became so jealous of his younger brother that he murdered him. Apprehended by God and confronted with his crime, Cain showed only self-pity and went east from Eden, where he built a city ([4:1–16](#)). Chapter 4 closes with another contrast: the brazen Lamech, who called for vengeance, while others began to call upon the name of the Lord.

The Generations of Adam

This genealogical table ([5:1–32](#)) brings humankind to the time of Noah and the Flood. The longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs seems very striking to us, but one must remember that the earth had not yet been subjected to pollution and that the effects of sin on the human race were still nominal. The refrain “and he died” reminds us of man’s mortality. For Enoch, however, there was something better: “He enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout his life. Then, suddenly, he disappeared because God took him” ([5:24](#), nlt).

The Flood

With increased population came an eruption of sin ([6:1–5](#)). As men multiplied, so did their corruption. The universal condemnation of verse 5 shows a world ripe for judgment. Noah, however, “found favor with the Lord,” for he was a righteous and blameless man who walked with God ([6:8–9](#)).

The Lord planned to annihilate the human race, but he determined to save Noah and his family. Intending to flood the earth, God instructed Noah to build an ark. Noah was directed to take animals

aboard the ark, two by two, male and female, for the preservation of each species. When all was in readiness, the Flood came: “the underground waters burst forth on the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky” ([7:11](#), nlt). It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. The highest mountains were covered, and life outside the ark perished. “But God remembered Noah” and sent a wind to evaporate the waters ([8:1](#)). Eventually the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (v 4). Noah made a sacrifice to the Lord, and the Lord determined that he would never again bring such destruction upon the earth.

The Flood is another of God’s acts that has been much debated. Many have argued for a local flood, which affected only part of Mesopotamia. Archaeologists have pointed to various flood strata in the excavation of Mesopotamian city-mounds as evidence for the account of the flood and have cited the various flood stories from that area as the source of the Genesis record. The epic of Gilgamesh gives an interesting tale of this hero, who went on a mission to visit Utnapishtim, the cuneiform Noah, in quest of eternal life. The flood story told by Utnapishtim has many parallels to Genesis, but there are greater contrasts, which demonstrate that the Bible preserves the true account.

Both the Genesis account and the references to it in the NT (cf. [2 Pt 3:6](#)) favor the view that the deluge was not a minor episode in the Tigris-Euphrates area but was an unprecedented worldwide catastrophe. Christian geologists affirm that the Flood had far-reaching effects on the earth itself. Flood stories are almost universally known, lending support to the conclusion that the Flood covered the whole earth. Following the Flood, God blessed Noah and his sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth. God made a covenant with Noah, promising that he would never again send a worldwide flood. As a sign of this, he established the rainbow.

Noah was the first tiller of the soil, and he planted a vineyard ([9:20](#)). Noah became drunk from wine he made and lay uncovered in his tent. Ham saw him and reported this to his brothers, who discreetly covered him. Ham and his son Canaan were cursed; Shem and Japheth were blessed.

The History of the Nations

“This is the history of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the Flood” ([10:1](#), nlt). This chapter lists the descendants of Noah’s three sons,

in the order of Japheth (vv [2-5](#)), Ham (vv [6-20](#)), and Shem (vv [21-31](#)). Many of the names of their descendants are preserved in tribes and nations of the world.

The Tower of Babel

The building of the Tower of Babel ("Gate of God") illustrates man's perversity and his tendency to want independence from God. The desire of man to displace God follows the fateful example of Lucifer and is a basic tenet of many cults. God thwarted the designs of the builders of Babel by confusing their languages, so that the project came to a halt ([11:1-9](#)). The site of this tower is not known with certainty. Some associate it with Birs Nimrud, not far from the ruins of the city of Babylon. [Genesis 11:10-25](#) picks up the line of Shem and carries it down to Terah, the father of Abram.

The History of Abraham ([11:27-25:10](#)) and Isaac ([21:1-28:5](#))

Abram came from Ur of the Chaldees, a prosperous city. The city had an imposing ziggurat (temple-tower), with many temples, storehouses, and residences. Abram and Sarai, his half sister and wife, went with his father to Haran in Syria, which like Ur was a center of the worship of the moon god, Sin (or Annar).

Abram's Call

The call of God came to Abram directing him to leave his relatives and move to a land that the Lord would show him ([12:1](#); cf. [Acts 7:2-3](#)). Abram obeyed. At the age of 75, he, Sarai, and his nephew Lot left Haran and went to Shechem, where the Lord appeared to him and promised that land to his descendants.

Famine drove Abram down to Egypt ([Gn 12:10-20](#)). Because of Sarai's beauty, he feared that someone might kill him to get her, so he passed her off as his sister. She was taken into the pharaoh's harem. When the Lord plagued Pharaoh because of this, Abram's lie was discovered and Sarai was returned to him.

Abram and Lot

Abram and Lot returned to Canaan, where strife broke out between Abram's herdsmen and those of Lot. Abram suggested that they should separate, and he gave Lot the choice of territory. Lot chose the well-watered Jordan Valley and the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah (ch [13](#)).

The Invasion of the Four Kings from the East

The four kings who invaded along the King's Highway in Transjordan cannot be identified with certainty. Those kings were successful in their attack against the five cities of the plain, and they moved off with much booty and many captives, including Lot. Abram took 318 retainers, born in his household, and set off after them. By surprise attack, Abram recovered both Lot and the loot. On his return he was met by Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, to whom Abram paid tithes (ch [14](#)).

The Covenant

The Lord promised Abram a son as heir, and in an impressive nighttime ceremony, God made a covenant with Abram and promised him the land from the River of Egypt (Wadi el Arish) to the Euphrates (ch [15](#)). Because of her own barrenness, Sarai gave her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to Abram. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arab peoples. When trouble arose between the women, Sarai sent Hagar away, which was her right according to Near Eastern customs (as illustrated by the Nuzi tablets). God showed mercy to Hagar and promised that she would have a great posterity (ch [16](#)).

God repeated his promise to Abram concerning his descendants and changed the names of Abram ("exalted father") and Sarai to Abraham ("father of many") and Sarah ("princess"). A covenant sign of circumcision was given to Abraham (ch [17](#)). This operation had already been practiced among the Egyptians for several centuries.

The Destruction of the Cities of the Plain

The Lord and two angels appeared to Abraham and announced the birth of the promised heir within a year, as well as proclaimed the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, concerning which Abraham bargained with God ([18:22-33](#)). Lot and his immediate family were rescued from Sodom, and the cities were destroyed by God with brimstone and fire ([19:24-25](#)). Lot's two daughters, wishing to preserve their family line, got their father drunk and had sexual relations with him. Moab and Ammon, enemies of Israel in later times, were the result.

In [Genesis 20:1-18](#), Abraham again represented Sarah as his sister and got into trouble with Abimelech, king of Gerar.

Isaac

When Isaac was born ([21:1-3](#)), trouble again broke out between Sarah and Hagar. Hagar was driven

out a second time, and once more was befriended by the Lord.

A disagreement arose between Abraham and Abimelech concerning a well, but they made a covenant of peace at Beersheba ([21:25-34](#)).

God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac on Mt Moriah, which probably is the same site David later bought from Araunah the Jebusite ([2 Sm 24:16-25](#)), the place where the temple was to stand. As Abraham was about to use the knife, God called to him and showed him a ram caught in a thicket. Isaac was freed and the animal was sacrificed in his stead.

Sarah died at Hebron, and Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite ([ch 23](#)), in a transaction typical of Near Eastern business dealings. To find a wife for Isaac, Abraham sent his servant Eliezer back to the area of Haran, and the Lord directed Eliezer to Rebekah ([ch 24](#)).

Chapter [25](#) records the marriage of Abraham to Keturah, who bore him a number of children. Abraham died at the age of 175 years and was buried in the cave of Machpelah by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

The History of Jacob and Esau ([25:19-37:1](#))

Rebekah gave birth to twin sons, Esau and Jacob. When the boys were grown, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a meal of red pottage ([25:27-34](#)).

When famine came to the land, Isaac went to Gerar, as his father had done ([ch 20](#)), and repeated his father's lie by calling his wife his sister ([26:1-11](#)). Trouble arose with the Philistines over wells, but Isaac was a peaceable man and preferred digging new wells rather than fighting over old ones ([vv 17-33](#)).

In Isaac's old age, when his sight had failed, Rebekah connived with Jacob to trick Isaac into giving to Jacob the blessing of the firstborn, which was rightfully Esau's. This oral blessing had legal validity and was irrevocable, according to the ancient Nuzi tablets. Fearing for Jacob's life at the hands of Esau, Rebekah arranged to send Jacob to Haran to find a wife from among her own people. At Bethel, God appeared to Jacob in a dream of a ladder leading up to heaven; God renewed with Jacob the promise made to Abraham and Isaac ([28:10-22](#)).

Jacob reached Haran, found his uncle Laban, and was employed by him ([ch 29](#)). His wages for seven years of labor were to be Laban's younger daughter, Rachel, as his wife. But Laban substituted Leah, so that Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel. The Lord prospered Jacob, but he continually had difficulties with Laban. The Lord directed Jacob back to Canaan ([31:3](#)), so he left secretly with his wives, children, and property. Laban pursued them because his household gods were missing (possession of these "gods" made the holder heir to the owner's estate, according to Nuzi custom). Rachel had taken them but successfully concealed them from her father, and Laban went back to Haran.

Fearing a meeting with Esau as they passed through Edom, Jacob sent gifts to his brother and divided his own party into two camps for security. On this return journey, Jacob had an unexpected wrestling bout with the Angel of the Lord, and he was left with a limp and a new name, Israel ([ch 32](#)).

The meeting with Esau was friendly, and Jacob went on to Shechem ([ch 33](#)), where his sons killed the male Shechemites because of the rape of their sister Dinah ([ch 34](#)). God told Jacob to go to Bethel and build an altar to the Lord. All idols of foreign gods were buried ([35:1-4](#)). At Bethel, God reaffirmed his promise of a posterity and the land ([vv 9-15](#)). Rachel died on the way to Bethlehem, while giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's 12th and last son. Isaac died at Hebron at age 180 and was buried in the cave of Machpelah by Esau and Jacob.

[Genesis 36](#) records "the generations of Esau" ([v 1](#)). Here Esau is also named Edom ("Red"; cf. [25:30](#)).

The History of Joseph ([37:2-50:26](#))

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and thus incurred the jealousy of his brothers. This was heightened by Joseph's dreams of lordship over them. Their resentment of Joseph came to a climax when Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat. The brothers determined to kill Joseph, but they compromised by selling him to a caravan of merchants, who took him to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, an Egyptian captain of the guard ([37:36](#); [39:1](#)).

Chapter [38](#) relates a historic case of levirate marriage. Judah failed to give his widowed daughter-in-law to his third son. She deceived him into fathering twin sons and forced him to acknowledge his faults. The elder son, Perez, is named in Luke's genealogy of Jesus ([Lk 3:33](#)).

The Lord blessed Joseph, who soon was put in charge of Potiphar's household ([Gn 39](#)). The young man attracted the attention of Potiphar's wife, who, after many attempts to seduce him, at last accused him of attempted rape. Sentenced on this charge, Joseph met with favor in prison, where he had opportunity to interpret dreams for two of the pharaoh's servants (ch [40](#)). When the king had dreams that his magicians and wise men could not interpret, Joseph was summoned from jail. Joseph told Pharaoh that the dreams meant seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. Joseph was then exalted to the office of vizier, or prime minister, second only to the king, and put in charge of the administration of the land ([41:37-44](#)).

When the famine came to Palestine, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to purchase grain. Joseph recognized his brothers but did not reveal his identity to them. Joseph put them to the test by accusing them of being spies ([42:9](#)), by keeping one of the brothers (Simeon) hostage (v [19](#)), and by demanding that if they came to Egypt again, they must bring their youngest brother with them ([42:20](#); [43:3](#)). The famine became so severe in Canaan ([43:1](#)) that Jacob at last allowed Benjamin to go with his brothers to Egypt. The brothers were again set up by Joseph, who had his silver cup put into Benjamin's grain sack and then had him apprehended as a thief (ch [44](#)).

At this point Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers ([45:4-15](#)) and there was much rejoicing. Joseph pointed out that it was God who had sent him to Egypt (vv [7-8](#)), in order to preserve the lives of all the family. Jacob was then sent for ([46:1](#)), and Joseph met him in the land of Goshen ([46:28-29](#)). The Israelites were assigned land in the region of Goshen, where they prospered ([47:27](#)).

In Jacob's final illness, Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to his father for his blessing. Jacob gave the primary blessing to the second-born, Ephraim ([48:13-20](#)). Jacob blessed each of his own sons and then died at the age of at least 130 years. Joseph arranged for Jacob's body to be prepared for burial according to Egyptian custom ([50:2-3](#)). After the burial of their father in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron, Joseph's brothers worried about vengeance, but Joseph declared, "As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people" (v [20](#), nlt). Joseph died at age 110 with the prophetic request that when the Israelites

went up from Egypt they would take his bones with them ([50:25](#); cf. [Ex 13:19](#); [Jos 24:32](#)).

See also Abraham; Adam (Person); Covenant; Creation; Eve; Fall of Man; Flood, The; Isaac; Jacob #1; Joseph #1; Nations; Noah #1; Patriarchs, Period of the.

Geneva Bible

Translation of the Bible into English in 1560 in the city of Geneva, Switzerland. *See* Bible, Versions of the (English).

Gennaëus, Genneus

Apollonius's father ([2 Macc 12:2](#)). Since Gennaëus means "noble" or "highborn," it may be an epithet rather than a name.

Gennesaret

An area on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Magdala, where many of Jesus's healing miracles happened ([Matthew 14:34](#); [Mark 6:53](#)).

The area was called the plain of Gennesaret. It goes along for about 6.5 kilometers (four miles) with an average width from sea to mountains of about 1.6 kilometers (one mile). The land is mostly flat rising slowly as it gets close to the mountains.

The soil is very good for growing plants because it has many streams and rivers flowing through it. Temperatures from hot to mild allow for a long growing season and many crops. The fruits of Gennesaret were so good that the religious leaders did not allow them in Jerusalem during feasts. They feared many would attend only to eat them. Religious leaders called this area the Garden of God.

During Jesus's lifetime, the area was thought to be the best garden in Palestine. Many types of trees grow here, including walnut, palm, olive, and fig trees. Even though these trees usually need different conditions to grow well, they all grew successfully in this area. Large amounts of grapes, walnuts, rice, wheat, vegetables, and melons, as well as wild trees and flowers, were common. Later, many years of not taking care of the land caused the plain to be mostly covered with thorny

plants. In recent years, some areas have been cleared and made to grow plants again.

In [Luke 5:1](#), the Sea of Galilee is referred to as the Lake of Gennesaret. This name likely came from the nearby plain. Gennesaret (more correctly called Gennesar) was also the later name of the town Chinneroth ([Joshua 11:2](#)). This was an old city that had fallen apart by Jesus's day.

Gennesaret, Lake of

Another name for the Sea of Galilee in [Luke 5:1](#).

See Sea of Galilee.

Gentiles

The nations or peoples who are not Jewish. In Hebrew, these people are called *goyim* (meaning "nations"). In Greek, they are called *ethnoi* (meaning "peoples"). The Old Testament divides all people into two groups: the Jewish people (whom God chose as his special people) and all other nations.

The New Testament teaches that God offers salvation to both Jew and gentile. Two important apostles, Peter and Paul, were the first to share the good news about Jesus with non-Jewish people. Paul worked throughout his ministry to bring Jewish and non-Jewish believers together as one group in the church.

See Nations; Paul, The Apostle.

Gentiles, Court of the

The Court of the Gentiles was the largest outer area of King Herod's temple in Jerusalem. This courtyard was rectangular but not even on all sides, being wider at its northern end than its southern end. Both Jewish people and non-Jewish people (gentiles) could enter this area.

In this courtyard, merchants sold animals for temple sacrifices, and money changers helped visitors exchange their coins. There was a dividing wall with signs that warned gentiles not to enter the temple's inner areas. This is where Jesus drove out the merchants and money changers who were misusing the temple ([Matthew 21:12-13](#); [Mark 11:15-18](#); [John 2:14-16](#)).

See also Temple.

Gentleness

The Old Testament describes gentleness as an attitude of humility or bending low ([2 Samuel 22:36](#), King James Version; compare [Psalm 18:35](#), King James Version). "Gentle" or "gently" can mean courteous and unpretentious ([Proverbs 15:4](#)), quiet and tender ([Deuteronomy 32:2](#); [Isaiah 8:6](#)), or soft and lenient ([2 Samuel 18:5](#); [Job 15:11](#)).

In the New Testament, several words are translated "gentleness," "gentle," or "gently." Different meanings include

1. mildness, meekness, forbearance ([Matthew 11:29](#); [1 Corinthians 4:21](#); [2 Corinthians 10:1](#); [Galatians 5:23](#); [1 Timothy 6:11](#); [1 Peter 3:4, 15](#)), or a courteous and unassuming attitude ([2 Timothy 2:25](#));
2. kindness expressed toward others ([1 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [2 Timothy 2:24](#), King James Version); and
3. fitting, fair, or appropriate in various situations ([1 Timothy 3:3](#); [Titus 3:2](#); [1 Peter 2:18](#)).

Church leaders and other believers are instructed to deal gently with those who make mistakes ([Galatians 6:1](#)), oppose the faith ([2 Timothy 2:25](#)), or are ignorant and misguided ([Hebrews 5:2](#)).

Genubath

Son of Hadad, the Edomite prince who, as a young lad, was taken to Egypt to escape Joab's slaughter. There Hadad married a sister of Queen Tahpenes. She bore Genubath, who was raised by the queen as a son of Pharaoh ([1 Kgs 11:20](#)).

Gera

1. One of the sons of Benjamin ([Genesis 46:21](#)). But the name does not appear in a similar list in [Numbers 26:38-41](#).
2. The father of the judge Ehud ([Judges 3:15](#)).

3. The father of Shimei. Shimei cursed and threw stones at King David during the rebellion of Absalom. Later, he begged David to pardon him ([2 Samuel 16:5](#); [19:16–18](#); [1 Kings 2:8](#)).
4. A son of Bela from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:3, 5](#)). In verse [7](#), another name for Gera is "Heglam."

Gerah

Measure of weight defined as one-twentieth of a shekel, the latter being the basic weight among Semitic peoples. *See* Weights and Measures.

Gerar

City located in the western Negev. It was used as a geographical landmark defining the western boundary of the Canaanite territory from Sidon to Gaza ([Gn 10:19](#)). Abraham resided temporarily in this city, at which time he deceived Abimelech the king by giving him the impression that Sarah was his sister ([20:1–2](#)). Later, Isaac settled in this city and also disguised his marriage to Rebekah for fear of reprisals from the men of the city. Isaac eventually left the town, moving to the nearby valley of Gerar on account of his conflicts with the Philistines. Here the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's servants over a newly dug well, and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, made a covenant with Isaac ([26:1–26](#)). It is doubtful that King Abimelech of Gerar ([20:2](#)) was the same person as Abimelech, king of the Philistines ([26:8](#)). Abimelech was probably a surname or an official title.

During the patriarchal period, Gerar appeared as a dominant Canaanite city in the Negev; however, in Joshua's recounting of the Conquest, this town was not named among the Philistine cities yet to be conquered ([Jos 13:2–3](#)) or in the list of cities already defeated ([15:21–22](#)). Later, in the period of the kings, Gerar was mentioned as the southernmost city to which the Ethiopian army fled before it was completely destroyed by King Asa of Judah (910–869 BC) and his army ([2 Chr 14:13–14](#)). Perhaps the fertile valley of Gedor ([1 Chr 4:39](#); cf. [Gn 26:17](#)), formerly inhabited by the sons of

Ham (cf. [Gn 10:19](#)), was identical with the valley of Gerar. Gedor was possibly a later scribal error where the copyist confused the Hebrew letter *r* for a *d*.

The site of Gerar is identifiable with Tell Abu Hureireh along the northwestern bank of the Wadi esh-Sheri'ah, 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) northwest of Beersheba and 12 miles (19.3 kilometers) southeast of Gaza.

Gerasa, Gerasenes

A city and area in the Decapolis. Gerasa was a well-known Roman city located in the hills of the Transjordan. The Transjordan is the region east of the Jordan River. It is about 56 kilometers (35 miles) southeast of the Sea of Galilee and 31 kilometers (19 miles) east of the Jordan River.

It was first built as a Greek city by Alexander the Great around 333 BC. In 85 BC, the Jewish king Alexander Janneus captured the city. The Jews ruled Gerasa until Pompey captured the city in 63 BC. Under Roman control, it was added to the province of Syria and later included in the Decapolis. Today the site of Gerasa is the modern city of Jerash.

Although the city is not named in the New Testament, [Mark 5:1](#) and [Luke 8:26–37](#) mention the "region of the Gerasenes." It is where Jesus healed the demon-possessed man and where the pigs drowned in the Sea of Galilee. The parallel account in [Matthew 8:28](#) reads the "region of the Gadarenes."

The reading of "Gerasenes" in Mark and Luke is found in the better manuscripts of the New Testament over the changes later scribes added of "Gadarenes" and "Gergesenes." Gadara was an important city of the Decapolis whose political rule reached the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Later scribes may have added it to match Mark's and Luke's accounts with Matthew's Gospel.

Gergesa was a city along the eastern coastline of the Sea of Galilee. The name was probably added in the texts of Mark and Luke to make a better sense of Jesus's miracle. Nonetheless, "the district of the Gerasenes" has the best textual support and should be understood as the intended site of Mark and Luke for Jesus's miracle.

People living in the Roman Empire outside of Palestine would not have known about the small

district of Gadara. But they would have known about Gerasa, which was a wealthy Roman city. This helped them understand where Jesus's miracle at the Sea of Galilee took place.

See also Decapolis; Gadara, Gadarenes; Gergashites.

Gergesa, Gergesenes

A city on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Gergesa is near Gadara, which is probably where Jesus healed a demon-possessed man and cast the demons into a nearby herd of pigs. Though the account of this miracle in [Matthew 8:28](#) refers to “the region of the Gadarenes,” it is most likely that Matthew used the reference to Gergesa to refer to the region rather than the specific location.

See Gadara, Gadarenes; Gerasa, Gerasenes.

Gerizim, Mount

Mountain (modern Jebel et-Tor) from which the blessings were to be pronounced, just as the cursings were to come from Mt Ebal ([Dt 11:29](#)). The two mountains designated by God were opposite each other, and the setting was a memorable one with six tribes positioned on Mt Gerizim and six on Mt Ebal, the Levites standing in the valley between—reciting the blessings and the cursings ([Dt 27:11–28:68](#); [Jos 8:33–35](#)). The mountain is near Shechem, about 10 miles (16.1 kilometers) southeast of the city of Samaria, and it is referred to by the woman of Samaria in [John 4:20–23](#) as the mountain where “our fathers worshiped.” Abraham, indeed, had built an altar in this area ([Gn 12:6–7](#); [33:18–20](#)), and it had been the revered site for Samaritan worship for centuries. Jesus responds to the woman by pointing out that the physical locality of worship (whether Gerizim or Jerusalem) is not important—the spiritual reality is. One must worship in spirit and in truth.

It was in this area that the bones of Joseph were buried ([Jos 24:32](#)) and that Joshua called upon the people to renew their allegiance to the God of their fathers (vv [25–27](#)). Josephus records in his *Antiquities* (11.8.2–4) Sanballat's promise to Manasseh to preserve for him the honor of the priesthood and also to build a temple on Mt Gerizim like that at Jerusalem. It was apparently destroyed later by the Maccabean forces under Hyrcanus (*Antiquities* 13.9.1). The Samaritans still

worship at Nablus, which lies at the foot of Mt Gerizim, but are a diminishing community precariously held together.

Geron

Athenian senator who compelled the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and their God during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes ([2 Macc 6:1](#), rsv mg).

Gershon

1. Moses's son by Zipporah, born in Midian when Moses was forced to flee from Egypt ([Exodus 2:22](#); [18:3](#); [1 Chronicles 23:15–16](#)).
2. Jonathan's father. He and his sons served as priests for the tribe of Dan. The people of Dan made a carved statue to worship as a god, breaking God's command against idols. They chose Jonathan, Gershon's son, to be their priest and lead their worship ([Judges 18:30](#)).
3. An alternate spelling of Gershon, Levi's oldest son ([1 Chronicles 6:1, 16–17, 20, 43; 23:6–7](#)).
See Gershon, Gershonites.
4. An ancestor of Shebuel, the chief officer over the temple treasury during David's reign ([1 Chronicles 26:24](#)).
5. Phinehas's son who returned with Ezra after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 8:2](#)).

Gershon, Gershonites

Levi's oldest son (also spelled Gershom) who went into Egypt with Israel ([Genesis 46:11](#); [Numbers 3:17](#); [1 Chronicles 6:1](#)). He became the ancestor of a group of Levites called the Gershonites who left Egypt with Moses ([Exodus 6:16–17](#); [Numbers 3:18, 21](#)).

When the Levitical cities were given out, the Gershonites were listed as one of the largest

Levitical groups in Israel ([Joshua 21:1-7](#)). Some Bible passages show that they were sometimes the main working group among the Levites ([Genesis 46:11](#); [Exodus 6:16](#); [Numbers 3:17](#); [26:57](#); [1 Chronicles 6:1, 16](#); [23:6](#)).

According to the book of Numbers, the Gershonites camped behind the tabernacle on the west side during the wilderness journey ([Numbers 3:23](#)). Early in the second year after leaving Egypt, there were about 7,500 Gershonite males ([Numbers 3:22](#)). Only men between the ages of 30 and 50 could serve in the tabernacle. At the time of that early counting, there were 2,630 such men ([Numbers 4:39-40](#)). They were responsible for taking care of and moving the outside parts of the tabernacle ([Numbers 3:25-26](#); [4:24, 27-28](#)). They were given two wagons and four oxen for this work, and Aaron and his sons supervised them ([Numbers 4:27](#)).

After the Israelites first settled in Canaan, the Gershonites received 13 cities in the northern part of the land. These cities were located in the tribal areas of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh ([Joshua 21:6](#)).

During the time of King David, the Gershonites were among the Levites appointed to serve in the temple ([1 Chronicles 23:6-11](#)). The Gershonite families of Ladan and Jehieli were in charge of the treasury of God's house ([1 Chronicles 26:20-22](#)). At David's request, Asaph and his family, who were Gershonites, helped direct the music in the temple ([1 Chronicles 25:1-2](#)). During King Hezekiah's reign, the Gershonites were among the Levites who cleaned the temple ([2 Chronicles 29:1-6, 12](#)). After the exile in Babylon, the descendants of Asaph played music to celebrate the laying of the temple foundation and the dedication of the city walls ([Ezra 3:10](#); [Nehemiah 12:31-36](#)).

See also Levi, Tribe of; Priests and Levites.

Geruth-kimham

A piece of land near Bethlehem. It means "the lodging place of Kimham." Geruth-kimham was possibly given to Kimham because of the service that his father, Barzillai the Gileadite, had provided to King David ([2 Samuel 19:31-40](#); [1 Kings 2:7](#)).

After Jerusalem fell in 586 BC, Geruth-kimham became the camp where Johanan son of Kareah and his men stayed. This is where they prepared to escape to Egypt ([Jeremiah 41:17](#)).

See Kimham.

Geshan

Jahdai's son and a descendant of Judah through Caleb's line ([1 Chr 2:47](#)).

Geshem

An Arab opponent of Nehemiah who mocked those working to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 2:19](#); [6:1-6](#)). It is probable he lived in the north Arabian Desert. A Dedanite Arabian inscription has identified him as "Gashmu," son of Shahr. Like Sanballat and Tobiah, the rebuilding of Jerusalem threatened his economic interests.

Geshur, Geshurites

1. Geshur was a district east of the Jordan River. The people who lived there were called Geshurites. This land was part of the area given to the half-tribe of Manasseh ([Joshua 13:11](#)). Most Bible geographers place it near Bashan. This was on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. When they conquered the land, the Israelites defeated Og, the king of Bashan. Jair of Manasseh captured the region of Bashan. This extended as far as the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites ([Deuteronomy 3:14](#)). God gave the land of the Geshurites to Israel. These were the tribes who lived across the Jordan River ([Joshua 13:11](#)). But Israel did not drive out the Geshurites (verse [13](#)). Later, Geshur and Aram captured at least 60 Israelite towns. They took the towns from the Israelites in that region ([1 Chronicles 2:23](#)). David married Maacah, daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur. She gave birth to Absalom ([2 Samuel 3:3](#); [1 Chronicles 3:2](#)). After Absalom murdered Amnon in revenge, he ran away to Geshur. He stayed there for three years with his grandfather, King Talmai ([2 Samuel 13:37](#)).
See also Syria, Syrians.

2. Another place called Geshur was located south of the land of the Philistines. The people who lived there were also called Geshurites. This was among the lands not yet captured when Joshua was very old. [Joshua 13:2-3](#) mentions, "All the territory of the Philistines and the Geshurites, from the Shihor east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north." Many years later, when David was living in Ziklag under the rule of Achish, the king of Gath, he made attacks against the Geshurites and other nearby groups. These attacks reached "as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt" ([1 Samuel 27:8](#)).

Gether

Aram's son and the grandson of Shem ([Gn 10:23](#)). In [1 Chronicles 1:17](#) he is listed as one of the sons of Shem.

Gethsemane

The place where Jesus and his disciples went after their Last Supper together in the upper room. Jesus experienced deep emotional distress because he knew he would soon be betrayed ([Matthew 26:36-56](#); [Mark 14:32-50](#); [Luke 22:39-53](#)).

The name "Gethsemane" appears only in the Gospel of Matthew ([26:36](#)) and the Gospel of Mark ([14:32](#)). The name means "oil press." This tells us there were likely olive trees growing there. The Gospels describe Gethsemane as a "place," suggesting it had a fence or wall around it. It may be that this place was owned by someone. If so, Jesus and his disciples may have had special permission to enter.

Luke and John do not use the word "Gethsemane" in their Gospels, but they both describe Jesus's suffering before he was betrayed. Luke says this happened on the "Mount of Olives" ([Luke 22:39](#)). John says it was "across the Kidron Valley" ([John 18:1](#)). John is the only one who calls it a garden. These Gospels also tell us that Jesus and his disciples often met there to pray together ([Luke 22:39](#); [John 18:2](#)). The Gospel stories suggest the

garden was large enough for the group to separate into smaller groups.

Geuel

A son of Maki from the tribe of Gad. Geuel was one of the 12 spies chosen by Moses to explore the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:15](#)).

Gezer

Gezer was an important ancient city in the northern Shephelah hills, between the coastal plain and the central highlands. This made Gezer a strategic place. Armies often passed through this area. Today, it is called Tell Jezer or Tell Abu Shusha.

Early History of Gezer

In the third millennium BC, the city had a wall made of mud bricks. Later, builders replaced it with a stronger stone wall about 4 meters (13 feet) thick.

The Canaanite city was strongest between the 20th and 14th centuries BC. During that time, the outer wall was about 4.3 meters (14 feet) thick. It surrounded an area of 27 acres.

Around 1600 BC, the people built a high place for worship. It had 10 stone pillars (also called standing stones), each up to 3 meters (10 feet) tall. There was also a stone altar or large bowl, probably used in worship. The people of Gezer built a tunnel with steps that led down to a spring inside a cave. The tunnel was 65.8-meter (216-foot) long. It gave safe and easy access to water during a siege (when enemies surrounded the city). Other cities in the land, like Gibeon, had similar tunnels.

Archaeologists found objects in Gezer that show the people had trade and cultural contact with Egypt. One important discovery is the Gezer Calendar. It is a small stone tablet with writing in Hebrew. It lists the months of the year and describes farm work for each month. Scholars date it to the 10th century BC.

Gezer in the Bible

The king of Gezer, named Hiram, fought against the Israelites. Joshua and his army defeated him ([Joshua 10:33](#)). Gezer later became a city for the Levites. It was in the tribal land of Ephraim ([16:3](#);

[21:21](#)). But the tribe of Ephraim could not drive out the Canaanites who lived there ([Judges 1:29](#)).

An Egyptian king named Merneptah ruled around 1225–1215 BC. He mentioned Gezer, along with Ashkelon and Yanoam, on a stone monument called the Israel Stele. This monument describes his military victories.

During the rule of King David, the Philistines invaded the plain of Rephaim. But the Lord commanded David to attack. Then David "struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer" ([2 Samuel 5:25](#)).

After King Solomon married the daughter of an Egyptian king, the pharaoh attacked and burned Gezer. He gave the city to his daughter as a dowry ([1 Kings 9:16](#)). Solomon rebuilt Gezer, along with other cities used for storing supplies and housing chariots (compare verses [15–19](#)). He made the city strong by building a large gate with four sets of stone supports. Gates like this were also found at Hazor and Megiddo.

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam's rule, Shishak (also called Sheshonk), the king of Egypt, invaded Israel ([1 Kings 14:25](#)). A list of the cities he captured is carved on the wall of the temple in Karnak, Egypt. Gezer is one of the cities listed.

The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III ruled from 745 to 727 BC. He captured Gezer, and his palace walls at Nimrud (called Calah in the Bible) showed pictures of the event. The Assyrians brought conquered people from other lands to live in Gezer, just as they did in Samaria ([2 Kings 17:24](#)). Clay tablets written in cuneiform (an ancient form of writing) record agreements and show that these people lived in the city.

See also Levitical Cities.

Gezrite

KJV spelling of Girzite in [1 Samuel 27:8](#). The Girzites were raided by David's men while he was at Ziklag. *See* Girzites.

Ghost, Holy

See Holy Spirit.

Giah

An unidentified place located along the road that goes down from Gibeon to the Arabah. This is where Joab and Abishai chased after Abner during a military pursuit ([2 Samuel 2:24](#)).

Giants

The word *giants* is used in English Bibles to translate four different Hebrew words.

One Hebrew word appears in [Job 16:14](#). The King James Version says “giant,” but the Revised Standard Version says “warrior.”

Another Hebrew word is used in [Genesis 6:4](#) and [Numbers 13:33](#). Some translations say “giants,” while others say “Nephilim.” The word *Nephilim* is a Hebrew word that is not translated but simply spelled out using English letters. The exact meaning of *Nephilim* is unknown. It seems to refer to a group or race of people. Some people think they were very tall or strong, but the Bible does not say this clearly.

None of the Hebrew words translated as “giants” actually mean “giant.” So we cannot be sure that these people were very large.

In several passages, says “giants,” but the Revised Standard Version uses the Hebrew word *Rephaim* (for example, [Deuteronomy 2:20](#); [3:11](#); [Joshua 12:4](#)). The word *Rephaim* usually appears in its plural form. It refers to several groups of people who lived in the land of Canaan. These groups may have been very tall or large in size.

They include:

- The Anakim, who lived in the hill country of Judah near Hebron ([Deuteronomy 2:11](#))
- The Emim of Moab (verse [Deuteronomy 2:10](#))
- The Zamzummim of Ammon (verse [Deuteronomy 2:20](#))
- The people of Bashan ([Deuteronomy 3:11](#))

The word *Rephaim* also appears in the book of Joshua ([Joshua 12:4](#); [13:12](#); [15:8](#); [17:15](#); [18:16](#)).

Some interpreters believe these were the original people who lived in the land before the Canaanites,

Philistines, Israelites, and others arrived. They say these were different tribes made up of tall people who were later absorbed into other groups.

Other interpreters think the *Rephaim* were not separate tribes. Instead, they think these were just a few very tall people, possibly made that way by a disease, found among many different tribes.

The Bible does not clearly support either view.

Another Hebrew word is also translated as “giant” in both the King James Version and New Living Translation ([2 Samuel 21:16–22](#); [1 Chronicles 20:4–8](#)).

Famous Giants in the Bible

The most well-known giant in the Bible is Goliath of Gath. He was a Philistine soldier who fought against the army of King Saul at the valley of Elah ([1 Samuel 17](#)). The Bible says Goliath was six cubits and a span tall. This means he was between 2.3 to 2.9 meters tall (7.5 and 9.5 feet). His great height caused fear among the Israelite soldiers.

Goliath challenged the army of Israel. But David, a young shepherd, defeated him. After this, David became well known in Israel ([1 Samuel 18:5–7](#)). The Bible does not call Goliath a “giant.” But his height shows that he was very large.

Another person known for his great height was King Og of Bashan ([Deuteronomy 3:11](#)).

See also Nephilim.

Giants, Valley of the

KJV translation for “valley of Rephaim” in [Joshua 15:8](#) and [18:16](#). See Rephaim, Valley of.

Gibbar

Forefather of a family that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel ([Ezr 2:20](#)). The parallel list in [Nehemiah 7:25](#) reads “sons of Gibeon,” suggesting that “Gibbar” may be a textual corruption. Some support for this view lies in the fact that [Ezra 2:21](#) begins listing descendants by their home city rather than by family.

Gibbethon

City in the western part of central Palestine. It was located in the territory of Dan ([Jos 19:44](#)) and allotted to the Levite clan of Kohath ([21:23](#)). Baasha killed King Nadab at Gibbethon when Israel was taking the city from the Philistines ([1 Kgs 15:27](#)). About 26 years later, Omri was proclaimed king at Gibbethon ([16:17](#)).

See also Levitical Cities.

Gibeah

Caleb's grandson from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:49](#)).

Gibeah

1. A town in the hill country of Judah ([Joshua 15:57](#)). We do not know its exact location. Gibeah is among other towns located in the section of Judah southeast of Hebron. It was probably located southeast of Hebron, near Maon, Ziph, and Carmel, in an area with good farmland.

2. A town in the land given to the tribe of Benjamin. The Bible also calls it "Gibeah of Saul" ([1 Samuel 11:4](#); [15:34](#); [Isaiah 10:29](#)). The Gibeathites live there ([1 Chronicles 12:3](#)). Gibeah is first mentioned when the land of Benjamin is described ([Joshua 18:28](#)). It becomes an important place in the Bible because of a terrible event told in [Judges 19-21](#). In that story, a Levite's concubine was abused and killed. This led to a war between the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes of Israel.

Saul, Israel's first king, was from Gibeah ([1 Samuel 10:26](#)). After the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as King of Israel, Saul returned to Gibeah. It likely stayed his home and capital during his reign ([10:26](#); [22:6](#); [23:19](#)). Most scholars believe that the ancient town of Gibeah is the same place as the modern site called Tell el-Ful. The Old Testament places Gibeah north of Jerusalem, between Jerusalem and Ramah. It was near the main road that ran north and south through the hill country ([Judges 19:11-19](#)). Tell el-Ful is about 5.6 kilometers (3.5 miles) north of Jerusalem. It sits on one of the highest areas in that mountain range.

Archaeologists found that an Israelite village stood there around the 12th century BC. It was later destroyed by fire. In the 11th century BC, people built a stone fortress at the site. One corner tower still remains. This fortress was probably King Saul's royal home. But it was no longer used after King David made Jerusalem the capital of Israel. After that, the site became a military outpost for the capital.

The tower was destroyed and rebuilt many times over the centuries. It was finally destroyed during a war between Antiochus III and Ptolemy V. A Jewish writer named Josephus said that a village still existed there during

the time of the Romans. But the village disappeared after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

3. A town in the hill country of Ephraim. It was given to Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest. Eleazar was buried there ([Joshua 24:33](#)). An addition to the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) says they also buried Phinehas there. The location of Gibeah is uncertain. Scholars suggest several sites. One option is Nibi Saleh, about 9.7 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Jifna. The second suggestion is Jibia, about 6.5 kilometers (four miles) northwest of Jifna. It could refer to et-Tell, northeast of Jifna and south of Sinjil. Or it may be, Awertah, near Shechem.
4. "Gibeah of God" or Gibeath-elohim ([1 Samuel 10:5](#); in the King James Version, this place is called "hill of God"). After Samuel anointed Saul as king, he said Saul would meet a group of prophets at this place. Saul would prophesy with them. This would be a sign that God had chosen him to be king. Some people think Gibeath-elohim is the same as Gibeah of Benjamin, where Saul lived. But the story shows that Saul came to Gibeath-elohim before he reached his home.
5. A hill near the town of Kiriath-jearim. After the Philistines returned the ark of the covenant, it stayed there in the house of Abinadab. Later, King David moved the ark to the house of Obed-edom ([2 Samuel 6:1-4](#)).

Gibeath

KJV spelling of the town Gibeah in [Joshua 18:28](#). See Gibeah #2.

Gibeath-Elohim

Place where Samuel foretold an event that would confirm Saul as Israel's king ([1 Sm 10:5](#), rsv; nlt mg). See Gibeah #4.

Gibeath-Haaraloth

Place located between the Jordan River and Jericho, in the vicinity of Gilgal, where Joshua conducted the circumcision of the Hebrew males born in the wilderness during the 40 years of wandering. ([Jos 5:3](#), nlt; kjv "hill of the foreskins").

Gibeathite

Inhabitant of the Benjamite town of Gibeah ([1 Chr 12:3](#)). See Gibeah #2.

Gibeon, Gibeonites

Gibeon was an important city in the Old Testament. The Gibeonites were the people who lived there. This place and its people appear in many Old Testament stories from the time of Joshua to the time of Nehemiah. However, the city and its people existed before and after these time periods as well.

Where Was Gibeon?

Scholars are confident that the ancient site of Gibeon is the same as the modern site called el-Jib. This location is about 8.9 kilometers (5.5 miles) north of Jerusalem. Edward Robinson first suggested this identification in 1838. Excavations happened at this site in the years 1956, 1957, 1959, 1960, and 1962. During those excavations, archaeologists discovered 31 jar handles that had the name "Gibeon" written on them. This discovery proves beyond doubt that el-Jib is the ancient city of Gibeon.

Certain geographical and historical details support this identification. Gibeon was north of Jerusalem and was accessible during the time of David, Solomon, and Jeremiah. It also lay southwest of Ai. These locations align with the biblical description. Excavations have also revealed time periods when people occupied el-Jib. These findings match the historical data in the Old Testament.

Gibeon in the Time of Joshua

The book of Judges is the first to mention Gibeon and the Gibeonites ([Joshua 9](#) and [10](#)). This was during the time of Joshua, around 1200 BC. After hearing about Israel's victories at Jericho and Ai, the people of Gibeon, along with those from Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim, tricked the Israelites into making a peace treaty. They wore worn-out clothes and carried dry, crumbling bread to make it seem like they had come from a faraway land. Joshua believed them and made a treaty with them. When their deception was discovered, they were made servants who chopped wood and carried water for the Israelites ([Joshua 9:21-27](#)).

Groups of people from the nearby cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon launched an attack on Gibeon because the Gibeonites had made peace with Joshua. Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, led the attack. The Gibeonites ask Joshua for help. The Israelites marched overnight from Gilgal to defend them. The Israelites forced the enemies of Gibeon down the road to Beth-horon with hailstones helping complete the victory. On that day, the sun stood still over Gibeon ([10:9-13](#)). Gibeon was the only city in the area to make peace with Israel ([11:19](#)). Eventually, it became part of the territory of the tribe of Benjamin ([18:25](#); [21:17](#)).

Gibeon in the Time of David and Solomon

Before David became king of Israel, Saul's general met some of David's men at Gibeon. They held a strange contest beside the pool of Gibeon. Twelve men from each side fought, and all of them died by each other's swords ([2 Samuel 2:12-17](#)). A larger battle happened after that, and David's men won (verses [18-32](#)).

Later, Amasa, who was the nephew of David, became captain of the rebel army of Absalom. Joab attacked him at the "great stone in Gibeon" ([20:8](#)). Joab left Amasa to die on the highway in his own blood.

When David was king, he allowed the Gibeonites to put to death seven of Saul's sons "on the hill before the LORD" ([21:1-9](#)). This was done to repay the Gibeonites. Saul had earlier killed some of their people, which broke the covenant Israel had made with them long ago (verses [1-6](#)).

During David's reign, Gibeon remained an important place of worship. The tabernacle of the Lord was there, along with the altar for burnt offerings ([1 Chronicles 16:39](#); [21:29](#)). Later,

Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices. While he was there, he had a dream in which he asked God for wisdom to rule Israel well ([1 Kings 3:3-9](#); compare [2 Chronicles 1:2-13](#)). God appeared to Solomon a second time at Gibeon. This time God assured Solomon that he had heard his prayer. God urged Solomon to obey him ([1 Kings 9:2-9](#)).

Gibeon was among the cities captured by Pharaoh Shishak in the second half of the 10th century BC. It likely remained an important city during the time of the kings. In the time of Jeremiah, a prophet from Gibeon spoke falsely in the name of the Lord ([Jeremiah 28:1-4](#)).

Gibeon After the Exile in Babylon

Some of the Gibeonites went into exile in Babylon. A small group returned after the exile ([Nehemiah 7:25](#)). Those that returned helped Nehemiah repair the Jerusalem wall ([3:7-8](#)). Much later, the Jewish historian Josephus said that the Roman general Cestius set up camp at Gibeon on his way to Jerusalem in AD 66 (*War* 2.515-516).

The Bible mentions Gibeon from around 1200 BC to about 445 BC. This matches the archaeological periods known as Iron I, Iron II, and the Persian or Iron III period. So, in an excavation, we would expect to find remains from all of these periods.

See also Conquest and Allotment of the Land; Gibbar.

Giblite

KJV rendering of Gebalite, an inhabitant of Gebal, in [Joshua 13:5](#). *See* Gebal #1.

Giddalti

A son of Heman who served as a temple singer. King David appointed Giddalti to serve under the direction of his father ([1 Chronicles 25:4](#)). Giddalti was in charge of the 22nd of the 24 divisions of temple service ([1 Chronicles 25:29](#)).

Giddel

1. Ancestor of a group of temple assistants who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Ezr 2:47](#); [Neh 7:49](#)).

2. Ancestor of a group of King Solomon's servants who returned with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile ([Ezr 2:56](#); [Neh 7:58](#)).

Gideon

Gideon was a judge of Israel from the tribe of Manasseh. Gideon was the son of Joash and belonged to the clan of Abiezer. Of the 12 judges of Israel, the Bible says more about Gideon than any other judge. Samson is a close second. Gideon's story happened about 1,100 years before the time of Christ.

God Calls Gideon

The Midianites ruled over Israel for seven years. They were very cruel. The people cried out to God for help ([Judges 6:6](#)). God sent a prophet to tell them why they were suffering. The prophet said it was because they had forgotten the one true God and were not faithful to him.

Then God sent his angel to Gideon. The angel called Gideon a "mighty warrior" ([Judges 6:12](#)), even though Gideon was hiding while threshing wheat. He was afraid of the Midianites. But God saw what Gideon could do through his power (verses [14–16, 34](#)). Gideon knew he was weak and the task was big. That made him the right person for God to use. God often works through people who seem weak to show his great power (compare [1 Corinthians 1:27](#); [2 Corinthians 12:10](#)).

Gideon Destroys the Altar to Baal

Gideon's first task was to destroy his father's altar to Baal. He also tore down a nearby pole used to worship Asherah, a female false god linked to Baal (compare [Isaiah 42:8](#)). Gideon knew the people would be angry, so he did this at night with the help of his servants.

The next day, the men of Ophrah were furious. They wanted to kill Gideon for what he had done. But Gideon's father, Joash, defended him. He said that if Baal was really a god, Baal could fight for himself.

After this, people began calling Gideon "Jerubbaal," which means "Let Baal contend" ([Judges 6:32](#)).

Gideon's Weakness and God's Strength

Gideon sometimes struggled to trust God fully. He asked God for signs to help him feel sure. God did

not get angry but kindly gave Gideon what he asked for. One sign was the miracle with the dew and the fleece ([Judges 6:36–40](#)).

Later, God told Gideon that Israel would not win by having a large army. God wanted everyone to know that the victory came from him, not from human strength ([Judges 7:2](#)). So Gideon's army was reduced from 32,000 to just 300 men in a special way (verses [3–7](#)).

That night, Gideon and his servant Purah went near the Midianite camp. They listened as a Midianite soldier told about a dream. The dream showed that Israel would soon win (verses [13–14](#)). This gave Gideon courage, and he worshiped the Lord ([Judges 7:15](#); compare [6:24](#)).

The Battle Against the Midianites

Gideon divided his 300 men into three groups. At night, they took their places around the Midianite camp. At Gideon's signal, each man blew a trumpet made from an animal horn. Then they broke jars that hid torches inside and shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" ([Judges 7:20](#)).

The Midianites were shocked and confused. They thought they were being attacked by a large army. In fear, they ran away toward the east, crossing the Jordan River.

Gideon's men chased them. Other Israelites from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh also joined the fight. The tribe of Ephraim helped too. They captured and killed two Midianite leaders.

At first, the men of Ephraim were upset that Gideon had not asked for their help earlier. But Gideon answered them kindly, and they were no longer angry ([Judges 8:1–3](#)).

Gideon Refuses to Be King

After the victory, the people asked Gideon to become their king. But he refused. He reminded them that the Lord was their true ruler ([Judges 8:22–23](#)).

Even though Gideon said no to being king, he still received a large amount of gold from the battle ([Judges 8:24–26](#)). He used the gold to make an object called an ephod. It may have been a garment like the high priest's or a standing image. Sadly, the people began to worship the ephod. It became a trap for them and for Gideon's family ([Judges 8:27](#)).

Later, Gideon's name Jerubbaal was changed to Jerubbesheth in [2 Samuel 11:21](#). This change

replaced “Baal” with the Hebrew word *besbeth* that means “shame.”

Gideon in the New Testament

The Letter to the Hebrews names Gideon as one of the heroes of faith. He trusted in God, and his faith brought glory to the Lord ([Hebrews 11:32](#); King James Version, “Gedeon”). Even in the time of Isaiah, people remembered “the day of Midian” as a time when God saved his people by his own power, not by human strength ([Isaiah 9:4](#)).

See also Judges, Book of.

Gideoni

Gideoni was the father of Abidan. Abidan was the leader of the tribe of Benjamin when the Israelites were traveling through the Sinai wilderness after they escaped from Egypt ([Numbers 1:11](#); [2:22](#); [10:24](#)). As a tribal leader, Gideoni presented the tribe's offering during the dedication ceremony of the tabernacle ([7:60–65](#)).

Gidom

Place to which the Benjamite army was driven during a civil war between Benjamin and the rest of Israel ([Jgs 20:45](#)).

Gier Eagle

An older English name for the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). The King James Version uses “gier eagle” in [Leviticus 11:18](#) and [Deuteronomy 14:17](#) for the bird now often called the carrion vulture.

See Birds; Vulture.

Gifts, Spiritual

See Spiritual Gifts.

Gihon, Spring of

Site in Jerusalem where Solomon was anointed as king ([1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45](#)). There are two sources of running water in Jerusalem: The first is the Ain

Umm el Daraj’ (also known as the spring of the Mother of Steps, in the OT as Gihon, and to Christians as the Virgin’s Fountain), which lies at the eastern ridge. The second is Bir ‘Ayub, or the well of Job. The importance of the spring of Gihon for the defense of Jerusalem in time of siege is emphasized by Hezekiah’s measures to deny his enemies access to the water supply and provide access for those who defended the city ([2 Kgs 20:20](#); [2 Chr 32:30](#); cf. [2 Kgs 25:4](#); [2 Chr 32:3–4](#); [Is 7:3](#)). Hezekiah’s tunnel brought the waters from the spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley (eastern) into the central valley where the present-day pool of Siloam is located. The spring was unable to supply all of Jerusalem’s needs after the exile, and in the Roman period aqueducts were built to bring additional water.

See also Siloam, Pool of.

Gilalai

Musician present at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall, rebuilt during Ezra’s time ([Neh 12:36](#)).

Gilead (Person)

1. A son of Makir from the tribe of Manasseh ([Numbers 26:29–33](#)). He was leader of the clan of his descendants during the time of Moses ([26:29](#); [27:1](#); [36:1](#)).
2. The father of Jephthah during the period of the judges ([Judges 11:1–2](#)). Jephthah was the leader of the Gileadites and judge over Israel.
3. A son of Michael from the tribe of Gad. He lived in Bashan during the first settlement of Palestine ([1 Chronicles 5:14](#)).

Gilead (Place)

1. A region east of the Jordan River. It often referred to the land where the Israelite tribes lived on that side of the river ([Judges 20:1](#); [2 Kings 10:33](#); [Jeremiah 50:19](#); [Zechariah 10:10](#)). More exactly, it was the area between the Yarmuk River in the north and the Arnon River in the south. The Jabbok River ran through the middle of it. Some people call the highlands of Gilead the “Dome of Gilead.” This area is part of the hill country that stretches north from Judah. It rises over 914 meters (3,000 feet) above the Jordan Valley. Many rivers and streams flow through Gilead. Because of this, the flat land was good for farming. People grew olive trees, grapevines, and grain there (compare [Jeremiah 8:22](#); [46:11](#); [Hosea 2:8](#)). The hills of Gilead were steep and covered with trees. Some writers compared them to the forests of Lebanon ([Jeremiah 22:6](#); [Zechariah 10:10](#)). These hills gave safety to people running away from danger. The rough land made it hard for enemies to follow them (compare [Genesis 31:21](#); [1 Samuel 13:7](#)). At first, God gave the region of Gilead to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh ([Numbers 32](#)). During the time of the judges, the Midianites and Amalekites attacked Gilead. But Gideon led the Israelites to victory ([Judges 6–7](#)). About 50 years later, the people asked Jephthah to return from exile and help them. He saved Gilead from the Ammonites (chapters [10–11](#)). During the time of King Saul, he saved Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites ([1 Samuel 11:1–11](#); [31:8–13](#); [2 Samuel 2:1–7](#)). Later, Saul’s commander Abner made Ish-bosheth king in Gilead to oppose David ([2 Samuel 2:8–9](#)). David defeated the Ammonites and took control of Gilead ([8:11–12](#); [10:1–19](#)). When Absalom rebelled, he fled to Gilead for refuge (chapters [15–17](#)).

After Absalom died in the forest of Ephraim, David returned to Jerusalem as king (chapters [18-19](#)).

Later, during the divided kingdom, Gilead became a place of war. First, the Israelites fought against the Syrians (also called Arameans) ([1 Kings 20:23-43](#); [22:1-4, 29-40](#); [2 Kings 13:22](#); [Amos 1:3](#)). Then the Assyrians invaded. In 733 BC, they took Gilead from King Pekah and sent the people into exile ([2 Kings 15:27-31](#)). This ended Gilead's connection with the northern kingdom of Israel.

2. A city known for doing evil things ([Hosea 6:8](#)). This city may have been a shorter name for Jabesh-gilead or Ramoth-gilead. It may also be the same place as the Mizpah mentioned in [Judges 10:17-18](#).
See also Mizpah #5.

Gilead, Balm of

Substance of uncertain identification and one of several resins used in the Near East for medicinal purposes. It did not grow in Gilead, but it may have received its name from being exported to Egypt and Phoenicia from Gilead ([Gn 37:25](#); [Ez 27:17](#)). The substance supposedly had astringent, antiseptic, and other therapeutic qualities.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice; Plants (Balm).

Gileadite

Name given to Israelites from the two and a half Transjordanian tribes. *See* Gilead (Place) #1; Gilead (Person) #1, #2.

Gilgal

1. A town near Jericho in the land of Canaan. It was given to the tribe of Benjamin when Joshua divided the land among the tribes of Israel. For many years, Gilgal was an important place for the people of Israel. It was used for worship, leadership, and military decisions. This was especially true during the time when Israel entered the promised land and during the early years when Saul was king. Gilgal was the first place where the people of Israel set up camp after they crossed the Jordan River. God had stopped the river so they could cross safely ([Joshua 4:19](#)). Israel stayed at Gilgal for some time. They probably set up the tabernacle (the tent of worship) there. Gilgal became the center of their life together in the new land.

Several important things happened at Gilgal:

- The men and boys who were born during the 40 years in the wilderness were circumcised ([Joshua 5:2-9](#)).
- The people celebrated the Passover (verse [10](#)).
- The manna (the food from heaven) stopped appearing (verse [12](#)).
- Joshua saw a divine being who called himself the "commander of the army of the Lord" (verses [13-15](#)).

Gilgal was Israel's first stronghold in the land of Canaan. It served as the base for Israel's military campaigns during the conquest of the land.

From Gilgal, Joshua led the people in several major events:

- The defeat of Jericho ([Joshua 6](#))
- The attack on Ai ([8:3](#))
- The peace treaty with the Gibeonites ([9:3-15](#))
- The battle against the five Amorite kings ([10:6-43](#))
- The northern campaign (chapter [11](#))

At Gilgal, Joshua assigned the tribes of Judah, Manasseh, and Ephraim their land portions ([Joshua 15-17](#)).

Even after the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh, Gilgal stayed important for many years. Samuel, the prophet and judge, visited Gilgal often as part of his yearly travels ([1 Samuel 7:16](#)). Gilgal was one of the primary places for offering sacrifices ([10:8](#); [13:9-10](#); [15:21](#)). At Gilgal, Samuel crowned Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, as king ([11:14-15](#)). Later God rejected Saul as king of Israel ([13:4-15](#); [15:17-31](#)). After Absalom's rebellion, the men of Judah met King David at Gilgal when he returned to the land ([2 Samuel 19:15](#)).

Gilgal was still a place of worship as late as the eighth century BC. But the prophets Hosea and Amos spoke against it because the people were worshiping in wrong ways ([Hosea 4:15](#); [9:15](#); [12:11](#); [Amos 4:4](#); [5:5](#)).

We do not know the exact location of Gilgal. Archaeologists have suggested different places near Jericho. Some think it was at Khirbet en-Nitleh about 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) east of modern Jericho. Others think it was at Khirbet Mefjir, a mound about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) from ancient Jericho (Tell es-Sultan).

[Joshua 4:19](#) places it on the eastern border of Jericho. The Jewish historian Josephus said it was about 50 stadia (5.8 miles, or 9.3 kilometers) from the ford of Jordan to Gilgal. Gilgal was about 10 stadia from Jericho (*Antiquities* 5.6.4). These details seem to match Khirbet Mefjir best.

1. A place near mentioned in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#). It might be near Jericho, but the verse suggests it is closer to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. These two mountains are in central Canaan, near the city of Shechem. This means this Gilgal was likely in that area, not near the better-known Gilgal by Jericho.
2. The King James Version rendering of "Goiim in Galilee" ([Joshua 12:23](#)). We do not know its location, but the context places it in northern Palestine in the area of Galilee.
See Goiim #2.
3. A place describing the northern border of Judah ([Joshua 15:7](#)). It was near Adummim. It might be the same place as Geliloth ([Joshua 18:17](#)).
4. A place mentioned in connection with the prophets Elijah and Elisha ([2 Kings 2:1](#); [4:38](#)). It seems it was a town farther from the Jordan River than #1 above. The story about God taking the prophet Elijah into heaven relates to Gilgal. Elijah and Elisha were going from Gilgal to Bethel then Jericho. The story places Bethel between Gilgal and Jericho. So, it could not have been the first Gilgal. It may refer to the modern Jiljilia. This is a town on top of a hill in central Palestine, about 11.3 kilometers (7 miles) north of Bethel.

Gilgamesh Epic

The Gilgamesh Epic is a famous story about a Sumerian hero's adventures and search for wisdom. Gilgamesh was king of Uruk, or Erech (modern-day Warka) at the end of the fourth millennium BC. The legend comes from the first Babylonian dynasty (about 1830-1530 BC) and was found in King Ashurbanipal's library in Nineveh. Ashurbanipal was king from 669 to 627 BC.

The story is written on 12 clay tablets. It tells how Gilgamesh, a strong ruler, became friends with

Enkidu, a wild man created by the gods to defeat Gilgamesh. Together, they killed a monster named Huwawa. Then Ishtar, the goddess of love, tried to seduce Gilgamesh. When he refused her, they killed a sacred bull. As punishment, Enkidu died.

Sad and afraid of death, Gilgamesh traveled the world looking for immortality. He met Utnapishtim, who had survived a great flood. Utnapishtim told Gilgamesh about this flood, which covered a large area of Mesopotamia. Because of his devotion, the gods saved Utnapishtim and made him immortal. The last tablet talks about how sad Gilgamesh is because he will die someday.

Scholars have compared the flood story in this epic to the one in the Bible's book of Genesis. Both stories have a flood, people who are saved, birds sent out, and a sacrifice made afterward. But there are differences too. The Bible gives a moral reason for the flood, while in the epic, the gods were annoyed by human noise. The birds, heroes' names, boat size, and flood length are different in each story.

The Genesis story does not come from the epic. Both stories might come from an older tradition. Or they might be separate accounts of the same big flood.

See also Flood, The; Noah #1.

Gilo, Giloh, Gilonite

A village, and those living there, in the mountains of southern Judah ([Joshua 15:51](#)). King David's counselor Ahithophel was a Gilonite ([2 Samuel 15:12](#); [23:34](#)). Today, researchers believe Giloh may have been located at a place now called Khirbet Jala, which is just northeast of the city of Hebron.

Gimzo

Town of Judah captured by the Philistines during King Ahaz's reign ([2 Chr 28:18](#)). It is modern Jimzu, located southeast of Ludd (Lydda).

Ginath

Tibni's father. Tibni unsuccessfully attempted to gain the throne of Israel; Omri became king instead ([1 Kgs 16:21-22](#)).

Ginnethon

1. Priest who set his seal on Ezra's covenant during the postexilic period ([Neh 10:6](#)).

2. Priest and head of Meshullam's household during the postexilic days of Joiakim the high priest ([Neh 12:16](#)).

Girdle

One of various articles of clothing worn about the waist.

Girgashites

A Canaanite tribe ([Genesis 10:16](#); [1 Chronicles 1:14](#)) whose land was promised to Abraham ([Genesis 15:21](#); [Deuteronomy 7:1](#); [Joshua 3:10](#)). The land was ultimately acquired ([Joshua 24:11](#); [Nehemiah 9:8](#)). The tribe's location is unknown. They may have lived in Karkisha, a city mentioned in Hittite texts, or in Kirkishati, an area east of the Tigris. The name *Gresh* appeared in 13th century BC Ugaritic texts and might indicate a tribe. In [Matthew 8:28](#); [Mark 5:1](#); and [Luke 8:26](#), a name variously translated as "Gergesenes" (King James Version), "Gerasenes," and "Gadarenes" may preserve the tradition that the Girgashites once lived in Palestine.

Girzites

People living in southwest Canaan who were raided by David when at Ziklag ([1 Sm 27:8](#), kjv "Gezrites"). The Hebrew text has girzi, while the marginal variant transposes two consonants to read gizri, "Gezrites." The Greek version follows the Hebrew marginal variant. The confusion of the name is obviously early. If "Gerzites" is the original, they could have been a Canaanite tribe living in the Mt Gerizim area. If it was "Gezrites" originally, the people could have migrated from Gezer. They are otherwise unmentioned in the OT.

Gishpa, Gispa

Overseer of the temple servants in Nehemiah's time ([Neh 11:21](#), kjv "Gispa"); perhaps alternately

called Hasupha in [Ezra 2:43](#) and [Nehemiah 7:46](#).
See Hasupha.

Gittah-Hepher

KJV form of the town Gath-hepher, in [Joshua 19:13](#).
See Gath-hepher.

Gittaim

A town in the territory of Benjamin where the people of Beeroth fled to find safety. They stayed there under official protection ([2 Samuel 4:3](#)). [Nehemiah 11:33](#) lists Gittaim as one of the places where Jewish people settled after returning from exile in Babylon.

The two references may indicate two different places. If so, the second Gittaim may be northwest of Jerusalem. But some scholars believe that there is only one Gittaim, the one near Beeroth.

Gittite

A person who lived in Gath, which was a Philistine city ([2 Samuel 6:10–11](#); [1 Chronicles 13:13](#)).

See Gath.

Gittith

Obscure Hebrew term in the superscriptions of [Psalms 8](#), [81](#), and [84](#) (nlt mg); perhaps a musical instrument or a musical cue, signaling a mood, to which the psalms were to be performed. See Music; Musical Instruments.

Gizon, Gizonite

Designation for Hashem (Jashen, nlt), one of David's mighty men ([1 Chr 11:34](#)). Gizon may have been an ancient Canaanite settlement. Some scholars have emended the text to read "Gunite" (cf. [1 Chr 5:15](#); [7:13](#)) or "from Gimzo" (cf. [2 Chr 28:18](#)).

Glass

Translation for "mirror" in [Isaiah 3:23](#), [1 Corinthians 13:12](#), and [James 1:23](#) (kjb). Since mirrors of Bible times were polished metal sheets, "glass" is incorrect. See Mirror.

Glean, Gleaning

Practice of allowing the poor to follow reapers in a field to pick up missed spears of grain (cf. [Lv 19:9](#); [23:22](#); [Dt 24:19](#); [Ru 2:2–23](#)). Vineyards, as well as fields of grain, were to be available for gleaning ([Lv 19:10](#); [Dt 24:20–21](#)). Olive trees, however, were not to be gone over a second time (cf. [Jgs 8:2](#); [Is 17:6](#); [24:13](#); [Jer 6:9](#); [Mi 7:1](#)). The word "gleaned" is also used to describe the killing of men who fled from a battle ([Jgs 20:45](#), kjb).

Glede

The King James Version translation for "buzzard" in [Deuteronomy 14:13](#).

See Birds (Kite or Glede).

Glorification

An expression of God's glory and splendor.

In Hebrew, the word for "glory" originally meant "heavy" or "important." Over time, it came to describe someone influential, rich, or powerful. In ancient times, wealthy and powerful people wore fine clothes and jewels. Because of this, a person's glory referred to the visible signs of their wealth and power. Glory also came to mean beauty because fine clothes and jewels were beautiful. This idea of glory was later extended to God.

Glory of God

In the Old Testament, God's glory refers to something clear and obvious about him. The book of Exodus contains many references to God's glory. For example, there was the fiery pillar, and God's glory entered the holy of holies in the tabernacle (see [Exodus 40:34–38](#)).

When the tabernacle was being built ([Exodus 25–27](#)), glory and beauty were connected. Some believe that the "goodness" of the Lord that Moses saw ([Exodus 33:19](#)) could also be translated as

"beauty." Therefore, God's glory can also mean his beauty.

The New Testament continues the Old Testament idea that God is full of glory (see the vision of God in his glory in [Revelation 4](#)). However, the New Testament focuses more on the glory of Christ. The transfiguration of Christ showed his glory openly ([Matthew 17:1-8](#)). The apostle Paul called Jesus the Lord of glory ([1 Corinthians 2:8](#)) and said that God's glory shone from his face ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)). The Gospel of John is especially known as the "Gospel of Glory." In the Incarnation (when the Son of God became human), Jesus showed the glory he had as the only Son of the Father ([John 1:14](#)). The raising of Lazarus was another example of God's glory shown through Christ ([John 11:40](#)). In [John 17](#), Jesus prayed about his glory and said that his disciples would also share in it.

Glorification of the Believer

In [2 Corinthians 3:18](#), spiritual transformation is described as changing "from glory to glory." Glorification is the final step in this transformation. In the process of salvation, Paul lists glorification as the last event ([Romans 8:28-30](#)). The verb used in [Romans 8:30](#) is in the past tense, which suggests the certainty and finality of glorification. Glorification is the completion, perfection, and full realization of salvation.

Glorification is found in perfect sanctification (the process of becoming holy) as it relates to a person's inner character. No single passage in the Bible covers this theme in detail, but [Ephesians 5:27](#) gives a good summary. In this passage, Paul wrote about presenting the church to Christ. What Paul says about the church applies to each Christian. Jesus will present the church to himself in "without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless." Similarly, in [2 Timothy 2:10](#), Paul says, "I endure all things for the sake of the elect, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Just as a believer's inner character is glorified, so is their body. Paul calls the resurrection of the body the "redemption of our bodies" ([Romans 8:23](#)). In [Philippians 3:21](#), Paul speaks of changing our bodies of humiliation (bodies weakened by sin and mortality) into bodies of glory like Christ's. The power that will do this is the same power of God that controls everything.

The most detailed discussion of the glorification of the body is found in [1 Corinthians 15](#), with

additional details in [2 Corinthians 5](#). Paul's theme in [1 Corinthians 15](#) is that just as Christians have the mortal bodies of Adam, they will have immortal bodies like the Son of God. Paul contrasts these two bodies. The present body can be destroyed, but the resurrection body will be imperishable. The current body is one of dishonor, but the resurrection body will be glorious. The current body is weak, but the resurrection body will be powerful. The present body belongs to this physical world, but the resurrection body will belong to the future, spiritual, eternal world.

Salvation involves:

- Justification (being declared righteous)
- Regeneration (being made new)
- Sanctification (becoming holy)

In the life to come, it includes the glorification of the inner person and the resurrection of the body in glory. A glorified person must also live in a glorified environment. Therefore, the Bible ends with a description of a glorious new heaven, new earth, and a new Jerusalem.

See also Glory; Resurrection.

Glory

The singular splendor of God and the consequences for humanity.

The Glory of God

The glory of God can be described in two senses: (1) as a general category or attribute, and (2) as a specific category referring to particular historical manifestations of his presence.

As an Attribute

God's glory refers primarily to his majestic beauty and splendor; it also refers to the expression of God's character ([Rom 3:23](#)). The Scriptures record praise to his glorious name ([Neh 9:5](#)), describe him as the glorious Father ([Eph 1:17](#)) and the King of glory ([Ps 24](#)); he is exalted above the heavens, and his glory is over all the earth ([Pss 57:5, 11; 108:5; 113:4](#)). He is the God of glory who appeared to the patriarchs of the OT ([Acts 7:2](#)). He is jealous to maintain his glory and unwilling that it be given to another ([Is 42:8](#)); he acts to bring glory to himself ([Ps 79:9; Is 48:11](#)).

The glory of God is proclaimed by the Creation ([Pss 19:1; 97:6; Rom 1:20](#)). It is revealed by his mighty acts of salvation and deliverance ([1 Chr 16:24; Pss 72:18-19; 96:3; 145:10-12; Jn 11:4, 40](#)). His glory is the theme of the praise ([1 Chr 16:24-29; Pss 29:1-2, 9; 66:1-2; 96:7-8; 115:1; Is 42:12; Rom 4:20; Phil 2:9-11](#)).

As His Presence

References to the glory of the Lord are often to particular historical manifestations of his presence; images of light and fire are prominently associated with these occurrences. The foremost example is what is known in rabbinical literature as the shekinah glory, a phrase meaning the “dwelling glory.” It refers primarily to the presence of God in the pillar of cloud and fire in the OT.

The first explicit reference to the glory cloud is found in [Exodus 13:21-22](#). At the time of the exodus, the glory of God appeared in the pillar of cloud and fire to lead the people through the sea and wilderness ([Neh 9:11-12, 19](#)). At Sinai, with Israel encamped around the mountain, the glory of God comes in the cloud and fire to speak with Moses in the sight of the people ([Ex 19:9, 16-18; 24:15-18; Dt 5:5, 22-24](#)). When Moses is given a glimpse of that glory unconcealed by the cloud and fire, his own face becomes radiant and must be veiled because of the people’s fear ([Ex 33:18-23; 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:7-18](#)).

The picture of Israel encamped around the glory of God on Sinai portrays God dwelling in the midst of his people. When the tabernacle is completed and the people set out on their march, the glory cloud of God’s presence dwells above them throughout their journey ([Ex 40:34-38; Nm 10:11-12](#)). When they encamp, the tribes encircle the tabernacle ([Nm 1:50-2:2](#)), and the cloud reminds them of his presence in their midst. Later, the same glory filled the new temple that Solomon builds ([2 Chr 5:13-6:1; 7:1-3](#)). The psalmists celebrated Jerusalem and the temple as the place where his glory dwelt ([Pss 26:8; 63:2; 85:9](#)); God was in their midst.

Later in Israel’s history they denied God’s glorious presence ([Is 3:8](#)) and exchanged the glory of the Lord for idols made by human hands ([Ps 106:20; Jer 2:10-11](#); cf. [Rom 1:23](#)). Because of their disobedience, judgment came against Jerusalem; the penalties of covenant violation were enforced. God would no longer be the God of a disobedient people ([Hos 1:9](#)). God’s presence in the glory cloud left the temple ([Ez 10:4, 18-19; 11:22](#)), and Israel went into exile ([12:1-15](#)).

Yet out of this judgment God determined to bring a remnant to rebuild the city and the temple. In his visions Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord return to dwell in the temple again ([Ez 43:2-9](#)), a time when the glory would return to a purified people and dwell among them forever. When the exile was over and the second temple was under construction, Haggai and Zechariah urged the people on with the promise of the return of the glory of God to fill the temple as it had done in the first temple and to “be glory in their midst” ([Hg 2:3-9; Zec 2:5, 10-11](#)).

The Glory of God in Jesus Christ

We are not told if the shekinah glory returned to the second temple. But we are told that God’s glory was seen again on earth in the person of Jesus Christ. [John 1:14](#) says, “The Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us, and we beheld his *glory, glory* as of the only Son” (italics added). As such, Jesus was the new tabernacle for God’s abiding glory. In Jesus, God dwelt among people. Since Christ was (and is) the very image of God, to see the light of his face was to know the glory of God ([2 Cor 4:4-6](#)). To see Jesus was to see a “light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel” ([Lk 2:30-32](#)). The disciples who witnessed the Transfiguration ([Mt 17:1-8](#)) saw his glory in a marvelous way ([2 Pt 1:16-17](#)), for it was a glory that burst out of his human body. This outburst of glory prefigured the glorification Christ experienced in resurrection and ascension (see [Jn 17:5; Phil 2:5-11](#)).

Because Jesus humbled himself and was obedient to the point of death, God highly exalted him ([Phil 2:8-9](#)). After he suffered death on the cross, he entered into his glory ([Lk 24:26](#)) with a new and glorious body ([1 Cor 15:39-43; Phil 3:21](#)). The glorified Christ appeared to his servants. Stephen saw his glory ([Acts 7:55](#)), and Saul was blinded by his splendor ([9:3](#)). That same Christ is predicted to return in glory. He will sit on his throne in judgment ([Mt 25:31](#)); evil will be punished ([16:27; 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27; 2 Thes 2:9-10](#)). Those who have professed him before men need not fear his glorious appearing ([Mk 8:38](#)).

At the consummation, the whole earth will be filled with his glory ([Ps 72:19; Is 6:3; Hb 2:14](#)). No longer will a glory cloud rest above a temple to mark the Holy Place, for there will be a new heaven and a new earth ([Rv 21:1](#)). The Holy City will have the radiance of the glory of God (vv [10-11](#)).

Glory and the People of God

The people of God have experienced the glory of the presence of God. The glory cloud of the OT was *their* glory ([Ps 106:20](#); [Jer 2:11](#)). Christ came as the embodiment of the glory of God; God was in the midst of his people. When Christ ascended, he sent his Spirit to the believers ([Jn 16:7-14](#)) so that God could live in the midst of his people. The Spirit of glory rests on those who suffer for the name of Christ ([1 Pt 4:14](#)); that Spirit is the guarantee of the glorious inheritance of the saints ([Rom 8:16-17](#)).

God has given to his people the hope of glory ([Rom 5:2](#); [Phil 3:21](#); [Col 1:27](#); [Jude 1:24-25](#)). Those whom he has chosen he will also glorify ([Rom 8:30](#); [9:23](#)); they will share in the glory of Christ ([Col 3:4](#); [2 Thes 2:14](#); [2 Tm 2:10](#)). The sufferings of this age do not compare with the glory that will be revealed ([Rom 8:18](#); [2 Cor 4:17](#)). The whole of creation longs to see the glorious freedom of the children of God ([Rom 8:21](#)). This hope of glory is so certain that Peter can speak of participating in it even now ([1 Pt 5:1](#)) while looking forward to that eternal glory (v [10](#)). As partakers in the glory of Christ, the church is called to glorify God. Because of the hope that is in them, they purify themselves ([1 Jn 3:3](#)).

See also Boast; God, Being and Attributes of; Pillar of Fire and Cloud; Shekinah; Theophany; Wealth.

Glossolalia

Transliteration of a Greek expression meaning "speaking in tongues." *See* Tongues, Speaking in.

Gnat

A very small flying insect. The word, used in [Matthew 23:24](#), is a general word for a small fly.

The third plague in Egypt before the exodus consisted of gnats ([Exodus 8:16-18](#); [Psalm 105:31](#)). The King James Version translates the Hebrew word as "lice." But, [Exodus 8](#) describes the breeding pattern as insects rising from the dust. This more likely describes gnats rather than lice.

Since "gnat" is a general term, the small flies of that plague may have included several small species such as mosquitos, harvester gnats, midges, or sand flies.

The sand fly has a far more painful bite than the mosquito. Further, it does not make a buzzing noise

in flight and is so small that it can pass through most mosquito netting.

Gnats were attracted to wine while it was fermenting. The Pharisees, in particular, would strain their wine to avoid consuming ritually unclean insects ([Matthew 23:24](#)).

Gnosticism

Religious thought distinguished by claims to obscure and mystical knowledge, and emphasizing knowledge rather than faith. Until the mid-20th century, Gnosticism was regarded as a Christian heresy that developed through the interweaving of Christian experience and thought with Greek philosophy. More recently, many scholars define the Gnostics more broadly as devotees of a religious view that borrowed ideas from many religious traditions. The meanings of these borrowed terms and practices were shaped into mythological expressions of experiential salvation.

Gnosticism as a Heresy

During the 20th century, many discoveries of Gnostic documents have enabled scholars to define Gnosticism more accurately. Prior to the 20th century, most of the information available concerning the Gnostics came from early Christian writers (heresiologists) who penned treatises against heretics, and in the process described some of their beliefs and practices. These heresiologists, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus, viewed the Gnostics as distorters of Christianity. The Gnostics developed many misinterpretations of the Bible, especially of the creation account and the Gospel of John. Indeed, the Gnostic writers Heracleon and Ptolemais are the first known commentators on the fourth Gospel. The anger of the Christian apologists is well summarized by Irenaeus when he likens the Gnostic interpreter to one who tears apart a beautiful picture of a king and then restructures it into a picture of a fox.

Apparently a number of Gnostics continued as members of local churches and some served in high offices. Indeed, there is speculation that Valentinus may have been considered as a possible candidate for bishop at Rome. Moreover, Marcion, the fabled Christian heretic, reinterpreted Paul in such a way that the OT God became the god of evil and Christ became the messenger of the good God of grace. Many Gnostic heretical tendencies have been associated with Marcion, who developed his own

censored canon of the NT and thereby forced the Christians to counter by clarifying their own canon. The early Christian historian Eusebius (d. AD 339), who excerpted some of the early lost works of heresiologists like Hegesippus, also provides insight into the hostility of Christians against various Gnostics like Marcion, Basilides, Tatian, Saturnil, Dositheus, and the so-called father of all heresy, Simon the sorcerer.

Types of Gnostics

1. The Iranian type of Gnostic myth that arose in Mesopotamia is an adaption of Zoroastrianism. The myths are constructed with a horizontal dualism in which the opposing powers of good (light) and evil (darkness) are regarded as fairly equal in strength. In the first stage of the myth, a segment of the light is captured by the jealous darkness when the light transcends itself and reaches into the realm occupied by the darkness. The capture of the light has been viewed by some scholars as the Iranian cosmic “fall.” Since the Gnostics themselves are usually identified with the captured light particles, a major task of their myths is to describe the process by which the light particles (encapsulated within the bodies of Gnostics) are released. The body, or “flesh” in the Greek sense, is merely a worthless covering or tomb, while the spirit—the spark in man linked to the divine—is the part that seeks release and return to the heavenly bliss. In the Iranian system the light forces regroup and make a partially successful counterattack on the forces of darkness. Then, primarily through the work of an alien messenger of strength who has gained a foothold in the world, the good forces are able to challenge the work of the evil captors and supply advice (gnosis) to their devotees. This gnosis leads to salvation or release.

2. The Syrian type of Gnostic myth, which arose primarily in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, is more complex and involves a vertical dualism. In this system there is only one ultimate being or group of divinities (not two as in the horizontal system). Their dualism is usually explained as the result of a flaw, or error, in the good. The error in good, for example, is frequently attributed to the least member in the good pantheon. The guilty deity is usually designated as Sophia (the Greek term for “wisdom,” which indicates the Gnostic’s low opinion of the Greek philosopher’s quest for wisdom). This Gnostic myth details how, instead of being satisfied with her station in life, Wisdom lusts for the Ultimate Depth. Since this ultimate god cannot tolerate distortion and weakness in the

godhead, he must exclude Wisdom’s lust from the heavenly realm. This lust is exiled to a lower heaven, is personalized as the Lower Wisdom (sometimes called the demiurge), and becomes the creator of the world. As lesser deities, the creator and subordinate gods (often called fates) are unable to perceive the upper heavenly realm and falsely consider themselves to be ultimate. The upper godhead deviously maneuvers the Lower Wisdom in creating human beings and giving life to them through the process of passing on the breath of life. Unknowingly, in the act of creation, the Lower Wisdom not only gives life to human beings but also passes on the divine light particles. Thus, with the help of a savior—an alien messenger of knowledge sent by the upper godhead and often designated as Jesus—humanity is enabled to perceive even more than the creator and to conquer the spiritual stupor that has come upon him when his spirit was encased by the creator in an earthly body.

As a result of the split within the deity in this system, the biblical Garden of Eden story becomes radically reinterpreted. The creator provides a tree of life (which is a misnomer) and actually offers humanity bondage instead. The lower god also forbids access to the tree of knowledge (gnosis), which appears in his creation without his authorization, being provided by the upper godhead for the purpose of awakening Gnostics to the state from which they have come.

Because only those people who have light particles are capable of being saved, the process of salvation in most Gnostic myths is deterministic. Moreover, salvation really occurs at the end of the Gnostic’s life when he seeks to escape from the created world. Concurrent with the escape, the Gnostic strips off the created elements of the body from his spirit and climbs through the fates to the heavenly realm.

With respect to both systems of Gnosticism, recent discoveries have clarified our understanding of the myths. New primary sources for the Iranian type of Gnosticism became available during the first half of the 20th century and include the publication of a Manichean psalter (1938) and a Manichean book of homilies (1934). New primary sources for the Syrian type of Gnosticism were made available through the publication of the Berlin manuscript in 1955, but more significantly, our knowledge has recently increased through the discovered codices usually designated as the Nag Hammadi manuscripts.

Understanding the Gnostic Purpose

Perhaps one of the greatest problems for the uninitiated readers of Gnosticism is understanding the purpose of the Gnostic myths. The myths often seem so strange that the readers are tempted to scratch their heads and wonder how anyone with any intelligence could believe such wild stories. One must realize, however, that the myth writers were seeking to communicate elements of the unexplained relationships between the human and the divine.

The bondage of evil in the world and its relationship to a good God has stretched the minds of the greatest theologians and philosophers of history. The Gnostics devised their answer to the problem of evil by shifting the blame from this world back to either God himself or to divisions within the divine realm. By compartmentalizing good and evil, it was possible to decide one's destiny by the alignments one made.

But the role of evil was seen as so strong in this world that the Gnostics, like the Greek philosophers before them, concluded the world was a hopeless context for the victory of the good. Accordingly, they abandoned the world to the evil god and developed a theology that focused on salvation as the process of escape from the world. Their theory also provided a salvation while on earth: Since the Gnostics contained divine light particles, they were in fact immortal, and their spirits, though existing in an evil context, would not ultimately be contaminated. The body and all its lust and lower animal desires would be shed from the spirit as it rose through the realms of the lower godhead to be reunited with the divine spiritual realm after death. Some Gnostics, indeed, carried the idea of noncontamination to ridiculous lengths and devised systems whereby sexual relations with various persons represented divine-human encounters—the more, the better! Others tended to affirm more ascetic tendencies whereby they sought to conform the miserable body to the lifestyle of the incorruptible spirit.

One of the realities the Gnostic interpreters encountered was the fact that not everyone accepted their theories. Accordingly, they devised mythical methods to distinguish between various types of people. Using ideas suggested by Paul in [1 Corinthians 2](#) and [Romans 8](#), the Gnostics developed a highly sophisticated categorization of people. The pneumatic, or spiritual (i.e., Gnostic), persons were divine in origin, being from light particles. The sarkic, or fleshly, persons were

formed totally from the substances made by the creator and could never inherit the divine realm. The Christians whom they saw as struggling to be obedient to the biblical message, however, were a kind of mixture. They needed desperately to work out their salvation, and if they were obedient as psychic people, they might gain some form of acceptance. This elitism of the Gnostics and their distortion of the Christian message clarifies the hostility of the Christians against the Gnostics.

The myths were the methodological formulations the Gnostics used to express their theological constructs. To understand them the reader needs the key of gnosis, or knowledge. Interpretation of the myths was in fact an early type of demythologizing, not unlike the process Rudolf Bultmann, an early-twentieth-century theologian and NT scholar, employed in interpreting the Bible. The Gnostic writers were among the brightest minds of their day. Their creativity is to be admired. Their theology, however, is to be rejected as a distortion of the biblical message. See Nag Hammadi Manuscripts.

Goad

Pointed rod, sometimes tipped with metal, used for driving or guiding cattle, especially oxen in plowing.

Goah

Location mentioned in connection with the hill of Gareb, to which the restored city of Jerusalem will extend. Goah is situated south of Gareb ([Jer 31:39](#), kjv "Goath").

Goat

A goat is an animal with split hooves, large eyes, and big, floppy ears that move frequently. Both male and female goats have horns that curve backward. The Palestinian goat is smaller and thinner than sheep. These goats are ruminants. They eat grass and other plants, which they chew, swallow, and then chew again to help digest their food.

People first began raising goats as farm animals earlier than any other grass-eating livestock. These early farm goats came from wild goats (the Gezoar

goat, or *Capra aegagrus*). Wild goats are believed to have been tamed very early in Palestine. The goats mentioned in the Bible were probably Syrian or Mamber goats (*Capra hircus mambrica*). When people raise goats on farms, a mother goat can have up to four baby goats at one time. Wild goats usually have only one or two babies.

The Palestinian goat was usually black. Goats with spots or patches of different colors were uncommon. This is why in [Genesis 30:32](#), when Jacob only asked for the spotted and speckled goats as payment, it seemed like he was asking for very little. Some goats may have been reddish-brown in color. We know this because in [1 Samuel 16:12](#) and [19:13](#), people used goat hair to copy David's reddish-colored hair.

How Were Goats Used in Biblical Times?

Almost every part of the goat was used by the Israelites. The whole goat was used for sacrifice. People ate goat meat and drank goat milk, which was their main source of milk ([Leviticus 7:23](#); [Deuteronomy 14:4](#); [Proverbs 27:27](#)). Their hair was used to weave tent cloth and for several uses in the home ([Exodus 36:14](#); [1 Samuel 19:13, 16](#)). The tabernacle at Mount Sinai was made of goat's hair blankets ([Exodus 26:7](#)).

People did not usually eat adult male goats for two reasons: the meat had a very strong taste and was tough to chew, and the males were needed to help produce more baby goats. However, young goats were often served as the main dish at special meals. Offering young goat meat to visitors was a way to show hospitality.

Goat milk contains more nutrients than cow or sheep milk and could be used in many ways. A healthy goat can produce about 3 liters of milk each day. People could make butter and buttermilk from this milk. In fact, one goat could provide enough food products to feed an average family in ancient Israel.

Goatskin was tanned as leather. Then, they made a skin bottle from the whole hide by sewing shut the leg and neck openings ([Genesis 21:14](#); [Joshua 9:4](#)). People used goatskin for various purposes, including making Hebrew musical instruments. The nebal, a large harp, had a goatskin base. Similarly, drums were covered with goatskin.

Shepherds herded goats with sheep in biblical times, but each group remained separate, following its own leader. Jesus was referring to their common

herding in his description of the Last Judgment ([Matthew 25:31–46](#)).

Sheep are more valued than goats because of their wool. But, in areas with little pasture and water and thorny shrubs, goats are necessary. They thrive where cows and sheep cannot, producing lots of milk. Unlike sheep, goats do not provide fat. Their coarse hair means they have little wool. Yet, goat-hair cloth, called cilicium, was used for tents.

Goats eat a lot of food and can damage the land where they graze. In biblical times, goats caused many problems in the land of Israel. They would break down the steps built into hillsides for farming, destroy trees in the forests, and eat so many plants that the soil would wash away when it rained because there were no plants left to hold it in place.

Goats were considered valuable property in biblical times. According to God's law, people had to give their firstborn male goats to God as an offering ([Numbers 18:17](#)). These goats had to be at least eight days old before they could be used as sacrifices. During Passover, the yearly celebration of God freeing the Israelites from Egypt, people would offer a one-year-old male goat ([Numbers 28:22](#)). On the Day of Atonement, two goats were sacrificed ([Leviticus 16:7–10](#)). People also used goats for other specific sacrifices.

The Ibex (Wild Mountain Goat)

The ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*) is a type of wild goat that still lives near the Dead Sea, mainly in rocky areas. We know these goats lived in ancient times because people drew pictures of them on rocks. Ibex goats look different from other wild goats. They have a smaller back end and thinner, curved horns. Their thin legs and split hooves help them move easily in the mountains. They can hold onto narrow ledges, jump from rock to rock, and climb steep cliffs.

Ibex goats live in rough mountain areas with rocky cliffs and grassy areas near where snow begins ([Psalm 104:18](#)). In [Job 39:1](#), they are referred to as "mountain goats." These goats usually live in groups of 5 to 20 animals. They eat grass and leaves from plants, usually in the afternoon and sometimes during the night. In ancient times, people used the large horns of ibex goats to make special trumpets. These trumpets were used in the Jerusalem temple to announce important events like the start of a new year and the special year of freedom, the jubilee year, that came every 50 years.

Symbolism of Goats in the Bible

The Bible's writers often used the goat as a symbol:

- In [Song of Songs 4:1](#) and [6:5](#), it represented the bride's black hair.
- In [Matthew 25:31-46](#), it represents the wicked.
- In [Ezekiel 34:17](#) and [Daniel 8:5-8](#), it represented various human leaders.

Goath

KJV spelling of Goah in [Jeremiah 31:39](#). See Goah.

Gob

A place where David and his men fought against the Philistines in two battles ([2 Samuel 21:18-19](#)). In the similar account found in [1 Chronicles 20:4](#), the location is called Gezer instead of Gob.

God As Father

The Bible describes God as the Father in different ways. As the Creator, He is the Father of all people ([Malachi 2:10](#); [Acts 17:28](#)). But in a special way, God is the Father of those who believe in him. He cares for, protects, and guides them ([John 1:12-13](#); [Romans 8:14-17](#)).

The relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son reveals the deepest meaning of God's fatherhood. At Jesus's baptism, God spoke from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" ([Matthew 3:17](#)). Unlike believers, who are God's children by adoption, Jesus is God's eternal Son. He said, "I and the Father are one" ([John 10:30](#)). This shows that he shares the same divine nature as the Father.

Jesus revealed what God the Father is like. He told His disciples, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#)). Jesus always did what pleased his Father ([John 8:29](#)). He taught people about God's fatherly love. He encouraged his followers to pray to God as "our Father in heaven" ([Matthew 6:9](#)). This prayer (called the Lord's Prayer) teaches us to trust in God's care and seek his will.

Through Jesus, believers can have a close relationship with God as their Father, being brought into God's family through faith ([Galatians 4:4-7](#)).

See God, Names of; Trinity.

God-Fearer

Someone who has a deep respect, reverence, or fear of God. This fear can be:

- A term of respect
- An emotional reaction of terror
- A fear of God's punishment

In the Old Testament, phrases describing a God-fearer are often paired with terms like "stood in awe" or "held in awe." Reverence for the Lord is less common but is used when Obadiah hid the prophets to save them from Jezebel ([1 Kings 18:3-4,12](#)). A God-fearing ruler was expected to provide justice ([2 Samuel 23:3](#); [2 Chronicles 19:7](#)). Long life was promised to those who feared the Lord ([Proverbs 10:27](#); [14:27](#); [19:23](#)). A God-fearing family would rely on the Lord for help during trouble ([2 Kings 4:1](#); [Proverbs 14:26](#)). The fear of the Lord was powerful in driving away sin and was the beginning of wisdom ([Wisdom of Solomon 10:13](#)).

In the New Testament, fear of God often accompanies instructions to love and serve the Lord ([Colossians 3:22](#); [1 Peter 2:17](#)). In [Luke 1:50](#), Mary's statement "His mercy extends to those who fear Him" means to revere and obey. In Acts, the term "God-fearer" refers to gentiles who attended the synagogue. Paul addresses them separately: "Men of Israel and you gentiles who fear God" ([Acts 13:16](#)). Cornelius was a God-fearing Roman centurion, recognized as leading a life acceptable to the Lord, even though he was not a Jew ([Acts 10:2,35](#)).

The fear of God also represents dread or terror of God's power and judgment, as seen in both the Old and New Testaments ([Genesis 3:10](#); [Deuteronomy 9:19](#); [Job 6:4](#); [9:28-29](#); [Psalm 76:8](#); [Matthew 17:7](#); [28:10](#); [Luke 5:10](#); [12:5](#); [Acts 5:5, 11](#); [1 Timothy 5:20](#)).

See also Fear; Proselyte.

God, Being and Attributes of

Inherent characteristics of God revealed in Scripture and displayed in God's actions in biblical history. They are characteristics equally of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's attributes are revealed in progressively richer and fuller ways within the history of redemption.

According to the Bible, the entire creation shows God's deity and eternal power ([Ps 19:1-6](#); [Rom 1:20](#)). God's providence also reveals certain of his attributes ([Mt 5:45](#); [Lk 6:35](#); [Acts 14:16-17](#); [17:22-31](#)). The fullest revelation of God's attributes is seen in his work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

How does Scripture express the characteristics of God? First, in the divine names by which God revealed himself ([Gn 1:1](#); [2:4](#); [17:1](#); [Ex 3:6, 14-15](#); [6:2-5](#)). Some of God's attributes are revealed implicitly in the biblical accounts of Creation, fall, Flood, Babel, and the exodus, and more fully in the various covenants God made with his people. To Israel, he identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Ex 3:15](#)). To the pharaoh, he identified himself as the "God of Israel" or the "God of the Hebrews" ([5:1-3](#)).

By the time the people of Israel had reached Mt Sinai, the revelation of God's attributes in the biblical narrative had become more explicit: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" ([Ex 34:6-7](#), rsv). This summary is repeated elsewhere with slight variations ([Nm 14:18](#); [Neh 9:17](#); [Ps 103:8](#); [Jer 32:18](#); [Jon 4:2](#)).

Preview

- The Attributes of God
- Incommunicable Attributes
- Communicable Attributes

The Attributes of God

The historic Christian confessions refer to various characteristics of God without calling them attributes or classifying them. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) shows a tendency toward classification, describing God as "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being,

wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." The first four attributes qualify the others.

Several ways of classifying the attributes have been suggested. Generally such schemes divide the divine attributes into pairs: negative and positive, natural and moral, absolute and relative, immanent and eminent, intransitive and transitive, quiescent and operative, antithetical and synthetical, or incommunicable and communicable. Roman Catholics prefer the distinction of negative and positive, or natural and moral. Lutherans generally favor the distinction between quiescent and operative attributes. Reformed and evangelical scholars usually distinguish incommunicable and communicable attributes. Karl Barth grouped the attributes under freedom and love, and then proposed pairs of attributes that reflect freedom-love or love-freedom. In spite of the diversity of labels given the groups of attributes, surprising agreement exists in the attributes listed under each group.

This article will make a distinction between incommunicable and communicable attributes without considering the classification itself as significant. No classification of God's attributes is fully satisfactory. The *incommunicable* attributes emphasize the absolute distinctness of God, his transcendent greatness and exalted nature. Such attributes have little or no analogy in God's creatures. The *communicable* attributes find some reflection or analogy in human beings created in God's image. They indicate the immanence of God in relation to creatures. Yet all the attributes are God's attributes; the distinction between God and man, between Creator and creature, is always basic.

Incommunicable Attributes

Acknowledging some diversity of theological opinion, the following attributes will be considered incommunicable: unity, spirituality, independence, immutability, eternity, and immensity. In addition, the incomprehensibility of God must be mentioned.

God's *incomprehensibility* is sometimes included in lists of his attributes. It seems preferable to regard it as a description of human inability to understand God fully. Incomprehensibility is therefore not an attribute, although it is a given in every discussion of God. Through his revelation God is truly known by faith, yet no creature will ever comprehend God the Creator. Likewise, no one will ever fully understand any one of God's attributes. Acknowledgment of God's incomprehensibility

should contribute to a spirit of humility in every consideration of God and his attributes ([Pss 139:6; 145:3; Is 40:28; 55:8-9; Mt 11:25-27; Rom 11:33-36; 1 Cor 2:6-16; 13:8-13](#)).

God's *unity* is an expression of monotheism—the fact that the God of Scripture is the only, living, true God ([Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29; Jn 17:3](#)). All other gods are idols and figments of human imagination. This attribute is reflected in the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” ([Ex 20:3](#)).

God's *spirituality* indicates that God is not physical and is invisible. Positively it means that God is personal, living, self-conscious, and self-determining. The invisible God cannot be seen by human eyes ([Ex 33:20](#)), so the second commandment forbids every visible representation of God ([20:4](#)). Because God is Spirit, he must be worshiped in spirit and in truth ([Jn 4:24](#)).

God's *independence* or self-existence indicates that he is not dependent upon anything outside himself. He is self-sufficient in his existence, in his decrees, and in all his works. God has “life in himself” ([Jn 5:26](#)) and “he himself gives life and breath and everything” ([Acts 17:25](#)). To Israel, he revealed himself as the “I Am” ([Ex 3:14](#)), and he made Israel a covenant people for his own possession. God continues to work out his will in the world, and even though he uses various means, his independence remains intact. Thus, he enters into fellowship with his covenant people, and he publishes the gospel through human agents.

God's *immutability* or constancy expresses his changelessness and his faithfulness to himself, to his decrees, promises, and works. He remains forever the same true God who undergoes no change from within or from anything outside himself. And so in [James 1:17](#) we read: “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (rsv). God's oath to Abraham expressed his immutability so that his covenant people could be sure of the “unchangeable character of his purpose” ([Heb 6:17](#)). Samuel told King Saul that the Lord would not “change his mind; for he is not a man” ([1 Sm 15:29](#), niv; cf. [Nm 23:19](#)). “For I the Lord do not change” ([Mal 3:6](#)). That was God's explanation for not destroying sinful Judah; he shows mercy and keeps his covenant. Because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,” Christians are warned not to be “led by diverse and strange teachings” ([Heb 13:8-9](#)).

God's immutability or constancy does not imply that he is static or immobile. He is a dynamic, living God who is constantly working ([Jn 5:17](#)). Sometimes God is described as being sorry, repenting, or changing his mind ([Gn 6:6-7; 1 Sm 15:11; Jon 3:10](#)). In their contexts, such figurative expressions show the constancy of a God who, in holiness and righteousness, always abhors sin and reacts against it. In his grace and mercy, he forgives the penitent, and he carries out his promises without fail ([Ps 110:4; Is 46:10; Jer 18:7-10; Eph 1:11](#)). Thus, the constancy of God is significant in all human relationships with him, including petitions offered in prayer.

God's *eternity* indicates his transcendence over time. He is timeless and everlasting. He has no beginning or end; he does not undergo growth, development, or maturation. He existed before the creation of the world; he dwells now in eternity; he will continue as the eternal God even when history ends. Scripture speaks of God as “eternal” ([Dt 33:27](#)), “the King” ([1 Tm 1:17](#)), “the beginning and the end” ([Rv 22:13](#)). He “inhabits eternity” ([Is 57:15](#)) and his “years have no end” ([Ps 102:27](#); cf. [2 Pt 3:8](#)). Although God is above time and is timeless, time is his creation and history is the arena of his work. “When the time had fully come God sent forth his Son” ([Gal 4:4](#)); Jesus Christ died on a Friday and rose on the third day.

God's *immensity* and *omnipresence* express his transcendence over space. God fills heaven and earth ([Jer 23:23-24](#)). Heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool, so he is not restricted to a temple building ([Is 66:1; Acts 17:24](#)). Yet God is immanent in this world and is actively at work in it to establish his kingdom. No one can hide from the omnipresent God ([Ps 139:6-12](#)). Jesus promised, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” ([Mt 28:20](#)). Since Pentecost ([Acts 2](#)), the Holy Spirit is said actually to dwell within the bodies of believers ([1 Cor 6:19](#)).

Communicable Attributes

Many attributes of God can be classified under this heading, although it is sometimes difficult to say which biblical references to God should be regarded as attributes. A rich diversity of terminology is found in Scripture, with many synonyms. For convenience, the communicable attributes are often classified as intellectual, moral, and volitional.

Intellectual Attributes

God's *knowledge* indicates that in a unique way God knows himself and all things possible and actual. *Omniscience* means that "he knows everything" ([1 Jn 3:20](#)). "Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" ([Ps 139:4](#)), including the secret thoughts of a person's heart. God's righteous judgment is rooted in the fact that he "knows the thoughts of man" ([Ps 94:11](#)). Acknowledging that God's omniscience is incomprehensible, the psalmist finds it a source of comfort ([139:1-5](#)). All the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ ([Col 2:3](#)); therefore, the Christian is told to bring every thought captive to obey Christ ([2 Cor 10:5](#)). Christian sanctification includes renewal in knowledge to become more like Christ ([Col 3:10](#)).

God's *wisdom* indicates that he uses his knowledge in the best possible manner to achieve his goals. God's works are varied, but they are all done in wisdom ([Ps 104:24](#)). "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" ([Prv 3:19](#)); his providence also displays his wisdom ([Gn 50:20](#)). Redemption through Jesus Christ reveals God's wisdom ([1 Cor 1:24](#)) and awakens awe and praise ([Rom 11:33-36](#)). Human beings should seek wisdom ([Prv 3:21](#))—wisdom rooted in the fear of God ([Jb 28:28](#); [Ps 111:10](#); [Prv 9:10](#)). Christians are said to be "wise in Christ" ([1 Cor 4:10](#)), and Christ charges them to act wisely ([Mt 10:16](#)), thus emulating the wisdom of God.

God's *veracity* expresses his truthfulness and faithfulness. He is the truth and he is faithful to himself, to his Word, and to his promises ([2 Tm 2:13](#)). "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" ([1 Jn 1:5](#)); therefore, his followers are to walk in the light ([vv 6-7](#)). Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" ([Jn 14:6](#)); hence, Christians are to walk in the truth and show faithfulness in their lives.

Moral Attributes

The most comprehensive description of God's moral character is his *goodness*. God deals bountifully and kindly with all his creatures. He is "good to all" ([Ps 145:9](#)). Jesus insisted that "no one is good but God alone" ([Mk 10:18](#); [Lk 18:19](#)). The redeemed praise God for his goodness ([1 Chr 16:34](#); [2 Chr 5:13](#); [Pss 106:1](#); [107:1](#); [118:1](#); [136:1](#); [Jer 33:11](#)) and are called upon to emulate this divine characteristic ([Mt 5:45](#); [Lk 6:27-36](#)).

God's *love* is the heartbeat of the gospel. Perfect love flows among the Persons of the Trinity ([Jn 3:35](#); [17:24](#)). At Sinai God revealed himself as

abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness ([Ex 34:6-7](#)), and all his covenantal relations with Abraham's descendants showed his steadfast love. The chief manifestation of God's love was the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ ([Jn 3:16](#)). The apostle John, who declared that "God is love," pointed to the cross to indicate what that love really meant: "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" ([1 Jn 4:8, 10](#)).

God's love shown to undeserving sinners is called *grace* ([Eph 1:6-8](#); [2:7-9](#); [Ti 3:4](#)). *Mercy* is God's love (sometimes his goodness) shown to those in misery and distress. God is *longsuffering* or patient in his love; he gives time for repentance.

God's *holiness* depicts the moral purity and excellence of God. The description of Jesus' holiness is applicable to each of the Persons of the Trinity: "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens" ([Heb 7:26](#)). The root idea of holiness is to be separate or set apart. Because of his inherent holiness, God is distinct from everything impure or unholy. God alone is holy; his name is holy, and he bears the name the "Holy One" ([Pss 78:41](#); [89:18](#); [99:3, 9](#); [111:9](#); [Is 12:6](#); [Jer 51:5](#); [Rv 15:4](#)). Angels praise God's holiness ([Is 6:3](#); [Rv 4:8](#)). Objects, places, and people are called holy when set apart for the worship of God. Because God is holy, his people are called to holiness ([Lv 11:44-45](#); [19:2](#); [1 Pt 1:14-15](#)). God's discipline of his people is aimed at making them share his holiness ([Heb 12:10](#)). The holiness of God is so prominent in Scripture that some have (mistakenly) regarded it as God's chief attribute.

Volitional Attributes

God's *sovereignty* indicates the divine authority with which he rules the entire creation and in his sovereign good pleasure does whatever he wills. God is King over the entire creation, and he rules the destiny of human beings and nations. He restores his kingdom through Jesus Christ; the risen Lord revealed that all authority in heaven and on earth was given to him ([Mt 28:18](#)). Election to salvation in Christ is "according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" ([Eph 1:11](#), rsv). God's sovereign will, though free, is not arbitrary; it is righteous and holy. He created the world and gave his law as the rule for his people's lives; he covenants, blesses, and judges. God is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" ([1 Tm 6:15](#)); he calls all his subjects to obedient love ([Dt 6:4-5](#); [Mt 22:37-40](#); [1 Jn 5:3](#)).

God's *sovereign power* means that he is without bounds or limit in ability; he is *omnipotent* or almighty ([Rv 4:8](#)). By his powerful word, he created all things, and upholds "the universe by his word of power" ([Heb 1:3](#)). There is nothing too hard for the Lord God Almighty ([Gn 18:14](#); [Jer 32:27](#); [Mt 19:26](#)); he keeps his gracious covenant and fulfills all his promises ([Lk 1:37](#); [2 Tm 2:13](#); [Heb 6:18](#)). The gospel is "the power of God for salvation" ([Rom 1:16](#)), for Christ is "the power of God" to save ([1 Cor 1:24](#)). Hence, believers must come to know "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" ([Eph 1:19-20](#), rsv).

God's Glory

All the attributes of God are summarized in Scripture's references to the *glory* of God. The majesty, splendor, beauty, and brilliance of God who dwells in unapproachable light are expressed by this indefinable term. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham ([Acts 7:2](#)); God showed his glory to Moses ([Ex 33:18-19](#); [34:6-7](#)). The God of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of glory ([Eph 1:17](#)). The heavens declare the glory of God ([Ps 19:1](#)); the majesty and glory of God fill heaven and earth ([8:1](#)). When finally every tongue shall confess Jesus as Lord, it will be for the glory of God the Father ([Phil 2:11](#)). Human beings were created for God's glory, and Christian believers are instructed to do everything for the glory of God ([1 Cor 10:31](#)), thus reflecting in themselves his inherent glory.

God, Names of

God's self-identifications expressing various aspects of his being.

Preview

- The Biblical Idea of Name
- The Names of God in the Old Testament
- The Names of God in the New Testament

The Biblical Idea of Name

In the Scriptures the name and person of God are inseparably related. This is in keeping with the biblical conception of what a name signifies.

In the Hebrew language, the term for "name" most probably meant "sign" or "distinctive mark." In the

Greek language, "name" (onoma) is derived from a verb that means "to know." A name, therefore, indicates that by which a person or object is to be known. But the idea of name is not to be taken in the sense of a label or an arbitrary means of identifying or specifying a person, place, or object. "Name" in biblical usage correctly describes the person, place, or object and indicates the essential character of that to which the name is given. Adam named the animals according to their nature ([Gn 2:19-20](#)); Noah means "one who brings relief and comfort" ([5:29](#)); Jesus means "savior" ([Mt 1:21](#)). When a person was given a new position or a radical change took place in his life, a new name was given to indicate that new aspect—for example, Abraham ("father of many," [Gn 17:5](#)), and Israel ("one who strives with God" or "God strives," [32:28](#)). The name of a person or people expressed what the person or people thought the proper description or statement of character was.

With regard to the names of God, there are considerable differences, and these are most clearly seen when biblical scholars and theologians confront the question of whether the names of God are ascriptions given by God concerning himself or they are ascriptions given to God by people who observed his acts and reflected on his character as discerned through a study of divine deeds. Here are some examples of various kinds of divine names:

1. Proper names: El, Yahweh, Adonai, Theos (God), Kurios (Lord).
2. Personal names: Father, Abba, Son, Jesus, Holy Spirit.
3. Titles: Creator, Messiah/Christ, Paraclete/Comforter.
4. Essential names: Light, Love, Spirit.
5. Descriptive names: Rock, Ba'al, Master, Rabboni, Shepherd.

The Names of God in the Old Testament

El and Related Names

The name 'El is found over 200 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is best translated as "God." The term 'el has a number of possible meanings. The root is thought by some to be 'ul, which means "to be first" or "to be strong." Others suggest the root is 'alah, which means "to precede" and suggests "leader" or "commander." It can also mean "to be afraid." Thus God as 'alah, as the strong one, is to be feared. Still others suggest the preposition 'el ("to, toward") as

the root; the idea then is of “one giving self to others” or of “one to whom others go for help.” Some scholars suggest that the word ‘alim, meaning “to bind,” should be considered as a root also—that is, “the strong one binds and holds firm control.” Common to these four suggested root meanings is the idea of strength, power, and of supreme excellence and greatness.

‘El in the OT is used particularly in the earlier books, where it describes God’s exercising dynamic power as distinguished from authority. ‘El speaks of God as the great doer and producer. He is the One who exercises such power that whatever is made, done, kept, or destroyed is his doing (cf. [Ex 15](#)). ‘El is also used to express the idea that God is not to be identified as part of creation but as the One who is above, behind, and beyond creation ([Ps 19:1](#)).

‘Elohim is also commonly used as the name of God, occurring over 2,500 times in the OT. There are differences of opinion concerning the exact origin and meaning of this plural name. Some have suggested that ‘Elohim is the plural form of ‘El, but it seems more likely that it is a plural of ‘Eloah, which appears in the poetical writings. Some critical writers have suggested that this plural form is borrowed from pagan polytheistic sources, but no such plural form is found among pagans as the name of a deity. Others have suggested that the plural form is used to indicate the triune nature of God, and support for this has been seen in the use of a singular verb with this plural noun. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity, as it is developed throughout the Scriptures, does not appear to be based on the use of this plural form of God’s name, even though the two positions are not contradictory.

The plural form, ‘Elohim, is best understood as expressing intensity. God makes himself known by this name as the Lord of intense and extensive glory and richness as he exercises his preeminence and power in the created cosmos. Hence, when the Scripture speaks of creation, it states, “In the beginning ‘Elohim created the heavens and the earth” ([Gn 1:1](#)). This name is repeated 35 times in [Genesis 1](#) and [2](#) in connection with God’s power as revealed in Creation. In the book of Deuteronomy the name ‘Elohim is used repeatedly to stress the majestic power of God that was shown in Israel’s release from bondage in Egypt, preservation in the wilderness, and preparation for entrance into the Promised Land. In this context, God (‘Elohim) is also recognized as the Lawgiver who will powerfully execute judgment on covenant

breakers. The psalmists also used this named repeatedly as they acknowledged and praised God the majestic ruler who had demonstrated his omnipotence in many dimensions of life (see [Ps 68](#), in which ‘Elohim appears 26 times.)

Some scholars point to the use of ‘Elohim when God spoke to Abraham and said he would be ‘Elohim to the patriarch and his seed; that is, God would be in a covenant relationship to them ([Gn 17:1-8](#)). Included in this relationship is the idea that God is ever ready to use his power on behalf of those who are in covenant with him. Thus, ‘Elohim also expresses the concept of God’s faithfulness in regard to the covenant and the promises and blessings involved in it.

The name ‘Eloah occurs mainly in the poetical writings, no fewer than 41 times in Job. Isaiah used it to express the incomparable character of God ([Is 44:8](#)). In like manner David asked, “Who is God [‘Eloah], but the Lord?” ([2 Sm 22:32](#)). Moses was the first to use the name ‘Eloah in his song ([Dt 32:15-17](#)), referring to Israel’s God in the context of the “no-gods,” which had been chosen in place of the Rock of salvation and the incomparable One. This name was probably used to stress the fact that God is the only true and living One, the One to be adored and worshiped; he is to be revered with a holy fear.

Another closely related name is ‘Elah, found in Ezra and Daniel. Some think ‘Elah is a Chaldee or Aramaic form of ‘Eloah. Its root is said to be ‘alah, which means “to fear” or “to be perplexed.” God as ‘Elah is the God to be feared and worshiped accordingly. In view of this meaning, it can be understood why, in the time of Israel’s exile and immediately after their return, this name was commonly used.

Three other names of God include the term ‘El:

‘El ‘Elyon is the name used to designate the God of Melchizedek ([Gn 14:18-22](#)) as God Most High. In [Psalms 57:2](#) and [78:56](#) the Hebrew reads ‘Elohim ‘Elyon. It is believed that the term ‘Elyon is derived from the verb ‘alah, meaning “go up, be elevated, to be exalted.” There are a number of instances where the term ‘Elyon is used alone, but the context indicates that it is then used as a synonym for God (e.g., [Nm 24:16](#); [Ps 83:18](#); [Is 14:14](#)). The term ‘elyon is used quite frequently as an adjective; it is then translated as “high, highest, upper, uppermost.” The basic ascription given to God when this name is employed is to One who is above all things as the maker, possessor, and ruler. He is incomparable in

every way; he is subject to no one and no thing; he is the Exalted One.

'El Shaddai is used in the longer form seven times in the Scriptures ([Gn 17:1](#); [28:3](#); [35:11](#); [43:14](#); [48:3](#); [Ex 6:3](#); [Ez 10:5](#)). In the shorter form (Shaddai), it appears more frequently: in [Job 30](#) times; in [Psalms 19:1](#) and [68:14](#); once in [Ruth \(1:21\)](#), [Isaiah \(13:6\)](#), [Ezekiel \(1:24\)](#), and [Joel \(1:15\)](#). In these passages the combined ideas of God as the all-powerful, all-sufficient, transcendent, sovereign ruler and disposer are present. This meaning is generally accepted, but there are differences as to the exact meaning of the term Shaddai. Some have begun with shad as the first concept to be considered; its meaning is "breast, pap, or teat," and it is considered a "precious metaphor" of the God who nourishes, supplies, and satisfies. The root of shad (shadah), in Semitic usage, is to moisten. This meaning is not the preferred one in the context of which 'El Shaddai appears; nor is shed (demon), which some scholars have sought to use because it appears in [Deuteronomy 32:17](#) and [Psalm 106:37](#) speaking of Israel's idolatry. In addition to the fact that shed is spelled differently, the connection between the concept of demon and God as all-powerful is difficult to establish. More acceptable is the suggestion that Shaddai is a composite term of sha ("the one who") and dai ("is sufficient"). The later Greek versions have adopted this meaning. The most preferred explanation is that Shaddai is derived from the verb shadad ("to overpower, to deal violently, or to devastate"). A clear connection between shadad and Shaddai is said to be found in [Isaiah 13:6](#) and [Joel 1:15](#). God as 'El Shaddai is presented as the all-powerful One, totally self-sufficient, absolute ruler, and the One who can and does make final disposition. The Septuagint has adapted this meaning; it translates 'El Shaddai as Pantokrator, the "All-Ruler" or "Sovereign One."

'El 'Olam is used to refer to God as the everlasting or eternal One, a clear instance where the name of God and an attribute of God are combined. The term 'olam has a wide range of uses. It is usually defined in lexicons as meaning "long duration, antiquity, and indefinite futurity." It is used to speak of God's existence, of God's covenant and promises, and of the Messiah's reign. Speaking to God, the psalmist said, "You are from 'olam (everlasting) to 'olam (everlasting)" ([Ps 90:2](#)), and the prophet Isaiah spoke of God as the everlasting Creator ([Is 40:28](#)) and as everlasting strength ([26:4](#)), and Jeremiah spoke of God as everlasting King ([Jer 10:10](#)). God's everlastingness or eternity speaks of his infinity in relation to time. 'Olam, as

ascribed to God, should not be thought of as duration prolonged indefinitely backward and forward. Rather, the word speaks to God's transcending all temporal limits; in addition, 'olam refers to the quality of God that differs essentially from time. The Scriptures speak of 'El 'Olam in contexts where the believer's assurance of well-being, security, and hope are presented as prized possessions.

'El Gibbor is a name that speaks of God's power and might. Gibbor alone is used in reference to mighty and heroic men. The two terms together always refer to God, and in some instances Haggadol ("the greatest") is added ([Dt 10:17](#); [Jer 32:18](#)) to emphasize the greatness and awesome majesty of God. 'El Gibbor is also used to describe the Messiah in [Isaiah 9:6](#) (cf. [Ps 45:4](#)).

'El Ro'i is used once to describe God as the seeing One. Hagar described the Lord this way when she was found in the wilderness ([Gn 16:13](#)). [Psalm 139:1-2](#) expresses this concept of God as the all-seeing One from whose eye nothing is hidden (cf. [Ps 33:18](#)).

Yahweh is a distinctly proper name of God. It is never used to refer to any pagan gods; neither is it used in regard to men. It appears 6,823 times in the OT, occurring first in [Genesis 2:4](#), where it is joined with 'Elohim. Yahweh is used 164 times in Genesis, and it appears 1,800 times in Exodus through Joshua. It never appears in a declined form in the Hebrew language, and it never occurs in the plural form or with suffixes. It is abbreviated as Yah and Yahu (cf. [Ex 15:2](#); [Ps 68:4](#); [Is 12:2](#); etc.).

The exact meaning of the name Yahweh is difficult to determine. Some have sought the root in the verb hayah ("to be") or in an ancient form of that same verb, hawah. There is no agreement as to whether the qal or hiphil form of the verb should be considered as the root. Those who opt for the hiphil form read Yahweh to mean "cause to be"; thus [Exodus 3:14](#) would read, "I will cause to be what has come to be." Others look to the qal form and then translate the name as "I Am" or "I Shall Be." Still others are inclined to disassociate the name from the verb hayah and regard it as an original and independent term, expressing the uniqueness of Israel's gracious God.

Translators of the OT have not agreed upon the correct translation of the name Yahweh. Since it is translated into the Greek as kurios, which means "Lord," many have rendered Yahweh as "Lord." But 'Adonai, which is best rendered "Lord," appears

with Yahweh in various instances. The kjv, for example, translates Yahweh as “God,” and ‘Adonai as “Lord.” Some modern translators have chosen to use Yahweh (see jb and njb). The name Jehovah, as used in the asv (1901), has been judged unacceptable. This name arose due to the Jewish practice of not pronouncing Yahweh because of [Leviticus 24:16](#), “He that blasphemes the name of Yahweh shall surely be put to death.” This warning against a vain or blasphemous use of the name was taken in an absolute sense, especially after Israel’s deportation (cf. [Am 6:10](#)). Hence, when reading the OT the Jews substituted either ‘Elohim or ‘Adonai for Yahweh. From this, the practice of adding the vowels of ‘Adonai to YHWH (JeHoWaH) became established.

The interpretation of [Exodus 6:2-3](#) has caused much debate. “And God said to Moses, ‘I am Yahweh; I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as ‘El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them.’” This passage has been understood to mean that the name Yahweh was not known or used prior to the time of Moses. But that is not what the passage states; rather, it speaks of the patriarchs not knowing God as Yahweh. They knew him as ‘El Shaddai in actual revelatory historical deeds. They had not come to know God according to his unique character, that is, as Yahweh. In other words, God had always been Yahweh; he is saying to Moses that the descendants of the patriarchs would come to know the full, rich meaning of the name by the way God dealt with them.

This name Yahweh reveals God’s nature in the highest and fullest sense possible. It includes, or presupposes, the meaning of the other names. Yahweh particularly stresses the absolute faithfulness of God. God had promised the patriarchs that he would be their God, that he would be with them and deliver and bless them, keep them, and give them a land as a place of service and inheritance. Moses is told by God that Israel is about to behold and experience the unchangeableness of God as he steadfastly and wondrously remembers his word and executes it to the fullest degree. God would prove to be a faithful, redeeming, upholding, restoring God. In working out this redemption, God would demonstrate that he is all that his name implies: merciful, gracious, patient, full of loving-kindness, truthful, faithful, forgiving, just, and righteous ([Ex 34:5-6](#)). Truly, Jacob had received an insight into the meaning of the name when he exclaimed, “I wait for thy salvation, O Yahweh” ([Gn 49:18](#)).

Yahweh, then, is the name par excellence of Israel’s God. As Yahweh, he is a faithful covenant God who, having given his word of love and life, keeps that word by bestowing love and life abundantly on his own.

In view of the richness of the name Yahweh, it can be understood why there were stringent rules regarding its proper use ([Lv 24:11, 16](#)). It also explains why thankful, rejoicing, worshipping Israelites used the abbreviated form of Yahweh in song when they sang Hallelujah: “Praise Yah” ([Pss 104:35; 106:1; 149:1; 150:1](#)).

Yahweh is used in a number of phrases that are considered names of or ascriptions of God. The most common of these compound names is Yahweh Tseba’oth (“hosts”). The word “hosts” is used frequently in the Pentateuch to refer to the armies of Israel (cf. [Nm 10:14-28](#)). This is because the word is derived from the verb saba’, which means “to wage” war. It also means “to serve” in some contexts; for example, [Numbers 8:24](#) clearly has reference to the service performed in the tabernacle. The noun tseba’oth first occurs in [Genesis 2:1](#), where it refers to the many components of the earth and heaven. Some would limit the reference in these contexts to the stars. Still others would suggest that the tseba’oth refers to the angels, appealing to [Psalm 33:6](#) for confirmation.

The compound name Yahweh Tseba’oth first appears in [1 Samuel 1:3](#). In view of the frequent use of tseba’oth in 1—2 Samuel to refer to armies ([1 Sm 12:9; 14:50; 17:55; 2 Sm 2:8; 8:16; 10:16](#)), it is thought that the compound name refers to Yahweh as the God of armies, that is, God has his armies to serve him. These are considered to be armies of angels who are ministering servants to God. It has been correctly pointed out that the compound name Yahweh Tseba’oth is used most frequently by the prophets (Jeremiah, 88 times; Zechariah, 55 times; Malachi, 25 times; Haggai, 14 times) at times when God’s people had either suffered defeat at the hands of enemy armies or were threatened by defeat. Therefore, the compound name was used to remind them that their covenant God had great hosts to fight and work for him on behalf of his people. Thus, though Israel’s armies failed, their covenant God was sufficient for every possible circumstance. And it was to this Yahweh Tseba’oth that Israel’s commanders were to give allegiance ([Jos 5:14-15](#)), and in whose name Israel was blessed ([2 Sm 6:18](#)).

Several other compound names occur infrequently:

Yahweh-Nissi (nissi, “my banner”) is the name that Moses called on when he built an altar celebrating Israel’s God-given victory over the Amalekites ([Ex 17:15](#)). Isaiah uses the term nissi when speaking of the coming Messiah who is to be the conqueror ([Is 11:10](#)).

Yahweh-Rapha (rapha, “healer”) appears in [Exodus 15:26](#), when Israel is assured that God, their healer, will prevent the diseases of Egypt from affecting Israel. Although the name is only used once, God was often called upon and praised as the healing One (e.g., [Ps 103:3](#); [Is 30:26](#); [Jer 6:14](#)).

Yahweh-Rohi (ro’i, “my shepherd”) appears in [Psalm 23:1](#). The concept of Yahweh as shepherd is explicated in [Ezekiel 34](#). “I myself will be the Shepherd of my sheep” (v [15](#)). Jesus demonstrated this concept’s full meaning when as a shepherd he gave his life for his sheep.

Yahweh-Jireh (yir’eh, “to see ahead or to provide”) appears in [Genesis 22:14](#). Abraham gave this name to the place where God provided a substitute for his son Isaac, whom Abraham was to offer as a sacrifice to God. Yahweh-Shalom (shalom, “peace”) is the name Gideon gave to the altar he built when the angel of the Lord came to give him orders to fight the Midianites ([Jgs 6:24](#)).

Yahweh appears with a few forms of the term tsadaq, “righteousness.” Yahweh is spoken of as our righteousness in [Jeremiah 23:6](#); the thought evidently is that David’s Righteous Branch (the Messiah) will attribute God’s righteousness to those who are incorporated in the new covenant. This concept is expressed in the Pentateuch a number of times when it is said that God has provided a way for living righteously; that is, God provides a way of sanctification (cf. [Lv 20:8](#); [22:9](#)).

’Adonai as a name for God appears about 360 times in the OT, though it is not uniformly used. It is first found in [Genesis 15:2](#) and [8](#), when Abram requests more definite information concerning a son and the Promised Land. It appears only 14 times after that in the Pentateuch. It appears repeatedly in the Psalms (over 50 times), and certain of the prophets use it frequently (Isaiah, 47 times; Jeremiah, 29 times; Ezekiel, over 150 times; and Amos, 27 times).

The word ’adan, meaning “master, ruler, owner, lord,” is thought to be the root of the noun ’adon, which is frequently used of men. For example, in Genesis and 1—2 Samuel the term is used often for men who own slaves or are in positions of authority. ’Adonai is correctly described as the

name of personal communication between the believer and God. In such communication the worshiper acknowledged God’s intense majesty and greatness and also the sense of belonging to this God. ’Adonai, coming from human lips, expressed honor for God and humble submission on the part of the believing person. ’Adonai, thus, is the name that expresses faith, assurance, security, ready service, and thanksgiving ([Pss 16:2](#); [57:9–10](#)).

Old Testament Name Combinations

In the OT the names of God appear in various combinations. For example ’Elohim-Yahweh, ’Elohim-Yahweh-’Adonai, and ’Elohim-’Adonai are very common. These combinations were an effort to express the fullness of God’s being and character as these had been revealed. Names of God in combination with “Israel” occur also as, for example, with Yahweh-God-Israel ([Jgs 5:3](#); [Is 17:6](#)). God is also invoked in relation to Israel without the mention of one of his names—for example, Qedosh Yisrael (“Holy One of Israel,” [Is 43:14](#)) and ’Abir Yisrael (“Mighty One of Israel,” [Gn 49:24](#); [Ps 132:2](#); [Is 49:26](#)). By means of these phrases, the covenantal relationship between God and his people was expressed and God’s unchanging character was positively acknowledged.

Old Testament Personal Names

The personal names of God are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and variations of these.

The term ’Abh (“father”) appears more frequently in Genesis than in any other book, and in the Pentateuch more than in any other division of the OT. But it is not used there of God but rather of one who has generated children (i.e., the male parent), the progenitor—head, chief, and ruler of the family group or clan. It is used often in the sense of the responsible one through whom God has spoken, with whom God has dealt, and through whom he has given a rich heritage to the children and descendants of the patriarchs.

In the poetical books, God is referred to as Father but is not directly named as such. Job is asked, “Has the rain a father?” ([Jb 38:28](#)). The reference is to God as the maker, source, and controller of rain. In [Psalm 68:5](#) God in his holy dwelling place is the “Father of the fatherless”; the parallel phrase, “protector of widows,” indicates the sense. [Psalm 89:26](#) says that David will cry to God, “Thou art my Father,” and the parallels use the terms “God” and “Rock of my salvation.” The idea here is of God as

Creator and Savior who raised up, delivered, and protected David. In [Psalm 103:13](#), “Father” is used analogously, “As a father pities his children.”

Isaiah uses the term “Father” in relation to God four times. Three times it refers to the One who has made, saved, formed, kept, and directed Israel ([Is 63:16](#); [64:8](#)). Isaiah says the promised child is to be named Everlasting Father ([9:6](#)). Used in this sense, the term establishes the Son’s equality with the Father in stature, function, ability, and responsibility. Jeremiah also refers to God as Father in [Jeremiah 3:4, 19](#), meaning the origin, keeper, and friend of his people Israel. [Malachi 1:6](#) and [2:10](#) speak of God as the parent who deserves honor from his children and as the origin and ruler of all people.

The term “son” is one of the most-used terms in the OT; it commonly occurs in the sense of offspring and descendant. It also appears in the sense of follower or successor. There are a few indirect references to the second person of the Trinity.

The messianic [Psalm 2](#) has such a reference: “You are my son” (v [7](#)). It is stated in the context of the king speaking to one who rules and is to rule with and under the sovereign. The immediate reference may be to the theocratic king; however, the reference is revealed in the NT to be the second person of the Trinity ([Acts 13:33](#)). Thus, the term “son” is applied to the promised Messiah who is set forth as the divine sovereign ruler and judge of the nations. The Son is perceived to be equal with the Father in deity and function. Not all biblical scholars accept this interpretation, but support is found in such NT passages as [Hebrews 1:8](#) which quotes [Psalm 45:6](#). As stated above, Isaiah speaks of the son to be given ([Is 9:6](#)), the One born of the virgin ([7:14](#)), who is Immanuel, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The name “Holy Spirit” occurs only a few times in the OT. The Spirit is referred to frequently by terms and phrases such as “the Spirit of God” ([Gn 1:2](#)), “the Spirit of the Lord God” ([Is 61:1](#)), “the Spirit of the Lord” ([Ez 37:1](#)), “the Spirit” ([Nm 11:17](#); [27:18](#)), “my Spirit” ([Gn 6:3](#)), and “your Spirit” ([Ps 51:11](#)). Though the character of the Spirit is not developed as clearly in the OT as in the NT, it can be safely stated that the relationship posited between God and the Spirit is such that there is no doubt that the OT teaches the deity of the Spirit. The character and function of the Spirit is referred to especially in relation to the work of creation ([Gn 1:2](#); [Ps 33:6](#); etc.) and the equipping of servants for the service of God—for example, craftsmanship ([Ex 35:31](#)),

leadership ([Nm 11:17](#); [27:18](#)), and prophecy ([1 Sm 10:6](#); [2 Sm 23:2](#); [2 Chr 15:1](#); [Ez 11:5](#)).

The Names of God in the New Testament

Proper Names of God

Theos is the NT equivalent of the OT names ‘El and ‘Elohim; ‘Elyon appears in the NT as Hupsistos, the Highest ([Mk 5:7](#); [Lk 1:32, 76](#)). Pantokrator (‘El Shaddai) appears with Theos ([2 Cor 6:18](#); [Rv 16:7](#)). This name was used not only to express God’s transcendency, power, sovereignty, and lordship, but also to express that God is one who has a close relationship with his people. This fact is established by the very frequent use of personal pronouns with Theos. The name Theos appears over 1,000 times in the NT.

Kurios, “Lord,” is used to express the OT names Yahweh and ‘Adonai in the Septuagint, and the NT follows it. Kurios means “power,” so the meaning is not the same as with Yahweh; yet the NT does give Kurios the full weight of meaning that the OT gave to Yahweh, especially when used of Jesus Christ (cf. [Acts 2:36](#); [Phil 2:9–11](#); etc.)

Despotes is used five times of God or Jesus in the NT ([Lk 2:29](#); [Acts 4:24](#); [2 Pt 2:11](#); [Jude 1:4](#); [Rv 6:10](#)). It expresses the idea of authority. The idea of brutality conveyed by the modern concept “despot” is absent from the NT usage even when applied to men, where its central thought is ownership ([2 Tm 2:21](#)).

Personal Names of God

In the baptismal formula, which is part of the Great Commission ([Mt 28:19–20](#)), the three personal names of God appear: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These names carry the OT meaning, but since the relationship of the three Persons is explicated, the NT meaning of the names is enriched.

“Jesus” is the personal name of the Son, the second person of the triune Godhead. It means “savior” ([Mt 1:21](#)). The root of this name “to save” gave rise to names such as Joshua, Hoshea, and Hosea. The basic meaning of the OT root is “to bring into a safe, wide-open place.” Joshua, bringing Israel into Canaan, personally did what his name meant. The NT explanation (“save from sin”) is not contrary to the OT meaning. To be saved from sin is to be restored to fellowship with God and to enter into the paradise of the heavenly kingdom.

See also Christology; God, Being and Attributes of; Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of; Messiah; Names, Significance of.

Gods and Goddesses

Gods and goddesses are beings that people believe have special powers over nature, human life, or the universe. A god is male, and a goddess is female. In ancient times, many people worshiped different gods and goddesses ([Jeremiah 10:11](#)). The Bible teaches that there is only one true God ([Isaiah 45:18, 21-22](#); [Mark 12:32](#)). However, different nations created and worshiped their own gods, usually more than one. Many of the "foreign gods" (as mentioned in [1 Samuel 7:3](#)) are mentioned in the Bible, which often tells us which nation worshiped each god.

Named Gods and Goddesses in the Old Testament

Mesopotamia was a center of idol worship. The list of gods from this region is the longest in the Bible. People in Mesopotamia created and worshiped many different gods:

- Adrammelech and Anammelech ([2 Kings 17:31](#))
- Bel (also called "Marduk," [Isaiah 46:1](#); [Jeremiah 50:2](#); [51:44](#))
- Kaiwan ([Amos 5:26](#))
- Nebo or Nabu ([Isaiah 46:1](#))
- Nergal ([2 Kings 17:30](#))
- Nisroch ([2 Kings 19:37](#); [Isaiah 37:38](#))
- Rephan ([Acts 7:43](#))
- Sakkuth ([Amos 5:26](#))
- Succoth-benoth ([2 Kings 17:30](#))
- Tammuz ([Ezekiel 8:14](#))
- Tartak ([2 Kgs 17:31](#))

The Syrians worshipped:

- Ashima ([2 Kings 17:30](#))
- Rimmon (also called "Hadad-rimmon," [2 Kings 5:18](#); [Zechariah 12:11](#))

The Ammonites worshiped:

- Milcom or Molech ([1 Kings 11:5-7, 33](#); [2 Kings 23:13](#))

The Moabites worshiped:

- Chemosh
- Baal ([Numbers 25:3-5](#))

The Philistines worshiped:

- Dagon
- Baal-zebub (called "Beelzebul" in the New Testament, [2 Kings 1:2-3, 6, 16](#); [Matthew 12:24](#); [Luke 11:15](#))

The Canaanites worshiped:

- Baal
- Asherah
- Ashtoreth (also called "Ishtar" or the "Queen of Heaven," [Jeremiah 7:18](#); [44:17-19, 25](#))

Only two Egyptian gods are named in the Bible:

- Amon ([Jeremiah 46:25](#))
- Apis ([Jeremiah 46:15](#))

Nibhaz was probably an Elamite god ([2 Kings 17:31](#)).

Named Gods and Goddesses in the New Testament

Three Greek and Roman gods are mentioned in the New Testament:

- Artemis (called "Diana" by the Romans, [Acts 19:24-28, 34-35](#))
- Zeus (called "Jupiter" by the Romans, [Acts 14:12-13](#))
- Hermes (called "Mercury" by the Romans, [Acts 14:12-13](#))

The Gods of the Nations Are Not Real

The Bible teaches that the gods of the nations are not real, even though their worshipers believe that they are ([Jeremiah 2:11; 28](#)). God says that "they are no gods at all" ([Jeremiah 2:11; 16:20](#)) or are gods "that are not gods" ([Jeremiah 5:7](#)). The New Testament has the same message. Paul writes that "an idol is nothing at all" ([1 Corinthians 8:4](#)). He said that "man-made gods are no gods at all" ([Acts 19:26](#)). From the earliest times, when the Israelites first met people from other nations, God reminded them that he was more powerful than all other gods ([Exodus 15:11; 18:11; Deuteronomy 10:17; 1 Chronicles 16:25; 2 Chronicles 2:5; Psalms 86:8; 95:3; 96:4-5; 97:7-9; 135:5, 136:2; Daniel 2:47; Zephaniah 2:11](#)).

Israel's Struggle with Idol Worship

These gods were not worthy of Israel's attention or worship. Since there is only one God, other gods did not deserve Israel's worship ([Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7](#)). The Hebrew language did not even have a word for "goddess" and therefore had to use the word for "god" to discuss goddesses ([1 Kings 11:5, 33](#)). The Israelites were told not to make images ([Exodus 20:4, 23; Leviticus 19:4; Deuteronomy 5:8](#)). They were not to mention the gods and goddesses of the non-Jewish peoples that lived around them ([Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7](#)).

Despite God's warnings, the Israelites often turned to worship other gods throughout their history. This problem started very early when Jacob's family still kept small idols in their homes ([Genesis 31:32](#)). The people continued to worship other gods even after God rescued them from Egypt ([Exodus 32:1-4, 8, 23, 31; 34:15; Hosea 11:2](#)).

This unfaithfulness to God had serious consequences. In 722 BC, the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed because the people worshiped idols instead of God ([2 Kings 17:7-18](#)). Later, in 586 BC, the southern kingdom of Israel was also destroyed for the same reason ([2 Kings 22:17; compare Deuteronomy 29:25-28](#)). When the Jewish people were taken to Babylon as

captives, they saw how empty idol worship was and finally turned away from it. They could have avoided much suffering if they had followed Joshua's example when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" ([Joshua 24:15](#)).

See also Canaanite Deities and Religion; Idols, Idolatry; High Place.

Gog

1. Reubenite, Shemaiah's son ([1 Chr 5:4](#)).
2. Individual described as the prince of Meshech who ruled over the land of Magog ([Ez 38:2-21; 39:1-16](#)). Magog was evidently a territory located far from Palestine whose inhabitants would attack Jerusalem in a final attempt to overthrow God's people. The Lord, through Ezekiel, promised Gog a catastrophic defeat.

Attempts to identify Gog with some historical ruler have not been convincing. Gyges of Lydia, who drove out Cimmerian invaders, has been suggested, but equally probable are Gaga, mentioned in the Amarna tablets, and Gagi, king of the city-state of Sabi. Some have maintained a mythological interpretation, in which Gog is a symbol of evil actively opposing good. Certainly Gog—connected in Scripture with godless nations such as Gomer, Put, Persia, Sheba, and Tarshish—is depicted as leading an alliance of world powers in opposition to God. Gog also appears in Revelation ([20:7-9](#)), where Satan mobilizes Gog and Magog (i.e., the nations of the world) against God's saints in a final battle. A literal view contemplates an attack on Jerusalem by hostile forces (cf. [Zec 14](#)), while a symbolic interpretation envisions a climactic conflict between good and evil.

Goiim

1. People or region mentioned in [Genesis 14:1, 9](#) as ruled by a king named Tidal. The word is variously translated "nations" (kjv) and "Goiim" (rsv, nlt). Tidal, together with three other kings—Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Ellasar, and Kedorlaomer of Elam—attacked several cities in the valley of Siddim near the Dead Sea ([Gn 14:3](#)). They defeated the five kings of the valley region, looted their towns, and captured Lot, Abraham's nephew, who lived in Sodom (v [12](#)). When Abraham heard of this, he gathered his soldiers, pursued the victorious kings, defeated them, and rescued Lot (vv [13-16](#)).

2. People mentioned in connection with Joshua's victory over an unknown king of Gaiim ([Jos 12:23](#)). The location of these people is uncertain, since the verse reads "Gilgal" in the Hebrew text and "Galilee" in the Septuagint.

Golan

City and a district in the territory given to Manasseh in Bashan. It was the northernmost city of refuge east of the Jordan River ([Dt 4:43](#); [Jos 20:8](#)), given to the Levite family of Gershon ([Jos 21:27](#); [1 Chr 6:71](#)). Of uncertain identification, it was known to Josephus as a fertile area, and to Eusebius as a village. The best current suggestion places it at Sehem el-Jolan, east of the river el-'Allan.

See also Cities of Refuge; Levitical Cities.

Gold

Soft, yellow metallic element. *See* Coins; Minerals and Metals; Money.

Golden Calf

A calf-shaped idol made from gold jewelry given by the Israelites ([Exodus 32:1-4](#)). The people asked Aaron to make this idol while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from God. When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw the people worshipping the golden calf and celebrating in immoral ways. So, he broke the stone tablets that had the commandments written on them. Then he ground the golden calf into powder, scattered it on the water, and made the people drink it ([Exodus 32:15-20](#)). Some of the people who worshiped the idol were killed ([Exodus 32:25-29](#)). Others were punished by God with a plague ([Exodus 32:33-35](#)).

Aaron's golden calf was probably based on Apis, an Egyptian bull god. Apis was connected to another Egyptian god named Osiris. When these bulls died, they were buried as Osiris-Apis. This name later became Serapis during the time between the Old and New Testaments. The serious nature of Aaron's golden calf is shown by several mentions of it in other parts of the Bible ([Deuteronomy 9:16, 21](#); [Nehemiah 9:18](#), [Psalm 106:19-20](#); [Acts 7:39-41](#)).

Jeroboam I was the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel after the nation divided. He ruled from 930 to 909 BC. Jeroboam set up worship centers (shrines) at Dan in the far north and at Bethel in the south. He placed a golden calf in each shrine ([1 Kings 12:26-33](#); [2 Chronicles 11:13-15](#)). The prophets of Israel knew that these calves were not the one true God ([Hosea 8:5-6](#)). The prophet Hosea called the calf at Bethel (which means "house of God") the calf of "Beth-aven" (which means "house of wickedness," [Hosea 10:5-6](#)). Within 200 years of Jeroboam's rule, people had begun to show such devotion that they even kissed the calves ([Hosea 13:2](#)). Jeroboam's sinful act was listed as one of the main reasons for the destruction of Samaria (Israel's capital city) and the exile of the northern kingdom in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:16](#)).

Golden Calf

See Calf, Golden.

Goldsmith

A goldsmith was a skilled worker who made things from gold. Some made expensive idols (false gods) for people to worship ([Isaiah 40:19](#); [41:7](#); [46:6](#); [Jeremiah 10:9, 14](#); [51:17](#)). Others created holy items and gold coverings for the tabernacle and Solomon's temple ([Exodus 31:4](#); [35:32](#); [1 Kings 6:20-35](#)). After the people of Israel returned from exile in Babylon, the goldsmiths formed a special group of workers. They helped fix and restore the temple in Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 3:8, 31-32](#)).

See also Minerals and Metals.

Golgotha

Golgotha is the place where Jesus and two thieves were killed. It was near Jerusalem. The name appears in the New Testament only in the stories of Jesus's death. Three of the Gospels use the Hebrew-Aramaic word, "Golgotha" ([Matthew 27:33](#); [Mark 15:22](#); [John 19:17](#)). Luke uses "Calvary," meaning "skull" ([Luke 23:33](#)).

Why Was It Called "The Skull"?

We do not know for certain why this place was called "the skull." People have suggested different explanations:

- Jerome, a Christian teacher who lived from AD 346 to 420, told a story that it was a place where many people were killed, and their skulls were left there. However, we have no proof of this from Jesus's time.
- Some people think it was called "skull" because it was a place of death, using the skull as a symbol of death. Origen, an early Christian writer who lived from AD 185 to 253, mentions an early, pre-Christian tradition that says Adam's skull was buried there. This is probably the oldest known explanation of the name. Other writers after Origen also refer to this tradition.
- Others have suggested the place got its name because it was a hill shaped like a skull. However, we have no proof of this, and the New Testament does not describe it as a hill.

Where Was Golgotha?

People today do not agree on the exact location of Golgotha. The Bible gives us several clues about where it was:

- It was outside the city ([John 19:20](#); [Hebrews 13:12](#)).
- It may have been on high ground since people could see it from far away ([Mark 15:40](#)).
- It was maybe near a road because people "who passed by" are mentioned ([Matthew 27:39](#); [Mark 15:29](#)).
- John's story puts it near a garden with the tomb where Jesus was buried ([John 19:41](#)).
- The use of "the" before "place" in "the place of the skull" suggests it was a well-known place.

Later Searches for Golgotha

People did not seem interested in finding Golgotha until around AD 300. Eusebius, a Christian

historian who lived in Jerusalem for several years, wrote that Emperor Constantine asked Bishop Macarius to find the place where Jesus was killed and buried.

According to later stories, Queen Helena had a dream that led the bishop to the location. The place he chose had a temple of Aphrodite built by Emperor Hadrian. Constantine destroyed the temple. The story says he found pieces of Jesus's cross there. On that spot, he built two churches. This is where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is today. Although it has been destroyed and rebuilt many times, people have accepted this as the place since Constantine's time.

In 1842, a scholar named Otto Thenius suggested a different location. He believed Golgotha was a rocky hill about 228.5 meters (250 yards) northeast of Damascus Gate (one of Jerusalem's city gates). He thought this was the right place because:

- people said it was where Jewish executions happened,
- it was outside the city wall, and
- the hill looked like a skull.

Later, General Charles Gordon also supported this spot. It became known as "Gordon's Calvary."

See also Crucifixion.

Goliath

Goliath was a Philistine warrior from the city of Gath who lived in the eleventh century BC. He challenged the Israelite army to battle ([1 Samuel 17](#)). The young David later defeated him by knocking him down with a stone from his sling and then cutting off his head.

Goliath was over 2.7 meters (nine feet) tall. He wore armor that weighed about 56.8 kilograms (125 pounds). He carried a spear that weighed 6.8 kilograms (15 pounds). After Goliath's death, his sword was kept at Nob and was later given to David ([1 Samuel 21:9](#); [22:10](#)).

Goliath might have been a descendant of the Anakim (see [Joshua 11:22](#)). The Anakim were known for their unusual height. Another possibility is that Goliath's extreme height was caused by a medical condition (a growth in the pituitary gland in his brain).

There is a difference in biblical accounts about who killed Goliath. [2 Samuel 21:19](#) says that Elhanan killed Goliath. However, [1 Chronicles 20:5](#) says that Elhanan actually killed Goliath's brother.

Gomer

1. Son of Japheth, who was a son of Noah ([Gn 10:2](#); cf. [1 Chr 1:5](#)). He had three sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah ([Gn 10:3](#); [1 Chr 1:6](#)). He is the progenitor of the ancient Cimmerians, who according to Ezekiel's prophecy would join with Gog, the leader of the Magogites, in an effort to stamp out Israel ([Ez 38:6](#)).

2. Diblaim's daughter, a prostitute, who then became the wife of Hosea by divine command. Having borne Hosea children, she lapsed into immorality but was redeemed. Her behavior served as an illustration of Israel's infidelity to God ([Hos 1-3](#)).

See also Hosea (Person).

Gomorrah

One of the "cities of the valley" destroyed by God because of its wickedness ([Gn 19](#)). *See* Cities of the Plain; Sodom and Gomorrah.

Goose

A goose is a long-necked, web-footed water bird with waterproof feathers. Geese belong to several scientific genera, with *Anser* being one common type (true geese).

Geese were used for food and sacrifice in biblical times. They were domesticated in Egypt as early as 2500 BC during the Old Kingdom period and definitely by the time of the New Kingdom (around 1500–1100 BC).

Ancient Greeks knew about domestic geese, as they are mentioned in the *Odyssey* (a famous ancient Greek story written by Homer, who was a poet from around the 8th century BC). In Canaan, the breeding of geese was common. Archaeologists have found ivory carvings of geese from the 13th or 12th century BC during excavations at Megiddo in Israel.

Many types of geese spend most of their lives on land even though they are water birds. Some even build their nests in trees. Wild geese prefer to live in flatlands and prairies rather than in mountainous areas. This means they like to live in places that are flat and open instead of areas with mountains or hills.

The Bible suggests that geese may have been eaten at King Solomon's table. In [1 Kings 4:23](#), "fattened poultry" might refer to geese. This term could also mean other domestic birds that people commonly eat, such as ducks, swans, guinea fowl, or pigeons.

See also Birds.

Gopher Wood

Material Noah used to build the ark ([Gn 6:14](#)). *See* Plants (Cypress).

Gorgias

One of the three generals chosen by Lysias, who was "governor of the kingdom, as far as the bounds of Egypt, and of the Lower Asia, and reaching from the river Euphrates," according to Josephus, early Jewish historian. The three, Ptolemy the son of Dorymenes, Nicanor, and Gorgias, are described as "mighty men among the friends of the king" ([1 Macc 3:38](#)). They were commissioned to go into Judah and destroy it but were completely defeated, although they greatly outnumbered the forces of Judas Maccabeus ([4:1-22](#)). On another occasion Joseph and Azariah were defeated when they disobeyed the orders of Judas and attacked Gorgias at Jamnia ([5:56-60](#)). It is probable that Jamnia is the correct reading for Idumea, which is found in [2 Maccabees 12:32](#).

Gortyna

Gortyna was a city on the island of Crete. It is among the list of places where the Romans sent letters ([1 Maccabees 15:23](#)). These letters told kings and countries not to harm the Jewish people ([15:19](#)).

In early Greek history, Gortyna joined with another city called Knossos to control Crete. However, these two cities soon began fighting each other. When the Romans took control of the area, they made Gortyna the capital city of Crete.

In 1884, researchers found an important discovery in Gortyna. They discovered a set of ancient laws from the fifth century BC called the Gortyna legal code.

Gortyna was near a place called Fair Havens. So, the apostle Paul may have preached the good news about Jesus to the Jewish residents there during his journey to Rome ([Acts 27:8-9](#)).

Goshen

1. Geographical region in Egypt occupied by the Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt from the time of Joseph to the exodus. [Genesis 46-47](#) gives us several pieces of information concerning Goshen: (a) It was a definite part of Egypt. (b) It was the place where Joseph met his father after their years of separation, when Jacob moved his family to Egypt. (c) It was an area good for grazing flocks. Goshen has been associated with Egyptian bull cults and was important for animal husbandry. At one period the princes of Thebes sent their cattle to the Delta for pasture, even though it was controlled by the Hyksos. Sacred cattle were probably pastured there by Egyptians also. (d) It is called "the best of the land" in two different verses ([Gn 47:6, 11](#)) and is identified as the "land of Rameses." (e) It probably had a military outpost on its eastern border and may not have been heavily inhabited by Egyptians.

The name Goshen is not of Egyptian origin but is Semitic and attests to the occupation of the region by Semites before the New Kingdom of Egypt. The Septuagint reads "Gesem of Arabia" instead of "land of Goshen" in [Genesis 45:10](#) and [46:34](#). Ptolemy the geographer said that Arabia was an Egyptian name for the eastern border of the Nile Delta, and this would account for the terminology of the Septuagint.

Goshen was a region of about 900 square miles (1,448.1 square kilometers), consisting of the two districts. The western half ran from Zoan to Bubastis, a distance of about 35 miles (56.3 kilometers) from north to south. This district was an irrigated plain containing some of the most fertile land in Egypt. It is about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) wide at the Mediterranean Sea and narrows to about 10 miles (16.1 kilometers) between Zagazig and Tell el-Kebir on the south. The eastern sector contains a large desert area between the Nile Plain and the Suez. As it stretches to the south from Daphnai to the Wadi Tumilat, it

increases in width to about 40 miles (64.4 kilometers) from east to west. South of this section more desert area stretches to the Suez on the south and from the Bitter Lakes on the east to Heliopolis on the west. The physical arrangement of Goshen is important in determining the route of the exodus. Given the above description, the Wadi Tumilat would have been the most logical route to the Red Sea for people who were driving flocks and herds. The route would have led from the south side of the field of Zoan near Bubastis, east of the edge of the wilderness and the head of the Bitter Lakes.

2. Area in the territory conquered and occupied by the Israelites under Joshua ([Jos 10:41](#), country of Goshen; [Jos 11:16](#), land of Goshen). It was probably in the hill country of Judah between Hebron and the Negev.

3. Town in the territory of Judah ([Jos 15:51](#)). It may have been the central city of the district discussed in #2 above, but this is uncertain.

Gospel

A term used for various ways of describing the good news that God offers salvation through Jesus Christ.

Preview

- The Gospel Message of Isaiah
- The Gospel in the New Testament
- The Good News of Christ's Coming
- The Gospel according to Jesus
- The Gospel after Jesus' Resurrection

The Gospel Message of Isaiah

Of all the passages cited, those of Isaiah provide the most important background for the gospel in the New Testament. According to Isaiah's gospel, it is God alone who saves. There is no explanation for his saving action except in his own nature. Israel's deliverance is undeserved. She is no more worthy of God's love now than when she went into captivity. In whatever measure she has paid the just due for her past sins ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), she remains a sinful people ([42:25](#); [46:12-13](#); [48:1](#)). It is only by God's grace that she is saved ([55:1-7](#)). By God's design, Israel's salvation depends not upon her own righteousness but upon his ([41:10](#); [45:24](#);

[46:13](#); [51:5-6](#)). There being no righteousness to reward, the Lord acts to *create* righteousness in Israel ([45:8](#); [61:3, 10-11](#)).

Yet as these references indicate, salvation is not accomplished at the expense of justice. The penalty for Israel's sins is to be paid in full. God's mercy is not hereby called into question. On the contrary, it is precisely here that his mercy is most poignantly expressed, for the penalty is exacted not from his people but from the Servant appointed to stand in their place ([Isaiah 53:4-12](#)). Through the Servant's work, many shall be justified ([53:11](#)). The Evangelist (the preacher of the good news) will come, as predicted in [Isaiah 61](#). He is called the anointed One (verse [1](#)) who proclaims the year of the Lord's favor (verse [2](#)). God will be glorified through his preaching (verse [3](#)).

The Gospel in the New Testament

In only two places ([Galatians 3:8](#); [Hebrews 4:2, 6](#)) does the New Testament speak of the proclamation of the gospel before the Christian era. This is quite remarkable for three reasons:

1. It is remarkable given the unmistakable presence of the gospel in the Old Testament.
2. It is remarkable given the extent of gospel terminology in the New Testament (in the Greek, the noun appears 76 times, and the verb appears 54 times).
3. It is remarkable given the fact that the New Testament presents Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and draws heavily on the Old Testament to interpret his person and work.

Not only is it remarkable, it is very significant. It indicates that the New Testament usage depends not only upon the *character* of the message (truth about salvation) but also upon *historical events*. Almost without exception, the New Testament restricts its application of gospel terminology to proclamations made during the time of fulfillment—the age in which the salvation promised in the Old Testament is actually accomplished. The New Testament is not preoccupied with promises of salvation but with news of salvation. According to [Mark 1:1-4](#), the gospel “begins” not in the Old Testament but with John the Baptist, in whose work Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled. In [Romans 1:1-5](#) the gospel is

represented as a blessing promised in the Old Testament but not actually given until Jesus comes (see also [Acts 13:32-33](#)).

The Good News of Christ's Coming

The promised birth of John the Baptist is good news ([Luke 1:19](#)). It is good news not only for his parents (verses [7, 24-25](#)) but for all the people: John is sent to prepare them for Messiah's coming (verses [14-17, 67-79](#)). John's own preaching is good news ([3:18](#)) for the same reason. The Messiah (God's anointed one) would be coming to execute judgment. This is a process that involves both condemnation and salvation (verses [3-17](#)). John's message is good news for sinners in that they are warned of impending doom and urged to repent before the axe falls (verses [7-9](#)). It is good news for those who repent in that they are promised forgiveness (verse [3](#)) and membership in Messiah's community (verse [17](#)). The birth of the Savior himself is announced as good news bringing great joy ([2:10-11](#)).

The Gospel according to Jesus

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

Jesus was authorized by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel ([Mark 1:14](#); [Luke 4:18](#)). At the heart of his preaching stands the announcement “The time is fulfilled... and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the gospel!” ([Mark 1:15](#)). (For further references to this gospel, see [Matthew 4:23](#); [9:35](#); [24:14](#); [26:13](#); [Mark 8:35](#); [10:29](#); [13:10](#); [14:9](#); [Luke 4:43](#); [8:1](#); [16:16](#).) The message is good news for several reasons:

1. The kingdom is coming. The God whom Jesus proclaims is the ultimate ruler over all he has made. Yet despite this fact, his rule is incomplete: his will is not done on earth as it is in heaven. Wrong, not right, prevails. But according to Jesus, these conditions are not final. When the kingdom comes, God's rule will be completed. Wrong will be judged, righteousness established, and his people blessed.

2. The kingdom is beginning *now*. “The time is fulfilled,” declares Jesus ([Mark 1:15a](#)). The time appointed for the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises has arrived.
3. The consummation of the kingdom is therefore no longer a distant prospect. The full realization of God’s rule is “near” ([Mark 1:15b](#)).
4. God is establishing his rule for a saving purpose. This is implied in Jesus’ call to repentance ([Mark 1:15c](#)). It is especially clear in the passages to which we now turn.

The Salvation of the Poor

Invited to read the Scripture in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus turns to [Isaiah 61](#): “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor” ([Luke 4:18–19](#)).

Having read the prophecy, Jesus announces its fulfillment in his own ministry (verse [21](#)). Included among those whom Jesus has come to free are the physically infirm, such as the blind (verse [18](#)) and the leprous (verse [27](#)). (Compare the references to healing miracles in verses [23](#), [33–41](#); the close connection between evangelizing and healing in [Matthew 4:23](#); [9:35](#); [11:5](#); [Luke 7:21–22](#); [9:6](#); and the description in [Mt 12:22–29](#); [Luke 13:11–16](#), of the physically afflicted as captives of Satan now liberated by Jesus). Also included are the materially poor—people like the widow helped by Elijah during the famine ([Luke 4:25–26](#)). It is the literally poor and hungry whom Jesus pronounces “blessed” in [Luke 6:20–21](#).

Yet it is primarily “spiritual” poverty that is in view. Still applying [Isaiah 61](#), Jesus speaks in [Matthew 5:3](#) of the “poor in spirit.” These are people broken and grieved by misery and poverty, oppression and injustice, suffering and death, national apostasy and personal sin—people who in their crisis turn to God and longingly wait for him to bring forth justice, bestow his mercy, and establish his kingdom. It is to such people that Jesus brings good news ([Matthew 5:3–10](#)). God sent Jesus to usher in the kingdom, to rescue the lost, to liberate the enslaved, to cure the afflicted, to bind up hearts

that are broken, and to forgive the guilty ([Mark 2:5, 10, 17](#); [10:45](#); [Luke 4:18–21](#); [7:48–49](#); [15:1–32](#); [19:10](#)).

The Gift of Grace

The kingdom’s arrival is not the effect or the reward of human effort but God’s answer to the human predicament—the gift of his favor ([Luke 12:32](#)). Correspondingly, the explanation for the salvation of the poor lies nowhere but in God’s own character. As the prodigal [from the parable of the prodigal son] himself recognized, he hardly deserved to be his father’s servant, much less his son. Nothing he did, not even his repentance, accounted for the father’s love ([15:11–32](#)).

In the parable of [Matthew 20:1–16](#), it is owing entirely to the goodness of the employer that the last workers to be hired receive a full day’s wages. The first debtor in the story of [Matthew 18:23–35](#) earned nothing but the right to be sold into slavery. Instead, the king canceled his enormous debt. The tax collector, who had nothing to offer God but a confession of sin and plea for mercy, went home justified ([Luke 18:13–14](#)). The same holds true for the more virtuous among the poor, such as the persons described in [Matthew 5:7–10](#). Their virtue is real, not imagined. Yet in keeping God’s commands, they do not put him in their debt. They are simply doing their duty ([Luke 17:7–10](#)).

Furthermore, even the most merciful need divine mercy ([Matthew 5:7](#)). For even those most eager to obey God’s law are unable to fulfill all its requirements (compare [11:28–30](#)). The first servant in [Matthew 18:23–35](#) owes far more money than someone in such a situation could possibly pay. This serves to magnify the generosity of the king. Grace depends for its exercise upon the inability of its objects ([Luke 14:12–14](#)).

The Call to Salvation

The Israelites are without exception a sinful people, all of them needing the salvation that Jesus brings ([Matthew 1:21](#); [Luke 1:77](#)). In demonstration of God’s grace, Jesus proclaimed his gospel to the entire nation ([Matthew 4:23](#); [9:35](#); [15:24](#); [Luke 4:43](#); [9:6](#); [20:1](#)). From the most respectable to the least, all are summoned to submit to God’s rule, all are invited to come and partake freely of the banquet he has spread ([Luke 14:16–24](#)). But the gift of salvation must be received if it is to be experienced ([Mark 10:15](#)). And while it is indeed a gift that costs nothing, it is also a priceless treasure for which a wise person

will freely sacrifice everything else ([Matthew 13:44–46](#)). It is a sacrifice exceeded only by the cost of rejecting the gospel ([Matthew 11:20–24](#); [Mark 8:34–39](#); [Luke 14:24, 33](#)).

“Repent and believe in the gospel,” Jesus commands ([Mark 1:15](#)). The self-righteous and the self-sufficient must be startled out of their false sense of security and humbly recognize their need for God ([Luke 6:24–26](#)). Only then will Jesus’ message to the poor be seen as gospel. An announcement of liberation ([4:18–19](#)) is good news only to people who are enslaved and know they are. The command applies also to the destitute and the afflicted. Those among them who bemoan their lot must repent of their sins.

But something further is needed for the response to be complete: a person cannot believe Jesus’ gospel without a commitment to the *Person* of Christ ([John 3:16](#)). Even those who are already “poor in spirit,” in the sense defined earlier, are not really “blessed” until they acknowledge the truth of Jesus’ claims ([Matthew 11:6](#)) and commit themselves to a life of obedience on his terms ([7:21–27](#)). This prepares us for the next point.

Summary

Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, the theme of his gospel remains the progressive arrival of God’s kingdom ([Matthew 4:23](#); [24:14](#); [Luke 4:43](#); [16:16](#)), a message that is preached almost exclusively to Jews ([Matthew 10:5–6](#); [15:24](#)). Yet Jesus also provides glimpses into what the gospel was to become once his work on earth was accomplished:

1. In [Mark 8:35](#) and [10:29](#) Jesus speaks of individuals who needed to make great sacrifices “for My sake and for the gospel.” While distinguished from each other, the person of Jesus and the gospel are here associated in the closest possible way. The time was approaching when the Proclaimer of the gospel would become the Proclaimed.
2. In [Mark 13:10](#) and [Matthew 24:14](#) (and the textually doubtful [Mark 16:15](#)) Jesus predicts that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the gentile nations.

3. In [Mark 14](#), having interpreted a woman’s action (verse 3) as an anointing of his body beforehand for burial (verse 8), Jesus declares, “And truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her” (verse 9; compare [Matthew 26:13](#)). This statement strongly implies that both the person of Jesus and the event of his death will figure prominently in the message that is to be proclaimed. Otherwise, it is strange that the gospel and this particular act should be so solemnly bound together. In this text, there already is an indication of how crucial Jesus’ death is for salvation, as announced in his gospel (compare [Mark 14:22–24](#)), and for the launch of the mission to share the gospel with the gentiles ([Matthew 20:28](#) is vital for explaining the shift from [Matthew 15:24](#) to [28:18–20](#)).

The Gospel after Jesus’ Resurrection

After the resurrection of Jesus, the gospel was proclaimed by his eyewitnesses. The contents of this gospel are recorded in the book of Acts and in Paul’s letters. The Greek term *euangelizomai* can be translated “evangelize,” “proclaim,” or “bring good news.” Of the 43 instances of *euangelizomai* beyond the New Testament gospels, 15 occur in Acts and 21 in Paul’s writings. Of the 64 instances of the Greek term *euangelion*, which can be translated “gospel” or “good news,” two instances occur in Acts and no fewer than 60 in Paul.

The Gospel of Christ

Having risen from the dead, Jesus Christ again evangelizes ([Ephesians 2:16–17](#)), doing so now through his appointed representatives ([Romans 15:16–18](#); [1 Corinthians 1:17](#); [9:12–18](#); [Galatians 4:13–14](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#); [2 Timothy 1:9–11](#)). More than that, Christ has become the central theme of the gospel. The Proclaimer is now the Proclaimed. This is repeatedly affirmed in Acts ([5:42](#); [8:4–5, 35](#); [11:20](#); [17:18](#)) and in Paul’s writings ([Romans 1:1–4](#); [10:8–17](#); [15:19–20](#); [2 Corinthians 4:4–6](#); [11:4](#); [Galatians 1:16](#); [Ephesians 3:8](#); [Philippians 1:15–18](#); [2 Timothy 2:8](#)). The New Testament always speaks

of *the gospel*—never the gospels—of Christ. A second gospel is as inconceivable and as unnecessary as a second Christ. This is the one gospel that God authorizes (for example, [Romans 1:1–17](#)) and proclaims (for example, [2 Thessalonians 2:13–14](#)).

[Galatians 2:7–9](#) speaks not of two gospels but of two mission fields. Paul (the apostle to the uncircumcised) and Peter (the apostle to the circumcised) are both entrusted with “the gospel of Christ” ([Galatians 1:7](#); compare [1 Corinthians 15:1–11](#)), the message that God has ordained for the salvation of Jews and gentiles alike ([Romans 1:16](#)). The “different gospel” that Paul denounces in [Galatians 1:6–9](#) and [2 Corinthians 11:4](#) is not another gospel about Jesus but a message about “another Jesus”—not the real one, but one who exists only in the minds and the messages of those who proclaim him. To preach the true Christ is to preach the true gospel, however questionable one’s motives ([Philippians 1:15–18, 27](#)), and to respond rightly to the gospel is to turn to Christ ([Acts 11:20–21](#); [Romans 10:8–17](#); [Galatians 2:14–16](#)).

The Gospel as a Witness to Saving Events

The gospel bears witness to every aspect of Christ’s saving work, from his birth ([Romans 1:3](#); [2 Timothy 2:8](#)) and public ministry ([Mark 1:1](#); [Acts 10:36–38](#)) to his second coming ([Colossians 1:5, 23](#); compare [3:1–4](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:5–10](#)) and the last judgment ([Romans 2:16](#)). But it is the death and the resurrection of Christ that are most crucial for the accomplishment of salvation, and that are therefore most prominent in the gospel’s witness. These are the events with which Mark’s proclamation climaxes (chapters [15–16](#)), and for which everything else prepares ([8:31](#); [9:31](#); [10:33–34](#); [12:6–8](#)). Special stress is placed upon Jesus’ death as the means of salvation from sin ([10:45](#); [14:3–9, 22–24](#)).

In Paul’s gospel, too, the death and resurrection of Jesus are central ([Romans 4:25](#); [1 Corinthians 15:1–4](#)), with the cross occupying the very center ([1 Corinthians 1:17–2:5](#)). Had Christ not risen from the dead, Paul argues, preaching about the cross would be a waste of time ([1 Corinthians 15:14, 17](#); compare [Romans 6:3–11](#)). However, now that Christ has risen, his death deserves special emphasis as the place where God provides atonement for sins ([Romans 3:21–26](#); [5:6–11](#); [2 Corinthians 5:14–21](#); [Ephesians 1:7](#)). [Atonement is the act by which God and humankind are brought together in personal relationship.] The gospel

according to Acts proclaims Jesus’ death ([Acts 8:25](#); [20:24, 28](#); compare [10:36–43](#)) and particularly his resurrection, the event by which he conquered death and was exalted as Lord and coming Judge ([10:36–43](#); [13:32–33](#); [17:18, 31](#)). According to 1 Peter, the bearers of the gospel ([1 Peter 1:12](#)) concentrated, as had the Old Testament prophets, on “the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” ([1:11](#); compare [1:18–19](#); [2:21–24](#); [3:18–22](#)).

The Gospel as a Power for Salvation

The gospel is much more than a report of past events and an exposition of doctrine. Paul declares in [1 Corinthians 1:17–18](#) and again in [Romans 1:16](#) that the gospel is “the power of God.” The gospel is not merely a witness to his power but an *expression* of his power. Thus, it cannot be restrained ([2 Timothy 2:8–9](#)). “Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power,” Paul writes in [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#). His point is not that the gospel was accompanied by mighty works (though this happened; compare [Romans 15:18–19](#)), but that the gospel itself is a mighty work. God makes it so through his Holy Spirit ([Romans 15:18–19](#); [1 Corinthians 2:1–5](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#)).

Furthermore, God’s singular purpose in exercising his power is to change people’s lives, to liberate them from sin and death, and to reconcile them to himself—in short, to save them. The gospel has power to effect the salvation it announces and to impart the life it promises (for example, [Romans 1:16](#); [10:8–17](#); [1 Corinthians 1:17–18](#); [15:1–2](#); [Ephesians 1:13](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:13–14](#); [2 Timothy 1:8–11](#); [1 Peter 1:23–25](#)). If people are to experience salvation, they must hear and believe the gospel. It is precisely in and through this message that the saving power manifested in the person and work of Christ (especially in his death and resurrection) is conveyed to men and women, and made effective in their lives. Similarly, it is in association with the gospel, or as a direct result of the reception of the gospel, that the Holy Spirit is imparted to believers ([Acts 10:36–44](#); [15:7–8](#); [2 Corinthians 11:4](#); [Galatians 3:1–2](#)). In short, the gospel is the decisive place of encounter between the sinner and God the Savior.

The Gospel of Grace

According to Peter’s testimony at the Jerusalem Council ([Acts 15:7–11](#)), an essential part of the gospel—for Gentiles and Jews alike—is salvation “through the grace of the Lord Jesus.” Toward the

close of his missionary career, Paul states that his basic concern has been “testifying to the good news of God’s grace” ([Acts 20:24](#)). This statement can be understood only in relation to Paul’s concept of the righteousness of God, particularly as set forth in Romans. Paul is here not merely expounding a divine attribute. Rather, he is dramatizing a divine activity—the manifestation of God’s righteousness now, “at the present time” ([Romans 3:26](#)), in the new age begun by Jesus’ arrival. The manifestation is twofold. Viewing the two aspects together, and doing so in the context of the gospel declared by Isaiah and by Jesus (both of whom strongly influenced Paul), respectively, will help us to understand why Paul speaks of “the gospel of the grace of God.”

First, the gospel is a *witness* to God’s grace. In offering his Son as a sacrifice for sins ([Romans 3:25a](#)), God demonstrates his righteousness (verses [25b–26](#)). That is, in the death of Jesus sins formerly “passed over” (verse [25c](#)) become the object of God’s wrath (compare [1:18](#)) and judgment. Yet in the very place where God deals justly and decisively with sins, he shows his grace to sinners. For the judgment against sin is focused not upon the sinners themselves but upon the one appointed to act on their behalf and to stand in their place ([Romans 4:25](#); [5:6, 11](#); compare [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Galatians 3:13](#)). On this basis, sinners are freely pardoned ([Romans 3:24](#)). “The grace of the Lord Jesus” ([Acts 15:11](#)) toward the sinful is also in evidence, for he willingly bears their wickedness and suffers the consequences of their wrongdoing ([Galatians 2:20](#); compare [2 Corinthians 8:9](#); [Philippians 2:6–8](#)).

Second, the gospel is a *means* of God’s grace. “The gospel reveals the righteousness of God,” says Paul ([Romans 1:17](#)). By this he means, not that the gospel talks about the righteousness of God (though it does), but that God’s righteousness is actively at work in the gospel. This activity in turn explains how the gospel becomes “the power of God for salvation” (verse [16](#)). And just how does God demonstrate his righteousness at this stage? In short, by bestowing it as a free gift on sinful human beings. It remains the righteousness of God, but by God’s grace, it is a righteousness in which humans may share. Furthermore, partaking of God’s righteousness depends on being personally united with Jesus Christ. In Paul’s view, the saved person is one who has been acquitted, justified, and “declared righteous” by God the judge. The basis for the verdict is not that I in myself am righteous (God justifies the ungodly, [Romans 4:5](#)). Nor does God

treat me as though I were righteous. According to Paul, I am declared righteous because I really *am* righteous—not in myself but in Christ ([1 Corinthians 1:30](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Philippians 3:9](#)). This union is established through the revelation—and the free offer—of God’s righteousness in the gospel ([Romans 1:16–17](#)).

Responding to the Gospel

The gospel calls for a threefold response:

1. *Believing.* The gospel, says Paul, is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” ([Romans 1:16](#)). For Paul, faith is the abandonment of all reliance upon “works of law” for justification ([3:28](#)) and utter dependence upon the grace of God as demonstrated in the work of Christ, especially his death (verse [25](#)). Accordingly, the “different gospel” of [Galatians 1:6](#) and [2 Corinthians 11:4](#) is deceitful, for it preaches salvation by personal merit rather than (or together with) the work of Christ (compare [Galatians 2:16](#)). Ultimately faith rests upon God ([Romans 4:24](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:8–9](#)) and upon Christ ([Romans 3:22, 26](#); [Galatians 2:16, 20](#)). Yet it is imperative that one believe the gospel also ([Acts 8:12](#); [11:20–21](#); [15:7](#); [Romans 1:16](#); [10:8–17](#); [1 Corinthians 1:17–24](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Hebrews 4:2](#)), for it is just by this means that God’s salvation is made known and mediated. Moreover, believing the gospel entails repentance ([Acts 14:15](#); [20:21, 24](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:5–10](#)) and obedience ([Romans 1:5](#); [15:16–18](#); [Hebrews 4:6](#)). Those who refuse to obey the gospel are endangering their lives ([2 Thessalonians 1:5–10](#); [1 Peter 4:17](#)).

2. *Growing.* The gospel is more than a message to be received. It is also a place in which to stand ([1 Corinthians 15:1–2](#)). It is sustainer of life as well as giver of life. One grows as a Christian not by turning from the gospel to other things (to turn away from the gospel is to abandon God and Christ, [Galatians 1:6](#)), but by going ever more deeply into the gospel. In [Romans 1:15](#) Paul expresses his eagerness to proclaim the gospel to the Christians in Rome. In the following chapters, anticipating his visit, he offers one of his most profound expositions of the gospel—one whose truth has never been fathomed and whose power has never been exhausted.
3. *Hoping.* “The hope of the gospel” ([Colossians 1:23](#)) includes not only the return of Christ and the glory of heaven ([Colossians 1:5](#); [3:1–4](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:14–16](#)) but the final judgment as well. For those who embrace the gospel, the last judgment holds no terrors, because the Judge [Christ] is the very one who rescues them from the wrath to come ([1 Thessalonians 1:10](#)). Those who are united to him need not dread condemnation now or at the end ([Romans 8:1](#)). Instead, the last judgment will mark their final vindication ([1 Corinthians 4:5](#); [Galatians 5:5](#)). Accordingly, this theme is not just a consequence but an integral part of the good news ([Romans 2:16](#)). Those who have died since believing the gospel ([1 Peter 4:6](#)) may seem to have suffered a fate common to all people, or even the condemnation reserved for the lawless. In fact, their response to the gospel assures them of approval by the coming Lord ([4:5–6](#); [5:4](#)) and of a share in the imperishable inheritance of heaven ([1:4](#)).

Gospel of Barnabas

The Gospel of Barnabas is a long Italian work written in the fourteenth century AD by a person who had converted to Islam. The writer may have wanted to take advantage of the mysterious mention of such a gospel in the Gelasian Decree, which was written no later than the sixth century AD.

So far, there is no evidence that a genuine or ancient gospel written by Barnabas ever existed. Because of this, many scholars believe the Gospel of Barnabas is not authentic but a much later imitation.

See also Apocrypha; Barnabas.

Gospel of Bartholomew

Many apocryphal gospels appeared after the second century AD, often using the name of a well-known person. The early church knew of these writings and understood that they were fictional. In the fourth century AD, church historian Eusebius described them as heretical (false teachings), untrue, and impious (disrespectful toward God). Later, the scholar Jerome mentioned a Gospel of Bartholomew by name, along with other Gnostic gospels, in the introduction to his commentary on Matthew's Gospel. But there is no clear evidence that Jerome ever saw this gospel or that it truly existed.

A related work called the Questions of Bartholomew exists in Greek, Latin, and Slavonic manuscripts. The Greek version may date back to the fifth or sixth century AD. In the text, Bartholomew asks Jesus where he went after his crucifixion. Jesus tells him that he went into Hades (the place of the dead). Later, Bartholomew asks Mary how she conceived and bore Jesus, who is beyond human understanding.

Mary warns that if she starts to tell, fire will come from her mouth and consume the world. Bartholomew insists on hearing it. As Mary begins describing the angel's visit and the announcement of the birth of Jesus, fire does come from her mouth, and the world is almost destroyed. Jesus intervenes and covers her mouth with his hand.

The apostles also ask to see the bottomless pit and "the things which are in the heavens." Bartholomew is shown Beliar, the enemy of humankind. Six hundred sixty angels bind him with

fiery chains as restraints. When Bartholomew steps on his neck, Beliar explains that his original name was *Satanael* and later became *Satan*. He describes how God created the angels, how he rebelled, and how he deceived Eve.

Finally, Bartholomew asks Jesus what the greatest sin is. Jesus replies that to speak evil against a faithful worshiper of God is to sin against the Holy Spirit.

See also Apocrypha; Bartholomew, the Apostle.

Gospel of Basilides

This was a critical commentary on the Gospels written by a second-century Gnostic teacher named Basilides. None of his writings have survived. What is known comes from later Christian writers who quoted or described them.

Basilides taught in Alexandria during the rule of Roman Emperor Hadrian. Hadrian ruled from AD 117 to 138. His teacher, Glaucias, claimed to have been an interpreter for the apostle Peter. Basilides pretended his Gnostic ideas had come from Peter's views on God and Christ. He described God in a seemingly contrary (paradoxical) way as a Being without existence who created three Sonships. Through a series of spiritual "ascents" and "enlightenments," the gospel of the supreme God, the "Gospel of Light," eventually descended upon Jesus.

Origen declared that "Basilides dared to write a gospel According to Basilides." Clement of Alexandria and the writer of the fourth-century fragment, Acta Archelai, thought Origen referred to an apocryphal gospel. They based their understanding of its content on the writings of Irenaeus, who had described Basilides's teaching.

Today, most scholars agree with Hippolytus, another early church writer, who said that this was not a new gospel but rather a commentary on the existing Gospels. The unusual rituals and relaxed moral behavior later reported among Basilides's followers probably did not come from him directly. His son Isidore led the Basilidian group in Egypt, and it continued there until the end of the second century.

See also Apocrypha.

Gospel of Eve

This is a Gnostic and apocalyptic work from which only one citation has survived in the writings of Epiphanius. He was a late fourth-century bishop from Cyprus. He quoted the Gospel of Eve while strongly opposing the teachings of the Gnostics and of Origen.

It seems that some people formed a cult (a group with special religious practices) centered on Eve. They believed she received secret revelations because the serpent had spoken to her in the garden of Eden.

Epiphanius quoted a passage from the *Gospel of Eve*. It can be translated roughly as follows: "I stood on a high mountain and saw a giant and a weak man, and I heard a voice like thunder. 'Come near me and listen,' he said to me, 'I am you and you are me. Wherever you are, I am there. I am spread through all things, and any place you can go, you can find shelter in me; and, by finding shelter in me, you find shelter in yourself.'"

See also Apocrypha; Eve.

Gospel of Judas Iscariot

This ancient Gnostic writing probably came from a group called the Cainites. The only reason we know about it is because early Christian writers quoted from it, especially Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons. Because Irenaeus wrote about it in the second century AD, the Gospel of Judas must have been written before that time.

The text probably included secret teachings that Judas Iscariot was said to have received from Jesus. It may have summarized the "true" or "higher" knowledge that this Gnostic group claimed to possess. The gospel gives its own explanation of the "mystery of the betrayal," saying that Judas's actions made salvation possible for everyone. According to this view, Judas either protected the truth of Christ or prevented evil powers (called Archons) from stopping the crucifixion, which they feared would destroy their power.

See also Apocrypha; Gnosticism; Judas Iscariot.

Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. It tells the story of Jesus's life, teachings, death, and resurrection.

Preview

- Who Wrote the Gospel of Matthew?
- When Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?
- Why Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?
- What Is the Message of the Gospel of Matthew?

Who Wrote the Gospel of Matthew?

The text of Matthew does not clearly state who wrote it. However, the ancient church believed the apostle Matthew was the author. Matthew was also known as Levi (see [Mark 2:14](#); [Luke 5:27, 29](#)). Before Jesus called him to be his follower, Matthew worked as a tax collector ([Matthew 9:9](#) and following verses).

It is interesting that Matthew refers to himself as a tax collector in his Gospel, but the other Gospel writers do not call him this. Perhaps Matthew mentioned his former job to show how his life changed when Jesus called him. Tax collectors in those days were hated and considered very low in society.

The Gospel itself contains details that suggest the writer knew about money and taxes. For example, the Gospel mentions specific coins like the two-drachma tax (in [Matthew 17:24](#)), a four-drachma coin (in verse [27](#)), and the various talents (in [18:24; 25:15](#) and following verses).

When Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?

Scholars disagree about when Matthew wrote his Gospel. This is primarily because there is still debate about whether the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of Mark came first. If Mark wrote his Gospel before Matthew, then Matthew relies on Mark for a lot of material. If Matthew wrote his Gospel before Mark, then Mark relies on Matthew for a lot of material.

Those who argue that Matthew wrote his Gospel first base it on three facts:

1. The early church recognized the Gospel of Matthew as the first Gospel.

2. Matthew wrote his Gospel to those who first needed a written story—the Jews.
3. When the early church established the New Testament canon (the official list of books that are accepted as Scripture), they placed the Gospel of Matthew at the beginning.

Whether Matthew came before or after Mark, most scholars believe it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. This is because [Matthew 24:15](#) talks about the temple as if it were still standing. The early church leader Irenaeus wrote that Matthew created his Gospel while Peter and Paul were in Rome. This would mean Matthew was written sometime in the 60s AD.

Why Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?

Defense of the Gospel

Matthew wrote his Gospel for a community of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. They likely lived in a place like Antioch in Syria. This community was surrounded by Jews who were hostile to the claims about Jesus and opposed the Christian community.

Matthew wrote as a Jew for a Jewish audience. He argues that in Jesus of Nazareth, the Old Testament reached its chosen purpose. Jesus is the Messiah (God's chosen one) that Israel was waiting for.

In the opening chapter, Matthew says Jesus is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" ([Matthew 1:1](#)). Jesus is "God with us" (verse [23](#)). Later in the book, Jesus is shown to be the "Son of Man" described in [Daniel 7](#) and the "Suffering Servant" described in [Isaiah 53](#). Matthew presents the events of Jesus's life as the "fulfillment" of Old Testament prophecies ([Matthew 1:22-27:10](#)). Jesus comes to offer Israel salvation from sin ([1:21](#)).

However, many Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, which put them in a dangerous position ([Matthew 11:20-24; 21:33-46](#)). One reason Matthew gives for Israel's rejection of Jesus is that the Jewish religious leaders failed to prepare the people for his coming. Matthew strongly criticizes the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. He claims they abandoned the word of God and followed their own traditions instead (chapter [15](#)).

Teaching the Church

Matthew also wrote as a Christian for a Christian audience. He presents Jesus as a new Moses, and even as God (Yahweh) in human form. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus teaches his own law for his followers ([Matthew 5](#)). Jesus forms a new community around himself under the leadership of the apostles ([10:2-4](#); [16:18-19](#); [23:8-10](#)). There is only one way for the Christian church to function properly.

Matthew believes that for the Christian church to work properly, the teachings of Jesus on moral and spiritual matters must be taken very seriously (chapters [5-7](#), [18](#)). To help with this purpose, Matthew designed his Gospel like a handbook or textbook for the church. It instructs God's people about who Jesus is and what he did.

To make these teachings easier to remember, Matthew organized his material in a very structured way. He arranges Jesus's teachings in five major sections called "discourses" (which are mixed with stories about Jesus). In these sections, similar types of teachings are grouped together. For example, chapter [10](#) contains instructions for missionaries, and chapter [13](#) contains seven parables about the kingdom of God.

The main theological themes in Matthew's Gospel are:

1. The *Son of God*. Jesus is God in a human body, "God with us." Another way of saying this is that Jesus is God incarnate.
2. The *kingdom of God*. In Jesus, God enters into history like a victorious king to begin his final rule.
3. The *salvation of God*. As the servant-king, Jesus has come to "save His people from their sins" ([Matthew 1:21](#)).
4. The *people of God*. Jesus has come to build his church. The church is a redeemed community consisting of both Jews and non-Jews (gentiles).

What Is the Message of the Gospel of Matthew?

The Coming of the Savior ([1:1-2:23](#))

The name "Jesus" means "Yahweh saves," which reveals his mission ([Matthew 1:1](#)). Jesus is "the son of Abraham," who comes to fulfill God's ancient promises to both Jews and non-Jews ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). Jesus is "Christ [or Messiah]," the son of David ([Matthew 1:1](#)), who comes to begin the kingdom of God ([4:17](#)). More than that, Jesus is "God with us." This is shown both by prophecy ([1:22-23](#)) and by the nature of his conception (verses [18-20](#)). Jesus has come to "save His people from their sins" (verse [21](#)).

As the son of David, and according to prophecy, Jesus is born in Bethlehem ([Matthew 2:1-6](#)). Guided by the star of Israel's Messiah, gentiles come to worship him ([Matthew 2:1-12](#); compare [Numbers 24:17](#)). When King Herod tries to kill him, Jesus finds safety in a foreign land. Matthew connects the exodus of Israel (when God led the Israelites out of Egypt) to the person and work of Jesus. God calling his Son out of Egypt marks the beginning of a powerful saving work. It is nothing less than a new exodus under Jesus, the new Moses (verses [13-20](#)). After being born in very humble circumstances, Jesus comes to live in the town of Nazareth (verses [21-23](#)).

The Beginnings of Ministry ([3:1-4:25](#))

John the Baptist warns Israel to repent because Jesus is about to bring judgment ([Matthew 3:1-12](#)). When Jesus allows John to baptize him, a voice from heaven speaks. This shows that Jesus is a King who serves his people by taking their sins upon himself (verses [13-17](#)).

Like Israel during the exodus, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness for a period of testing ([Matthew 4:1](#)). The devil tries to turn Jesus away from God and from what God has chosen Jesus to do. But Jesus wins this battle by relying on God and his word (verses [1-11](#)).

Jesus returns to Galilee and chooses to live in an area where both Jews and non-Jews live (verses [12-16](#)). He begins his ministry by preaching (like John, he calls people to repent because the kingdom is coming), teaching (he calls his first disciples), and healing people (verses [17-25](#)).

The Sermon on the Mount ([5:1-7:29](#))

Jesus went up a mountain to teach, similar to how Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive God's law for Israel. Jesus did this both as a new Moses figure and as God in human form. On the mountain, he gave important teachings for people who belong to God's kingdom ([Matthew 5:1-2](#)).

Jesus began with good news, not just rules (gospel not law). He said that God will save people who recognize their sin, trust in God's mercy, follow his commands, and eagerly wait for God to establish his righteous rule on earth (verses [3-12](#)). Jesus taught that his followers should act as a preservative (like salt) and provide guidance (like light) in a sinful world ([Matthew 5:3-16](#)).

Jesus explained that he did not come to remove the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them completely. This means he came to bring in the new age that the Old Testament pointed toward (verse [17](#)). Jesus called his followers to obey God's law faithfully as he now explained it as the Lawgiver himself (verses [18-20](#)).

Jesus taught that God's commands include both inner thoughts and outward actions. These commands should not be weakened or explained away. They require even more complete obedience now that the final age has arrived ([Matthew 5:21-48](#)).

When giving to others, praying, and fasting, followers of Jesus should avoid being hypocritical by focusing on God rather than themselves ([6:1-18](#)). The Lord's Prayer in [Matthew 5:9-13](#) asks God to honor his name by establishing his rule on earth and to forgive, protect, and provide for his children. Those who follow Jesus should have a God-centered view of life (verses [19-24](#)). There is no cause for anxiety (verses [25-34](#)).

Disciples must be discerning without being judgmental ([Matthew 7:1-6](#)). They must depend on God for the power needed to love others ([6:7-12](#)). After finishing his explanation of the law in [5:21-7:12](#), Jesus now calls potential disciples to follow him ([7:13-14](#)). He warns against false teachers (verses [15-20](#)). He insists that true disciples do the will of God (verses [21-23](#)).

The Authority of Jesus ([8:1-9:38](#))

After Jesus showed his authority through his teaching, he demonstrated this authority through healing miracles ([Matthew 7:28-29](#)). These

miracles revealed him as the servant described in the book of Isaiah ([8:17](#)).

Jesus healed several people using just his words:

- a person with leprosy,
- a Roman officer's servant, and
- a woman who had been bleeding for many years ([Matthew 8:1-13](#); [9:20-22](#)).

With his touch, Jesus cured a fever and brought a dead person back to life ([8:14-15](#); [9:23-25](#)). Sometimes Jesus used both his words and his touch to heal, as when he restored sight to blind people ([9:27-31](#)).

As "God with us," Jesus calls for total allegiance ([Matthew 8:18-22](#)). He did not have the basic shelter that animals enjoy ([8:20](#)). But Jesus showed his power over nature—proving his divine nature—by calming a storm (verses [23-27](#)). Jesus directly confronted evil spirits and proved his power over them ([8:28-34](#); [9:32-33](#)). Using authority that belongs only to God, Jesus forgave sins ([9:1-8](#)). With this same authority, Jesus called sinners to turn from their wrong ways and follow him (verses [9-13](#)).

The joy about the beginning of God's kingdom was mixed with a desire for its completion (verses [Matthew 9:14-17](#)). The summary in [9:35-38](#) is similar to what was said in [4:23-25](#), recalls chapters [5-7](#), and prepares the audience for the next major speech.

Jesus's Orders to the Missionaries ([10:1-42](#))

After Jesus told his followers to pray for more workers, he gave 12 disciples special authority as apostles and sent them out to work in his harvest field ([Matthew 9:37-10:4](#)). In this teaching, Jesus talked about both the apostles' immediate mission ([10:5-15](#)). Jesus also talked about the broader mission of the church (verses [16-42](#)).

For their first mission, the apostles were told to focus on sharing the good news about Jesus with the Jews (verse [6](#)). This would prepare them for the later mission to non-Jewish people ([28:19](#)). The "worthy" are those who welcome the apostles and their message. The "unworthy" are those who reject them ([Matthew 10:11-15](#)).

In the wider mission, Jesus warned that there would certainly be persecution (verses [16-19](#), [24-25](#)). However, this persecution would actually help

spread the message (verses [17-23](#)). Jesus promised that God would save his faithful messengers (verses [Matthew 10:19-23](#)). But God will judge those who oppress them and who reject Jesus (verses [26-39](#)). Jesus assured them that both those who announce the message and those who accept it would receive a definite reward (verses [37-42](#)).

Christ the Lord ([11:1-12:50](#))

The judgment that John the Baptist prophesied is already happening. How a person would be judged at the end of time would depend on how they responded to Jesus's words and actions ([Matthew 11:2-6](#)). Like John the Baptist, Jesus faced widespread rejection and indifference from people (verse [7-19](#)). Because Jesus brought such important grace in his ministry, those who rejected him would face the most severe judgment (verses [20-24](#)).

Yet, there are others—the humble, those carrying heavy burdens, and those willing to learn. They discover by revelation from God the Father and God the Son that the "Lord of heaven and earth" is also the "gentle and humble" God who comes to give rest to those who trust in him ([Matthew 11:25-30](#)). As the one who brings in the new age ([12:6](#)), Jesus claims that he is the Lord of the Sabbath (verses [1-8](#)). True rest comes to those who come to Jesus ([11:29](#)).

The Pharisees saw Jesus as someone who destroyed the Sabbath, and they claimed his miracle-working powers came from Satan ([Matthew 12:22-24](#)). But Jesus explained that the rule he was establishing was defeating Satan's empire (verses [25-29](#)). To reject this truth while fully understanding what one is doing is to commit the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit (verses [30-32](#)). The words of those accusing Jesus showed that they were destined for condemnation (verses [33-37](#)). They asked for a sign from heaven, but Jesus said it would not be given. Jesus's resurrection was the only sign they needed.

The Parables of the Kingdom ([13:1-58](#))

This is the third of Matthew's five major teaching sections. It contains seven parables (stories with deeper meanings).

In the parable of the sower, four types of soil—hard, shallow, cluttered, and fruitful—show the different ways people respond to Jesus's teaching ([Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23](#)). The disciples had

accepted Jesus's announcement of the kingdom, so they are given more understanding ([4:17](#)). But the crowds must accept that first proclamation before they receive further knowledge ([13:10-17, 34-35](#)).

In both the parable of the weeds in [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#) and the parable of the parable of the net in verses [47-50](#), Jesus assures his disciples that the final judgment would separate true believers from false ones. He also warns against making hasty judgments too early (compare with [compare 7:1-5](#)).

The parables of the mustard and the yeast in [Matthew 13:31-33](#) contrast the smallness of the kingdom's beginnings with the fullness of its completion. The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl in verses [44-46](#) show that the kingdom is more valuable than all others (compare [6:33](#)). With Jesus's teaching, the disciples gained new treasures to add to their old ones ([13:51-52](#)). In contrast, the people of Nazareth showed the same lack of understanding as the crowds and the same hostility as the Pharisees (verses [53-58](#)).

Spiritual Conflict ([14:1-16:12](#))

In [Matthew 14:1-12](#), John the Baptist's preaching revealed Herod's weakness. The beheading of John anticipates the death of Jesus on the cross (compare [17:12](#)). The true king is not Herod but Jesus. Jesus showed his power over nature itself ([14:13-36](#)). As God in human form, "God with us," Jesus fed the hungry crowd in the wilderness (similar to how God provided manna in the Old Testament) and walked on and calmed the sea (see [Psalm 89:9](#)). Peter shows us an example of Christian faith, fear, and complete dependence on Jesus ([Matthew 14:28-31](#)).

The Pharisees and teachers of the law appear to worship God. But they are actually devoted to their own traditions. They offered these traditions not as additions to God's Word but as replacements for it ([Matthew 15:1-9](#)). In verses [10-20](#), Jesus teaches that the ceremonial law apart from moral law becomes an empty ceremony. The old difference between ceremonially clean and unclean foods is now outdated ([Leviticus 11](#)). The same is true for the difference between Jews and non-Jews (gentiles). To emphasize this point, Jesus enters non-Jewish territory and heals a Canaanite woman ([15:21-28](#)). He also feeds a crowd of gentiles (verses [29-39](#)). Despite their many differences, the Pharisees and Sadducees unite in their opposition to Jesus ([16:1-12](#)).

The Coming Salvation ([16:13-17:27](#))

While the crowds had respectful but incomplete opinions about Jesus, Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This recognition of Jesus's divine nature came through divine revelation ([Matthew 16:13-17](#); compare [11:25-26](#)). Since God the Son owns and builds the church, Satan and death are defeated rather than victorious.

Jesus said he would build his church on Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When the apostles decide who can enter the church ("binding" and "loosing"), their decisions depend on God's revelation of apostolic teaching. After hearing Peter's confession and seeing the persistent wrong ideas about what the Messiah (God's chosen one) should be, Jesus predicted for the first time his suffering and future glory ([Matthew 16:20, 23; 21-28](#)).

In anticipation of that glory, Jesus transfigures himself (his appearance was transformed) before certain disciples. Moses and Elijah join God the Father in testifying to the unique glory of God the Son ([17:1-8](#)). Jesus later showed his power by casting out evil spirits (verses [14-18](#)). He demonstrates his authority by choosing to pay the temple tax using miraculous means (verses [24-27](#)).

Greatness in the Kingdom ([18:1-35](#))

This is the fourth of Matthew's five major teaching sections. In it, Jesus focuses on the character and attitudes that church members should have.

Jesus called his followers to both become humble like little children and to welcome those who are considered least important ([Matthew 18:1-5](#)). He especially instructed leaders to be strict with themselves but gentle with those under their care (verses [6-9](#)).

Jesus taught that Christians should remember the Father's love for sinners. They should make every effort, through both prayer and personal action, to restore fellow believers who have done wrong. Removing someone from the church should only be used as a last option (verses [10-20](#)). Church members who truly understand the Father's amazing grace will never stop offering forgiveness and compassion to those who harm them (verses [21-35](#)).

Instructions on the Way to Jerusalem ([19:1-20:34](#))

Jesus says that based on God's rules of creation, divorce is never commanded. God allows it only in the case of sin. This is when unfaithfulness to a spouse has already severed the marriage union ([Matthew 19:1-9](#)). As in [5:17-48](#), Jesus calls his followers to follow God's commands completely ([19:10-12](#)).

Jesus instructs his disciples to become like children ([18:1-4](#)). He also embraces children with his love ([19:13-15](#)). Jesus also pleads with the rich young man ([Matthew 19:16-22](#)). Although this man had kept the commands about loving neighbors, he was too attached to his wealth to give himself completely to loving God. However, Jesus promised that those who give up everything to follow him will receive much greater wealth in the coming kingdom (verses [27-30](#)). These blessings come not from human goodness but from the amazing generosity of our gracious God ([Matthew 20:1-16](#)). No one—not even the rich—is beyond the reach of God's grace. But God offers free salvation at great cost to himself ([Matthew 20:17-19](#)).

Jesus confronts competition and ambition among his followers. Jesus teaches them that true greatness comes from serving others, not having authority over them (verses [20-34](#)). He will ultimately demonstrate this in his death as "a ransom for many" (verse [28](#)).

Confrontations in Jerusalem ([21:1-22:46](#))

Jesus enters Jerusalem as the servant-king (compare [Matthew 3:17](#)). He comes as the Messiah destined for suffering (compare [16:16-21; 20:28](#)). He does not arrive on a war horse but on the colt of a donkey. He did this because he planned not to fight his enemies but to give himself over to them. Through this apparent defeat, he would achieve victory ([21:1-11](#)).

As Lord of the temple, Jesus demands that business activities stop and that the temple become (as God intended) a place of worship for everyone, including sick people, children, and foreigners ([Matthew 21:12-17](#); compare [Mark 11:17](#)). He outsmarts those who refuse to acknowledge the heavenly source of his authority and that of John the Baptist ([Matthew 21:23-27](#)).

Jesus powerfully pronounces judgment upon those Jews who have refused to acknowledge him as the Messiah and Son of God. First, he shows this visually by cursing the fig tree ([Matthew 21:18-](#)

[22](#)). Then, he shows this through his words by teaching three parables ([21:28-22:14](#)). From then on, the true people of God would be those who believed in Jesus, whether they were Jews or non-Jews.

Jesus called his people to give their highest loyalty to God. He taught that in the resurrection, what will matter most is one's relationship with God ([Matthew 22:23-33](#)). In fact, the person who loves God with their whole being and loves their neighbor as themselves has kept the two most fundamental commandments of the Old Testament (verses [34-40](#)).

From then on, submitting to God means correctly recognizing Jesus. He is indeed David's son ([Matthew 1:1](#)). But more importantly, he is ultimately David's Lord and the exalted Son of God ([22:41-46](#); compare [16:16](#)).

Woes upon the Scribes and Pharisees ([23:1-39](#))

Jesus gave five reasons for his strong criticism of the Jewish leaders:

1. Jesus calls the Jewish leaders hypocrites. What they do contradicts what they teach ([Matthew 23:1-4](#)). Their outward purity hides an inward corruption (verses [25-28](#)). They seem to defend God's cause but are really enemies of God's servants (verses [29-36](#)).
2. Their pride causes their hypocrisy ([Matthew 23:5-12](#)).
3. They take advantage of and threaten those under their care ([Matthew 23:13-15](#)).
4. They focus on obeying the least important things of the law and ignore the most important things ([Matthew 23:16-24](#)).
5. They are responsible for the terrible judgment that the whole nation will experience ([Matthew 23:33-39](#)).

The Coming of the End ([24:1-25:46](#))

The introduction to this fifth and final major teaching section of Matthew makes it clear that Jesus and his disciples saw a close connection

between Jerusalem's coming destruction and the end of the age ([Matthew 24:1-3](#)). It is clear that for Jesus and his disciples, there is the closest connection between the two events.

Jesus first describes the time between his first and second comings:

- Natural disasters will occur.
- Nations will be at war with one another.
- False messiahs will appear.
- God's people will face persecution.
- The good news about God's kingdom will be preached in all the world ([Matthew 24:4-14](#)).

Then Jesus speaks of the disaster that will soon happen to the Jewish nation. He already prophesied this in [Matthew 22:7](#) and [23:38](#). This ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 ([24:15-25](#)).

Sometime later, the Son of Man will return in great glory. Only God the Father knows when this will happen ([Matthew 24:36](#)). The Son of Man will return with signs that the end has come and he will gather his people (verses [26-31](#)). The current generation will not die before judgment comes against Israel (verses [15-25](#)). So, those listening must take action (verses [32-35](#)).

The same warning applies to the final coming of the Son of Man ([Matthew 24:36-51](#)). Both the certainty that it would happen and the uncertainty about when it would happen called for watchfulness and faithfulness during the waiting period. This event would bring both salvation and judgment.

To emphasize this lesson, Jesus told the parable of the wise and foolish virgins ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)) and the parable of the talents (verses [14-30](#)). The final parable of the sheep and the goats (verses [31-46](#)) spoke about the urgent need to respond correctly to the "brothers." This refers to the messengers of Jesus. Those who feed, clothe, and otherwise care for the messengers of Jesus show that they have accepted the apostles' message and their Lord (compare [10:40-42](#)).

The Road to Golgotha ([26:1-27:26](#))

As if responding to Jesus's own prediction, the main Jewish priests and the leaders plot to murder him ([Matthew 26:1-5](#)). Judas will soon help them

(verses [14-16](#)). At Bethany, a woman showed her great love for Jesus by anointing him with expensive perfume, which also pointed to his coming death (verses [6-13](#)).

During the Passover meal (described in [Matthew 26:17-30](#)), Jesus explained that his death would be a sacrifice to forgive sins ([26:26-28](#); compare with [1:21](#)). This meal marked the beginning of a new exodus, similar to when God freed the Israelites from Egypt (compare with [2:15](#)). Jesus also looked forward to the future day when God's kingdom would be complete and sin and death would be defeated ([26:29](#)).

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus felt great distress about taking the sins of his people upon himself (verses [36-46](#)). Yet he chose to obey his Father's will so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled ([Matthew 26:54](#); compare [Isaiah 53](#)). As God's servant who was destined to suffer, Jesus did not try to stop his arrest ([26:47-56](#)).

The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) and the high priest condemn Jesus as a blasphemer because he claimed to be "the Christ, the Son of God" ([26:57-68](#); compare [16:16](#)). Peter denies knowing Jesus three times, just as Jesus had predicted ([26:31-35](#); [69-75](#)). Judas feels so guilty about betraying Jesus that he kills himself ([27:3-10](#)).

The Jewish leaders give Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor ([Matthew 27:1-2](#)). Pilate is the only person with the authority to sentence someone to death. The Jews know that charging Jesus with blasphemy will not convince Pilate.

So, they now represent Jesus as a threat to Caesar (the emperor of Rome). In the end, Pilate does not respond to specific accusations or evidence. The crowd pressures him and threatens a riot ([Matthew 27:11-25](#)). So, he releases a murderer named Barabbas and sentences Jesus to be crucified (verse [26](#)).

The Death of Jesus ([27:27-66](#))

The Roman soldiers humiliate, mock, and beat Jesus. Then they lead him to the place where they will kill him. Jesus is weak because of the beatings, so he needs help carrying his cross ([Matthew 27:27-32](#)). He refuses the pain-relieving drug they offer him, so that he might keep his head clear (verse [34](#)).

They executed him with criminals ([Matthew 27:38](#)). This testifies to the purpose of his death (compare [1:21](#)). The Jews continue to mock and

blaspheme him. They disregard the truth of the title above his head, "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS" ([27:37-44](#)).

Finally, the ultimate horror reveals itself. Out of the darkness, Jesus cries out as if abandoned by God ([Matthew 27:45-49](#)). This is the greatest agony of he who bears the sin of the world. In the garden of Gethsemane, this is what he asked the Father to take away if possible. Jesus cries out with a loud voice and dies ([27:50](#); compare [John 19:30](#)).

Right after Jesus died, the saving effects of his death became clear ([Matthew 27:51-53](#)). The curtain in the temple tore in two from top to bottom. This curtain had separated the most holy place from the rest of the temple. When it tore, it showed that sinners could now approach God directly because their sins were forgiven through Jesus's sacrifice.

There was also an earthquake, rocks split apart, and some dead believers came back to life. These events showed that Jesus's death brought the hope of resurrection for those who had died.

Just as at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew ([2:1-12](#)), when wise men from the east (gentiles) recognized Jesus, now it is Roman soldiers (also gentiles) who declare, "Truly this was the Son of God!" ([27:54](#); contrast [26:63-65](#)). Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who had become a follower of Jesus, carefully placed Jesus's body in his own new tomb ([27:57-66](#)). Joseph's actions contrast with the ongoing attempts of the chief priests and Pharisees to resist Jesus's power ([27:57-66](#)).

The Triumph of the Savior ([28:1-20](#))

The victory of the Savior comes with great glory and power and joy. The angels announce it and his disciples testify to it ([Matthew 28:1-7](#)). The risen Jesus appears first to the women who stayed with him while he was nailed to the cross ([28:8-10](#); compare [27:61](#); [28:1](#)). After the guards report what happened, the Jewish leaders become even more desperate to stop the truth from spreading ([28:11-15](#)).

Jesus meets with the 11 disciples on the mountain in Galilee ([Matthew 28:16-20](#)). Like Moses who received God's commands on a mountain, Jesus gives his final instructions to his followers. From the very beginning of his Gospel, Matthew has been preparing his audience to understand its purpose of spreading the good news about Jesus. The apostles must disciple all peoples by:

- baptizing those who trust in Jesus into the name of the triune God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and
- by teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

The apostles go out assured that Jesus (as the Lord) protects them. Jesus (as Immanuel, "God with us") remains with them until the very end of the age.

See also Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of; Luke, Gospel of; Mark, Gospel of; Matthew (Person); Synoptic Gospels.

Gospel of the Birth of Mary

This is a collection of legends about Mary's life, from her birth until King Herod ordered the killing of children in Bethlehem. The earliest known version is called the Book of the Nativity of Mary or the Gospel of James. This is because it claims that James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote it. It was written before AD 150, since the early Christian writer Justin mentioned it in his *Dialogues* (165). Guillaume Postel rediscovered it for the West and translated it from Greek into Latin in 1552 under the title *Protevangelium Jacobi*.

Before it was lost, the work appeared in two major Latin versions: Pseudo-Matthew (around the sixth century) and the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (around the ninth century). These versions added more imaginative stories to the original Book of the Nativity of Mary and became the foundation for the Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine (1230–1298). These legends helped promote the veneration of Mary within the church.

According to the Book of the Nativity of Mary, she was born to wealthy parents named Joachim and Anna. They were not able to have children. After an angel answered their prayers for a child, they dedicated Mary to God. When she was six months old, Mary took seven steps, which led Anna to make her daughter's room a holy space where nothing ceremonially unclean could enter. Anna promised that Mary would not walk again until she entered the temple.

At age three, Mary was taken to the temple, where she was cared for and fed by an angel. When she turned twelve, the high priest prayed for guidance and was told that Mary should marry a widower.

Joseph, an elderly carpenter, was chosen when a dove came out of his staff as a sign.

Months later, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a cave near Bethlehem. A bright light surrounded them so that no one could see. When the light faded, the baby Jesus was at Mary's breast. The story ends with the visit of the magi and Herod's order to kill the infants of Bethlehem. To protect Jesus, Mary wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger.

A small Greek fragment from another Gospel of Mary was recently found, but it is too damaged to reveal much about its content.

See also Apocrypha; Birth of Mary; Mary.

Gospel of the Ebionites

Epiphanius, an early Christian writer from the fourth century AD, quoted this gospel in his book against false teachings.

The Gospel of the Ebionites may be the same work as the Gospel of the Hebrews, another apocryphal gospel. However, some scholars think it might be related instead to the Gospel of the Nazarenes.

The Ebionites were a Jewish-Christian group who followed a vegetarian diet. Epiphanius's quotations from this gospel highlight their belief that both John the Baptist and Jesus ate no meat.

See also Apocrypha.

Gospel of the Egyptians

This is the title of two different apocryphal works.

1. The first Gospel of the Egyptians is a Greek work from the second century AD. Early church writers such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen mentioned it. The book was read mainly in Egypt and probably spread Gnostic teachings. Gnostics were groups who believed that people could be saved through secret spiritual knowledge rather than through faith in Christ. This Gospel especially reflected ideas taught in Syria by Simon and Menander. These teachers claimed that marriage, eating meat, and having children were wrong. Clement of Alexandria may have quoted from this book to oppose the Encratites, who shared similar views. The negative view of women held by these Gnostics is clear in the quotes Clement recorded.
2. The second Gospel of the Egyptians was discovered in Chenoboskion, Egypt, in 1946. It is part of the Nag Hammadi collection, a group of Gnostic writings found in Coptic translation. The main title of the work is The Sacred Book of the Great Invisible Spirit, but a line at the end calls it The Gospel of the Egyptians. The book describes emanations (spiritual beings or powers that come from a higher divine source) originating from “the Primal Spirit of the cosmos.” It may have come from a Barbelo Gnostic group, which focused on a divine figure named Barbelo.

See also Apocrypha; Egyptians; Gnosticism.

Gospel of the Twelve Apostles

The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles is one of many ancient writings that claimed to tell the story of Jesus or his followers. These writings, often called “heretical gospels” (books that were rejected by the early church as false teachings), circulated during the first centuries AD along with the four true Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Christian scholar Origen, who lived around AD 185–254, first mentioned the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles by name in his comments on [Luke 1:1](#). Some scholars believe it might be the same as the Gospel of the Ebionites, which a few early Christian writings quote. However, nothing is known directly about the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles itself, because no copies have survived.

See also Apocrypha; The Twelve.

Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas is a noncanonical writing (not part of the Bible) that comes from a Gnostic tradition. It was probably written in the second or third century AD. Like other Gnostic writings, it was used by religious groups that taught secret spiritual knowledge.

Two early groups that valued this type of writing were the Marcosians, who built a symbolic system around numbers, and the Manicheans, who believed that light and darkness were two opposing powers. A church leader named Cyril of Jerusalem (who died in AD 386) said that the Gospel of Thomas was written by “one of the wicked disciples of Mani,” the founder of Manichaeism.

Along with the Protevangelium of James, the Gospel of Thomas was one of the oldest and best-known of more than fifty apocryphal gospels circulating among early Christian communities.

Two Different Works Called the Gospel of Thomas

There are actually two writings known by this name.

1. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (the one described in this article) tells stories about Jesus as a child.
2. The Coptic Gospel of Thomas, discovered in 1945 near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, contains 114 sayings that claim to be the “secret words” of Jesus recorded by “Didymos Judas Thomas.”

The Coptic text shows how Gnostic ideas influenced Egyptian Christianity. But the Infancy Gospel of Thomas focuses instead on miracle stories from Jesus’s early years.

Ancient Sources and Versions

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas survives in four versions: two in Greek (one short and one long), one in Latin, and one in Syriac. It was already known by early church writers. Hippolytus (AD 155–235) quoted it as saying, “He who seeks me will find me in children from seven years old; for there will I, who am hidden in the fourteenth aeon, be found.” Hippolytus claimed that it was used by the Naasenes, a Gnostic sect that worshiped the serpent. They used the Gospel of Thomas in support of their doctrine of the nature of the inner person.

The quotation above is not found in the surviving versions. This is understandable because there is evidence from the Stichometry of Nicephorus (possibly fourth century) that an earlier version was more than twice longer. Both Origen (who lived from about AD 185 to 254) and Eusebius (who lived from about AD 260 to 340) knew the Gospel of Thomas. Eusebius considered it heretical and said it should be “rejected as altogether absurd and impious” (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.25).

Stories About the Boy Jesus

The stories in the Gospel of Thomas emphasize the miraculous power and supernatural wisdom of the boy Jesus. Some scholars think they were originally created by orthodox Christians to oppose the Gnostic heresy that the “supernatural Christ” first came upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. It is more likely that these stories began because people were curious about what Jesus was like as a child. Some of the stories may have been influenced by non-Jewish (pagan) traditions.

Only three or four of the miracles in these stories show Jesus doing something good for others. Most of the other miracles are harmful or destructive. For example, one child spoiled the small pools of water that Jesus had made. Jesus became angry and cursed him, and the child’s body dried up. Another boy who bumped into Jesus fell down and died. A teacher who struck Jesus on the head was immediately cursed and fell to the ground. Because of stories like these, the French writer Ernest Renan described the “Jesus” in the Gospel of Thomas as “a vicious little guttersnipe” (a cruel and mischievous child).

Throughout the gospel, Jesus is shown as having infinite wisdom and power. In one story, he mocks his teacher, Zacchaeus. Jesus says, “You hypocrite, first, if you know it, teach the Alpha, and then we

will believe you concerning the Beta.” Zacchaeus feels ashamed and admits that he is not worthy to teach such a student. Jesus laughs and says, “I am come from above that I may curse them.” The story continues, “And no man after that dared to provoke him, lest he should curse him, and he should be maimed.”

Other miracles include:

- making 12 live sparrows out of clay,
- smiting his accusers with blindness,
- raising a child from the dead,
- healing a foot cut in two by an axe,
- carrying water in a cloth garment,
- reaping an enormous harvest from one kernel of wheat,
- stretching a piece of wood to its proper length, and
- healing his brother James, who had been bitten by a viper while gathering firewood.

The longer Latin version of the Gospel includes even more miracle stories.

The orthodox church never accepted the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas as part of the Bible. However, it was used and quoted in later writings of the same kind. For example, chapters 18 and onward of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew are based on stories from the Gospel of Thomas. Together with other apocryphal writings, it influenced Christian art and literature, especially from the tenth century onward. The story of Jesus making twelve sparrows from clay even appears in the Qur’an, showing how widely the story spread.

See also Apocrypha; Thomas, the Apostle.

Gospel of Truth

The Gospel of Truth is an early Christian Gnostic writing that reflects the early teachings of Valentinus.

How Was the Gospel of Truth Discovered?

Around AD 1945, farmers in Upper Egypt near modern Nag Hammadi uncovered a jar while digging near the ancient village of Shenesisit-

Chenoboskion. Inside were 13 books (9 of which were largely complete) and 15 fragments written in Coptic. This discovery was the library of an ancient Gnostic sect (a religious movement that taught salvation through secret knowledge). It contained all or parts of 51 different Gnostic writings. Only two of these had been available to scholars for study before. This collection is now called the Nag Hammadi or Chenoboskion texts. It was the first discovery of original Gnostic literature in the modern period. All are Coptic translations of earlier Greek originals.

Codex I is titled the Jung Codex because it is now owned by the Jung Institute in Vienna. It is unique among the 13 works because it is written in Sub-Achimimic Coptic. The rest of the works are written in the more usual Sahidic Coptic. This codex contains five works, two of which are the enormously controversial Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Truth.

The Gospel of Truth has no heading. Instead, the title comes from the first line of the text. It mentions no author nor addressee. In fact, it is not a "gospel" in the usual sense of a story about Jesus. It is a theological reflection that presents early Valentinian Gnosticism.

Who Was Valentinus and What Did He Teach?

Most scholars think the author was Valentinus, a Christian teacher who lived during the second century AD. They believe this because

1. the book shows early forms of Valentinian ideas before they became complex and mythical, and
2. it uses language that is almost in line with traditional Christian belief.

However, no final proof of this has been discovered as yet. If Valentinus himself did not write this document, then it had to be someone in the immediate circle of his initial disciples.

Valentinus was born in Egypt around AD 100 to 110. He received a thorough education at Alexandria and became a Christian. He taught first in Egypt before moving to Rome around AD 136, where he stayed until 154 or 155. The early church father, Tertullian, in his work against heresy, seems to imply that Valentinus was twice expelled from the Roman church. He states that he was a brilliant and eloquent man who had hopes of becoming a bishop in Rome at one time.

Valentinus attracted many gifted followers who later expanded his teachings almost beyond recognition. By the time he left Rome sometime after 154 or 155, he had definitely broken away from orthodoxy. He was now teaching a form of Gnostic heresy. The Gospel of Truth is the product of what he taught. A later surviving source claims Valentinus later taught in Cyprus. There is no further mention of what he did or of what happened to him afterwards.

What Is the Message and Significance of the Gospel of Truth?

The early church father Irenaeus wrote that the Gospel of Truth is not a gospel because it is unlike the four Gospels (*Against Heresies* 3.2.9). Irenaeus was certainly correct, since the work is not a narrative like the biblical Gospels. The Gospel of Truth does not contain any story about Jesus, any place name of any type, any date, or any mention of any person other than Jesus, who is only mentioned five times.

More than 60 times, this brief work speaks about knowledge (*gnosis*) and the need to have knowledge. This knowledge is born from within as the soul returns to itself, finding there what Deity deposited in it. It may even find there the residue of Deity still entrapped within the soul. Through this knowledge, a person discovers who they are, where they came from, and where they are going.

In this "gospel," Christ's role is to present the "Book of the Living" or the "Living Book." "Book" is not understood as the Gospel proclamation of the life and teachings of Jesus. It is rather the primordial gospel or truth that existed before creation. It was error and ignorance that caused rebellion against the Savior and his crucifixion on the tree.

Although it is not explicitly stated, the Gnostic understanding implies that matter emerged or was created because of divine error and ignorance. Salvation for living beings entrapped in this matter comes with returning to flawless Deity. The path of this return is Gnosis (knowledge). The Pleroma, the fullness of the Deity, went out into the depths of matter in search of the elect among beings by way of Jesus and the cross.

While clearly Gnostic, the Gospel of Truth is closer to traditional Christian teaching than most Gnostic Chenoboskion writings. It speaks of only one Son of God, does not divide Jesus into a human and divine figure, and does not mention Sophia, the female spirit often central to other Gnostic myths. It is for

these reasons, among others, that the Gospel of Truth is placed very close to Valentinus's break with orthodoxy.

The Gospel of Truth has assumed some degree of importance in New Testament studies beyond that warranted by its heretical content, because it everywhere assumes our full New Testament canon. By some scholars' counts, there are no less than 83 places where the Gospel of Truth echoes New Testament canonical books, even though it does not cite a single saying of Jesus directly. Most particularly, it relies heavily on the book of Revelation and on the Letter to the Hebrews.

See also Apocrypha.

Gouging

Gouging was the painful practice of forcibly removing a person's eyes. This was commonly done by the Philistines, Amorites, Babylonians, and other nations that surrounded Israel ([Judges 16:21](#); [2 Kings 25:7](#)). People would gouge out eyes not only to disable their enemies or prisoners but also to bring extreme shame and disgrace upon them ([1 Samuel 11:2](#)).

The Israelites seem to have known about gouging from their time in Egypt ([Numbers 16:14](#)). But there is no evidence that it was a common practice in Israel.

See also Criminal Law and Punishment.

Gourd

A trailing or climbing plant. These plants grow along the ground or climb up surfaces like walls or trees. Gourds belong to the same plant family as cucumbers, melons, and squash.

The Bible mentions gourds in two key passages:

1. In [Jonah 4:6-10](#), God made a plant grow quickly to provide shade for Jonah. Some translations call it a "gourd," but the original Hebrew word may refer to a castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) rather than a true gourd. The plant withered when God sent a worm to damage it, leaving Jonah exposed to the sun.

2. In [2 Kings 4:38-41](#), during a famine, one of Elisha's followers gathered wild gourds to add to a stew. These were likely *Citrullus colocynthis*, a cucumber-like vine with a bitter, poisonous fruit. When they tasted the bitter stew, the people cried out, "There is death in the pot!" Elisha then performed a miracle, adding flour to the stew to make it safe to eat.

Gourds have been cultivated for thousands of years. Some types are edible, while others are used to make containers, bowls, ladles, and water jugs when dried.

See Castor Oil Plant; Wild Gourd.

Governor

In the Bible, the term "governor" is translated from at least ten different Hebrew words and five Greek words. English Bible translations do not always use the same word for these terms. They often use many titles to describe the same Hebrew word, like:

- Overseer
- Officer
- Leader
- Judge
- Deputy

The same problem appears in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament).

A governor was a high-ranking person with authority over people, land, or both. Sometimes, a governor's rank and power came from the position itself. Other times, it was based on noble birth, wealth, or public achievements. A governor usually got his authority from a king, making him a deputy in the area he ruled. This was true for figures like:

- Joseph ([Genesis 42:6](#))
- Gedaliah ([Jeremiah 40:5](#))
- Daniel ([Daniel 2:48](#))
- Zerubbabel ([Haggai 1:1](#))

However, one Hebrew word for “governor” could also mean “absolute ruler” ([Joshua 12:2](#)) or a person acting under someone else’s authority.

The most common Old Testament term for “governor” likely comes from an Akkadian phrase meaning “lord of a district.” These governors usually used military power to stay in control ([2 Kings 18:24](#); [Nehemiah 2:7](#); [Jeremiah 51:23, 28](#)). During the Persian and Greek periods, a governor called a “satrap” was likely a civil official. Before the Babylonian exile, the leader of a city-state was often called “governor” ([1 Kings 22:26](#); [2 Chronicles 34:8](#)). The writer of [Psalm 22:28](#) used the title to describe God as the ruler of his people. A temple official who put the prophet Jeremiah in the stocks (a form of punishment) was also called a “governor” (sometimes translated as “officer”). A military governor likely commanded one or more units of soldiers. In some cases, “governor” was a special title, as seen in [Ezra 2:63](#) and [Nehemiah 7:65](#).

Translation issues from Greek are also common. The different Greek words used for “governor” often referred to different levels of leadership. This is clear with terms like “ethnarch” ([1 Maccabees 14:47](#); [2 Corinthians 11:32](#), in the New American Standard Bible), which means someone who ruled as a deputy of a king. Other words referred to Roman provincial officials. These governors are mentioned in New Testament writings ([Matthew 10:18](#); [Luke 2:2](#); [3:1](#); [Acts 23:24](#); [1 Peter 2:14](#)) and were responsible for maintaining law and order in their areas. In New Testament times, Judea was under the control of the governor of Syria. In the King James Version, “governor” is sometimes used in an old-fashioned way. For example, the “governor” in the King James Version of [James 3:4](#) refers to a ship’s pilot.

Goyim

Alternate rendering for people defeated by Joshua west of the Jordan ([Jos 12:23](#)). See Goyim #2.

Gozan

City and district near the Euphrates River. The Habor River (modern Khabur) flowed through it. The Assyrians conquered it sometime before Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah (701 BC). This fact is mentioned by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in a blasphemous letter sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah ([2 Kgs 19:12](#); [Is 37:12](#)). Later it became one of the places in Assyria where conquered Israelites were deported.

Grace

The gift of God as expressed in his actions of extending mercy, loving-kindness, and salvation to people.

Grace is the dimension of divine activity that enables God to confront human indifference and rebellion with an inexhaustible capacity to forgive and to bless. God is gracious in action. The doctrine of divine grace underlies the thought of both the OT and NT. However, the OT merely anticipates and prepares for the full expression of grace that becomes manifest in the NT.

Grace in the Old Testament

Early in the narrative of the OT, God reveals himself as a “God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” ([Ex 34:6](#), rsv). As a result, it becomes possible for undeserving humans to approach him with the prayer, “If now I have found favor [or grace] in thy sight, O Lord, . . .” ([Ex 34:9](#), rsv). Through divine initiative, human alienation from God is turned by him into a state of unmerited acceptance that opens the way for reconciliation and redemptive usefulness.

Divine grace was already operative in the Garden of Eden when God responded to the debacle of the fall with the promise of redemption ([Gn 3:15](#)) and solicitous care rather than with abandonment or retributive annihilation. The call to Abraham was an extension of grace, not only to him as an individual, but through him as a means of universal outreach. As an inseparable part of God’s promise of individual blessing to Abraham and of a national blessing to his descendants, the indication was given that the individual and the national blessings would be instrumental in bringing about a universal blessing to “all the families of the earth” ([Gn 12:2–3](#)). Consequently, both the election of

Abraham and the promise of universal blessing find expression in a God-given covenant, the object of which is to extend God's grace to the whole human race. In a solemn confirmation of the promise to Abraham, God affirmed, "My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. . . . And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant" ([Gn 17:4, 7](#), rsv). This promise was to be understood as finding fulfillment on the basis of grace, not of race, so that it would become applicable to all Abraham's offspring—not only to Jewish believers, his racial descendants, but also to his spiritual descendants, believers from all nations who profess a faith like Abraham's ([Rom 4:16](#)). Thus, from the perspective of divine grace, the election of Abraham and of national Israel was not an end in itself. It was God's plan for extending his redemptive designs to all believers, from all nations. In extending his grace to Abraham, God was establishing the beginnings of the church, the community of grace.

The divine particularism evidenced in the election of Abraham and in his becoming the recipient of God's grace provides a model for the selection of all the individuals used by God in the history of redemption. Beyond the benefits of grace accorded to individuals such as Abraham, David, the prophets, and later the apostles, by virtue of their call, loomed the potential of their contributions to the fulfillment of the covenant of God on behalf of the community of those who share the faith of Abraham—the church. In the gracious dealings of God with Israel, with its patriarchs and its leaders, God was laying the basis for his outreach of grace to the church universal. God's gracious interventions in the old covenant were intended to manifest the ultimacy of the church in his redemptive purposes. In the exercise of their ministries, the prophets of the old covenant knew that they were serving not themselves but the church ([1 Pt 1:10-12](#)).

As a transitional, mediatory expression of divine grace, the institutions of the old covenant possessed only a temporary validity that has been superseded by the ultimate manifestations of God's grace in the new covenant ([Heb 8:6-7](#)). Consequently, the old covenant was to become obsolete and replaced by a new covenant that would display the full manifestation of God's grace. The proverbial tension between law and grace becomes intelligible in this perspective. Like the election of racial Israel, the law (as one of the most

visible institutions of the old covenant) was a temporary measure of divine grace accorded to anticipate and prepare the covenant of justification through grace by faith in Jesus Christ ([Gal 3:23-29](#); [Heb 10:1](#)).

Grace in the New Testament

The concept of grace defined as God's active involvement on behalf of his people receives a sharper focus in the NT. Divine grace becomes embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, who demonstrates visibly the dynamic nature of God's grace and fulfills in his ministry of redemption the old covenant promises relative to God's gracious dealings with humanity ([In 1:14, 17](#)).

God's grace manifested in Jesus Christ makes it possible for God to forgive sinners and to gather them in the church, the new covenant community. During his ministry, Jesus repeatedly pronounced the words of forgiveness on a great number of sinners and ministered God's benevolent succor to a variety of desperate human needs. Through teachings such as the father's forgiveness of the prodigal son and the search for the lost sheep, Jesus made it clear that he had come to seek and save those who were lost. But ultimately it was his redemptive death on the cross that opened wide the gate of salvation for repentant sinners to find access to God's forgiving and restorative grace. This simple truth is formulated in the doctrine of justification by faith through grace ([Rom 3:23](#); [Ti 3:7](#)). According to this teaching, God's gracious provision of the substitutionary death of Christ enables him to pronounce a verdict of "just" or "not guilty" on repentant sinners and to include them in his eternal purposes. As a result, they enter into the realm of God's gracious activity, which enables them to implement the process of individual sanctification in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

God's grace manifested in Jesus Christ also makes it possible for God to bestow on believers undeserved benefits that enrich their lives and unite them together in the church, the body of Christ. Their acceptance on the basis of grace endows them with a new status as children of God, members of the household of God, so that they relate to him as to their heavenly Father ([Gal 4:4-6](#)). Consequently, they become members of a community where race, class, and sex distinctions are irrelevant, since they all became equal inheritors of God's age-long promise to Abraham of universal blessing ([3:28-29](#)). In order to enrich their individual lives and to assure the usefulness

of their participation in the life of the new community, the Holy Spirit graciously energizes believers with a variety of gifts for the performance of ministries designed to benefit the church ([Rom 12:6-8](#)). Foremost among those ministries is that of apostle, itself closely linked to God's gracious provision ([1:5](#); [15:15-16](#)) since it combines with the ministry of the prophets of old to provide the foundational structure of the church ([Eph 2:20](#)). Because the riches of divine grace are freely lavished upon believers in their community life upon earth ([1:7-8](#)), the church translated into eternity will demonstrate, by its very existence, the immeasurable riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ ([2:6](#)).

Finally, God's grace manifested in Jesus Christ makes it possible for God to cause believers to reflect his grace in their character and relationships. The irreducible condition for receiving God's grace is humility ([Jas 4:6](#); [1 Pt 5:5](#)). Such humility in relation to God enables believers to practice humility in regard to other people. From a position of grace, they can set aside selfishness and conceit in order to treat others with deference ([Phil 2:3-4](#)) in an attitude of mutual servanthood ([Eph 5:21](#)), and in a spirit of mutual forgiveness ([Mt 18:23-35](#)) so that even their communication can exhibit divine grace ([Col 4:6](#)). Since the grace of Jesus Christ constitutes the existential context of the lives and relationships of believers, they are exhorted not to pervert the grace of God into ungodly practice ([Jude 1:4](#)) but instead to grow in the grace of the Lord ([2 Pt 3:18](#)).

The essential meaning of grace in the Bible refers to God's disposition to exercise goodwill toward his creatures. This favorable disposition of God finds its supreme expression in Jesus Christ. By its very definition, this grace is rendered fully accessible to all humans with no other precondition than a repentant desire to receive it ([Ti 2:11-12](#)). As a result, the human condition of alienation from God and from his purposes becomes replaced with access to the otherwise unapproachable majesty of God represented by a throne, so that his grace may become available to meet human need ([Heb 4:16](#)). The tragic alternative to receiving God's grace is to remain in hopeless alienation or to pursue sterile attempts to merit God's favor through human efforts doomed to futility ([Rom 1:21](#)). God's unconditional acceptance of sinners may be conditioned only by their rejection of his acceptance.

Because Christ represents the fulfillment, the embodiment, and the dispenser of divine grace, the early Christians freely referred to God's grace as "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." This grace was conceived as being so basic and so pervasive to their individual lives and to the existence of their communities of faith that they naturally coupled the traditional greeting of shalom ("peace") with a reference to the grace of Jesus Christ. This is the reason for the ubiquitous repetition of numerous variations on the basic greeting formula found in almost every book of the NT, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" ([2 Thes 3:18](#)).

See also God, Being and Attributes of; Love; Mercy.

Grain

See Agriculture; Plants (Barley; Millet; Spelt; Wheat).

Granary

A granary is a building where grain is stored after harvest. Farmers use granaries to protect their harvested crops from weather, pests, and animals. In Bible times, granaries were very important for food security. They allowed people to store excess grain from good harvests to use during times of drought or famine.

See Agriculture.

Grape

Smooth-skinned, juicy berry that grows in clusters on woody vines. Grapes are eaten fresh or dried, and are fermented for wine. *See* Agriculture; Plants (Vine); Vines, Vineyard; Wine.

Grasshopper

Plant-eating insect equipped with long hind legs for leaping. *See* Animals.

Grate, Grating

A network of bronze surrounding the lower half of the altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle ([Exodus 27:4](#)).

See also Altar.

Gratitude

A natural expression of thanks in response to blessings, protection, or love. In the tradition common to Judaism and Christianity, gratitude is not a tool used to manipulate the will of God. It is never coerced or fabricated in one's mind. Rather, gratitude is a joyful commitment of one's personality to God.

In the Old Testament, gratitude to God was the only condition in which life could be enjoyed. For Jews, every aspect of creation provided evidence of God's lordship over all life. The Hebrew people thanked him for the magnificence of the universe ([Psalms 19:1-4](#); [33:6-9](#); [104:1-24](#)). When they received good news, they thanked God for his goodness and great deeds ([1 Chronicles 16:8-12](#)). When they received bad news, they also gave thanks, trusting that he was a just God ([Job 1:21](#)).

These same sentiments are found in later Jewish writings such as the Talmud. The people of Israel thanked God for his faithfulness to covenant promises:

1. The Israelites thanked God for deliverance from enemies ([Psalms 18:17](#); [30:1](#); [44:1-8](#)) and from death ([Ps 30:8-12](#); [Isaiah 38:18-20](#)).
2. The Israelites thanked God for forgiveness of sin ([Psalms 32:5](#); [99:8](#); [103:3](#); [Isaiah 12:1](#)).
3. The Israelites thanked God for answers to prayer ([Psalms 28:6](#); [66:19](#)).
4. The Israelites thanked God for compassion toward the afflicted and oppressed ([Psalms 34:2](#); [72:12](#)).
5. The Israelites thanked God for executing justice ([Deuteronomy 32:4](#); [Psalm 99:4](#)).
6. The Israelites thanked God for continuing guidance ([Psalm 32:8](#); [Isaiah 30:20-21](#)).

Gratitude was such a vital part of Israel's religion that it pervaded most ceremonies and customs. Thank offerings acknowledged blessings from God

([Leviticus 7:12-13](#); [22:29](#); [Psalm 50:14](#)). Shouts of joy ([Psalm 42:4](#)), songs of praise ([Psalms 145:7](#); [149:1](#)), and music and dance ([Psalm 150:3-5](#)) all added to the spirit of thanksgiving in worship. Feasts and festivals were celebrated in remembrance of God's steadfast love throughout their history ([Deuteronomy 16:9-15](#); [2 Chronicles 30:21-22](#)). King David appointed Levitical priests to offer God thanks ([1 Chronicles 16:4](#)). This custom was carried on by the kings Solomon ([2 Chronicles 5:12-13](#)) and Hezekiah ([2 Chronicles 31:2](#)) and by those who returned from the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:17](#); [12:24, 27](#)).

In the New Testament, the object of thanksgiving is the love of God expressed in the redemptive work of Christ. The apostle Paul thanked God for that gift of grace ([1 Corinthians 1:4](#); [2 Corinthians 9:15](#)) and the ability to preach the gospel ([2 Corinthians 2:14](#); [1 Timothy 1:12](#)). Paul thankfully participated in the spiritual gifts ([1 Corinthians 14:18](#)). Gratitude for love and faith among believers pervades his letters ([Romans 6:17](#); [Ephesians 1:15-16](#); [Philippians 1:3-5](#); [Colossians 1:3-4](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:2-3](#)).

Because the expression of gratitude is tied so closely to the response of faith, Paul encouraged believers to give thanks in all things ([Romans 14:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)). He commanded Christians to pray with thanksgiving in the name of Christ ([Philippians 4:6](#); [Colossians 4:2](#)), who has made all thanksgiving possible ([Ephesians 5:20](#)). In his teaching on how to celebrate the Lord's Supper, Paul specified that Christians should give thanks, just as the Lord "had given thanks" ([1 Corinthians 11:24](#)).

Grave

See Burial, Burial Customs.

Graveclothes

See Burial, Burial Customs.

Graven Image

Image or representation of a deity made of wood, stone, or metal. See Idols, Idolatry.

Great Lizard

One of the reptiles that the Jewish law listed as ceremonially unclean ([Leviticus 11:29](#)).

See Lizard.

Great Owl

The great owl (*Asio otus*) is a large owl that stands about 61 centimeters tall (nearly two feet). Its feathers are gray with brown spots and black stripes. It has two tufts on its head that look like ears. Because of these, it is also called the great horned owl.

This owl mostly eats rodents like rats and mice. In winter, it is often found in Israel, living in old ruins or among trees.

The great owl may be one of the birds Isaiah described as living in destroyed places, like Edom ([Isaiah 34:11](#)). It is also listed as an unclean bird in Jewish law in some Bible translations ([Leviticus 11:17](#); [Deuteronomy 14:16](#)).

See also Birds; Owl.

Greaves

Protective piece of armor worn over the shank of the leg ([1 Sm 17:6](#)).

See also Armor and Weapons.

Greece, Greek

The biblical references to Greece and the Greek people are often unclear. In the Old Testament, some passages refer to Greece or the Greeks as "Javan" or "the sons of Javan." Javan was the fourth son of Japheth, who appears in the "table of nations" in [Genesis 10](#). Just as the name Israel comes from Jacob, the name Javan is used for his descendants.

The Bible's descriptions of Javan and his sons show that they lived in the land of Greece and were the Greeks ([1 Chronicles 1:5, 7](#); [Isaiah 66:19](#); [Ezekiel 27:13](#)). The book of Daniel even describes the empire of Alexander the Great, which confirms that Javan means Greece. When Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint), they often replaced the name Javan

with the word for "Greek." This happens in passages such as [Daniel 8:21](#); [10:20](#); [11:2](#); [Zechariah 9:13](#); and [Joel 3:6](#).

In the New Testament, the word "Greek" appears to have the special sense of Hellenist, referring to Jews living in Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) cities ([Acts 6:1](#); [9:29](#); [11:20](#)). The word in [John 12:20](#), [Acts 14:1](#), and [16:1-3](#) seems to refer to Greeks specifically. But often in the New Testament the word "Greek" was used to mean "non-Jews." The Jews recognized only Jews and non-Jews, so the word was virtually synonymous with gentiles ([Romans 1:16](#); [10:12](#); [1 Corinthians 1:22, 24](#); [Galatians 2:3](#); [3:28](#)).

Sometimes the word "Greek" refers to the language ([John 19:20](#); [Acts 21:37](#); [Revelation 9:11](#)). The use of the word "Greek" for the Syrophenician woman ([Mark 7:26](#)) may be a cultural word. Acts refers to Greeks in the synagogues as observers. These may have been Greeks, it is uncertain ([Acts 14:1](#); [17:4](#); [18:4](#)).

Geography

The ancient Greek homeland comprised the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula. But Greek language speakers lived in the islands of the Aegean Sea, western Asia Minor, south Italy, and Sicily.

The Emergence of Greek Culture

After the Persian Wars ended (497 BC), Athens entered into a remarkable period of greatness. Athens was rebuilt and its port of Piraeus was fortified. When the Athenian citizens embarked on a course of unrestricted rule by the people, chaos seemed to threaten. Pericles, a brilliant leader, restored the balance of the state and Athens soon regained glory.

Vast buildings were built on the Acropolis, notably the Parthenon (dedicated to Athena, the goddess of Athens). Athens became wealthy, partly from the contributions to the Delian League. Athenian sea power grew.

Many people lived in Athens:

- slaves
- artisans
- craftsmen
- foreign traders
- artists
- poets
- philosophers
- teachers
- actors
- athletes
- scientists
- physicians
- historians
- religious teachers
- military and naval experts

Great writers of the fifth and early fourth centuries BC included:

- dramatists like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripedes
- historians like Thucydides and Herodotus
- philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Great art and architecture thrived during this period. It was a golden age of spectacular achievement in art, thought, literature, and architecture.

The Age of Hellenism

Athens's power and influence declined before the fourth century BC was over. Philip of Macedon, with ambitions of empire, drove west. By 338 BC Athens and Thebes were overwhelmed. Greece became united into a Macedonian Empire. Philip was assassinated in 366 BC, but his son Alexander educated in the Athenian tradition, took up his father's work. Before his own death in 323 BC, Philip conquered Persia and reached to the Punjab in India.

In the end, he controlled an area from the Caucasus (mountain region between the Black Sea and

Caspian Sea) to the Libyan Desert and the borders of Ethiopia as well. Alexander's vast territories were divided among four generals at his death. After some adjustments, three divisions emerged. Ptolemy ruled Egypt. Seleucus ruled Asia Minor, Syria, and the East. Antigonus ruled the third division, Macedonia.

The Greek area eventually came entirely under the control of the Romans, who moved into Greek areas in 198 BC. Over the years, they established Roman provinces, such as Achaia ([Acts 18:12](#)). It was into the world of Hellenism, now under Rome, that the Christians moved with the message of the good news about Jesus (the gospel) in the first century AD.

The Greeks in Palestine

Excavations have shown that there was contact between Palestine and the Aegean areas over many centuries.

From the middle Bronze period (the time of the early biblical fathers), middle Minoan II pottery has been found at some sites. The Philistines formed part of the Sea Peoples in the 13th century BC. They settled in areas of coastal Palestine and developed their own culture there, leaving a great deal of their pottery. Between 1370 and 1200 BC, various peoples from the Aegean and western Asia Minor found their way to Palestine.

Mycenaean pottery is a common artifact. Attic black-figure pottery artifacts from the sixth century BC indicate Greek presence. Attic red-figure pottery examples from the period around 530–300 BC exist as well.

Silver coins struck in imitation of Attic drachmas come from the same period. Greek influence increased with the rise of Hellenism. Eventually, Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers occupied Palestine. Pottery artifacts and architectural features show Greek influence in Palestine. This influence extends throughout the Levant region.

With the coming of the Romans, these influences continued. Greek was the language of commerce. Indeed, the New Testament was written in the Greek of ordinary people. A wide variety of Greek inscriptions have come to light from Roman times.

See also Alexander #1; Alexandria; Hellenism; Hellenists; Judaism.

Greek Language

Language of the Greek people.

The Greek language is a beautiful, rich, and well-tuned instrument of communication. It is a fitting tool both for vigorous thought and for religious devotion. During its classical period, Greek was the language of one of the world's greatest cultures. During that cultural period, language, literature, and art flourished more than war. The Greek mind was preoccupied with ideals of beauty. The Greek language reflected artistry in its philosophical dialogues, its poetry, and its stately orations.

The Greek language was also characterized by strength and vigor. It was capable of variety and striking effects. Greek was a language of argument, with a vocabulary and style that could penetrate and clarify phenomena rather than simply tell stories. Classical Greek elaborately developed many forms from a few word roots. Its complex syntax allowed intricate word arrangements to express fine nuances of meaning.

Ancient History

Although the antecedents of Greek are obscure, the first traces of what could be called antecedents of ancient Greek appear in Mycenaean and Minoan documents (1400–1200 BC) that use three different scripts: Minoan hieroglyphic (the earliest), linear A, and linear B (the latest). Linear B, generally considered “pre-Greek,” is written in a syllabic script found on clay tablets discovered on the island of Crete and on the Greek mainland.

The Mycenaean civilization and script ended suddenly with the Dorian invasions (1200 BC), and writing seems to have disappeared for several centuries. Later, about the eighth century BC, Greek writing appeared in a different script. That script was based on an alphabet presumably borrowed from the Phoenicians and then adapted to the Greek speech sound system and direction of writing. Greek was first written from right to left, like the West Semitic languages, then in a back-and-forth pattern, finally from left to right. Several dialects appeared during the archaic period (8th to 6th centuries BC): Dorian, Eonian, Achaean, and Aeolic.

During the classical period (5th to 4th centuries BC), Greek culture reached its literary and artistic zenith. Classical (or Attic) Greek was characterized by subtlety of syntax and an expressive use of particles (short, uninflected parts of speech, often

untranslatable). As the city of Athens attained cultural and political control, the Attic dialect also gained in prestige. With the Macedonian conquests, Attic Greek, combined with influences from other dialects (especially Ionic), became the international language of the eastern Mediterranean area.

Hellenism and the Koine Dialect

The conquests of Alexander the Great encouraged the spread of Greek language and culture. Regional dialects were largely replaced by “Hellenistic” or “koiné” (common) Greek. Koine Greek is a dialect preserved and known through thousands of inscriptions reflecting all aspects of daily life. The koine dialect added many vernacular expressions to Attic Greek, thus making it more cosmopolitan. Simplifying the grammar also better adapted it to a worldwide culture. The new language, reflecting simple, popular speech, became the common language of commerce and diplomacy. The Greek language lost much of its elegance and finely shaded nuance as a result of its evolution from classic to koine. Nevertheless, it retained its distinguishing characteristics of strength, beauty, clarity, and logical rhetorical power.

It is significant that the apostle Paul wrote his letter to Christians in Rome in the Greek language rather than in Latin. The Roman Empire of that time was culturally a Greek world, except for governmental transactions.

The Septuagint

During the centuries immediately before Christ, the eastern Mediterranean had been undergoing not only Hellenization but also Semitization. Both influences can be observed in the Greek translation of the OT.

Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was an epochal event. The Septuagint (the earliest Greek translation of the OT) later had a strong influence on Christian thought. A necessary consequence of Hebrew writers using the Greek language was that a Greek spirit and Greek forms of thought influenced Jewish culture. The Jews soon appropriated from the rich and refined Greek vocabulary some expressions for ideas that were beyond the scope of Hebrew terminology. Also, old Greek expressions acquired new and extended meanings in this translation of the OT by Greek-speaking Jews.

The Greek OT has been very significant in the development of Christian thought. Often the usage of a Greek word in the Septuagint provides a key to its meaning in the NT. The OT dialect of “Jewish Greek” is at times seen in NT passages translated very literally; at other times, the NT translation of OT texts is very loose.

New Testament Greek

Although most NT authors were Jewish, they wrote in Greek, the universal language of their time. In addition, the apostle John seems to have been acquainted with some Greek philosophy, which influenced his style. John used “word” (Greek *logos*) in reference to Christ ([Jn 1:1](#)), and several other abstract expressions. John may have been influenced by the Egyptian center of Alexandria, where Greek philosophy and Hebrew learning had merged in a unique way.

The apostle Paul also was acquainted with Greek authors ([Acts 17:28](#); [1 Cor 15:33](#); [Ti 1:12](#)). Thus, Greek orators and philosophers influenced Paul’s language as well as Hebrew prophets and scholars.

Exactly which dialect of Hebrew or Aramaic Jesus spoke is debated. It is certainly possible that Jesus also spoke Greek. The fact remains that the Gospels were originally written as Greek texts. The records in Greek of Jesus’ teachings and accomplishments prepared the way for the gospel to spread throughout a Greek-speaking culture.

The dignity and restraint of koine Greek used by Christian writers was neither so artificial and pedantic as some classical writings nor so trivial and vulgar as spoken koine.

Greek words took on richer, more spiritual meaning in the context of Scripture. Influenced by the simplicity and rich vividness of Semitic style, the NT was not written in a peculiar “Holy Ghost” language (as some medieval scholars believed) but in koine (common) Greek, largely by Semitic-thinking authors. Tens of thousands of papyri unearthed in Egypt in the early 20th century furnish lexical and grammatical parallels to biblical language, revealing that it was part of the linguistic warp and woof of that era. Yet NT Greek was nevertheless “free,” often creating its own idiom. Christian writers influenced Greek thought by introducing new expressions in order to convey their message about Jesus Christ.

Semitic Influence

Because NT Greek combines the directness of Hebrew thought with the precision of Greek expression, Greek’s subtle delicacy often interprets Hebrew concepts. The Semitic influence is strongest in the Gospels, the book of Revelation, and the Letter of James. Books like Luke and Hebrews exhibit a more typically Greek style. The NT epistles blend the wisdom of Hebrew and the dialectic philosophy of Greek. Sermons recorded in the NT combine the Hebrew prophetic message with Greek oratorical force.

In addition to direct quotes and allusions from the Septuagint, a pervasive Semitic influence on NT Greek has been noted in many areas. For example, the syntax of NT Greek contains many examples of Semitic style.

Vocabulary

The Greek NT vocabulary is abundant and sufficient to convey just the shade of meaning the author desires. For example, the NT uses two different words for “love” (for two kinds of love), two words for “another” (another of the same, or another of a different kind), and several words for various kinds of knowledge. Significantly, some words are omitted, such as *eros* (a third kind of love) and other words commonly employed in the Hellenistic culture of that time.

Moreover, Greek words often took on new meanings in the context of the gospel, arising from a combination of new teachings with an exalted morality. The writers did not hesitate to use such words as “life,” “death,” “glory,” and “wrath” in new ways to express new thoughts. Sometimes the literal meaning of a word almost disappears, as when the authors use “water,” “washing,” and “baptism” for Christ’s spiritually purifying power. NT vocabulary also contains words found elsewhere only in the Greek OT, such as “circumcision,” “idolatry,” “anathema,” “diaspora,” and “Pentecost.” Loan words from Hebrew or Aramaic include *alleluia* and *amen* (Hebrew), and *abba*, *mammon*, and *corban* (Aramaic).

For understanding the meaning of a NT word, then, a lexicon of classical Greek is helpful but not sufficient. One must also know how the word is used in the Greek OT, in Hellenistic writings, and in the inscriptions and documents representing the language of everyday life. Papyrus documents provide many illustrations of the meaning of NT words. For example, the Greek word for

“contribution” ([1 Cor 16:1](#)), at one time thought to be limited to the NT, is commonly used with the same meaning in the papyri. Many Greek words once defined on the basis of classical Greek have been given sharper meaning in the light of their use in the papyri.

Grammar

As in other Indo-European languages, the meaning of Greek words is affected by the addition and alteration of various prefixes and suffixes (the process known as inflection). Although its system of inflection is simplified compared to classical Greek, NT Greek is more inflected than are many languages. Greek meaning is thus much less susceptible to ambiguity than English.

In contrast to Hebrew, Greek has a neuter gender as well as masculine and feminine. The many and precise Greek prepositions are subtle, having various meanings depending on their context. NT Greek uses only about half of the particles used in classical Greek.

The Greek verb system, much more complicated than that of Hebrew, is capable of nuances of meaning difficult to express even in English. Each Greek verb has five aspects, which grammarians call tense, mood, voice, person, and number.

Tense

Greek verb tense deals primarily with *kind of action* rather than *time of action* as in English. In Greek there are three basic kinds of action: *durative*, expressed by the present, imperfect, and (sometimes) future tenses; *simple* or *punctiliar*, expressed by the aorist and (often) future tenses; and *completed*, expressed by the perfect tense (results of past action continue into the present) and pluperfect tense (results are confined to the past).

Greek tenses are often hard to translate into English; the time of action as well as the verb stem’s basic meaning (such as whether it takes an object) must be subtly blended with the kind of action into a single idea.

Mood

The mood shows how a verb’s action should be understood. Is the action real? (Use the indicative mood.) Is the action demanded by someone? (Use the imperative mood.) Does the action depend on other conditions? (Use the subjunctive or optative mood.) Is the action basically descriptive of

another substantive? (Use a participle.) Is the action basically substantive? (Use an infinitive.) In grammar, a substantive is a word or group of words functioning as a noun; the last two examples are not strictly moods, but they are used that way by grammarians. The moods give a Greek writer a rich choice of verbal expression.

Voice

A verb’s voice describes whether action is directed outward (active), inward (middle), or back upon the sentence’s subject (passive).

Person

The person of a verb tells who is doing the acting, whether I (first person), you (second person), or another (third person).

Number

Verb number shows whether the action is performed by one person (singular) or more than one person (plural).

Style

The NT contains a variety of writing styles in its use of Greek. The Gospels especially exhibit Semitic features. Matthew uses a style less picturesque than Mark’s and in some respects close to the style of Luke, Acts, Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter. Luke’s style varies from that of both Mark and Matthew; it is elegant. The rather simple style of John contains many Semitisms.

Among the apostle Paul’s letters, differences of style have been noted. The least literary and most direct in expression are his Letters to the Thessalonians. The Pastorals (1—2 Timothy, Titus) have a style nearer to the koine than most of the other epistles—not so Jewish, and not so much influenced by the Septuagint as his other letters.

The Letter to the Hebrews combines elegance with Jewish-Greek style. James’s letter, though high in cultural quality, is not as sensitive in style as Hebrews. Less elegant is 1 Peter, which is strongly influenced by the Septuagint and thus reflects Semitic style.

The Letter of Jude contains elevated, somewhat ponderous diction, and shows the influence of Jewish style. Second Peter, resembling Jude in its high style, is even more influenced by the Septuagint.

The book of Revelation has a generally simple style but shows considerable Semitic influence in its use of parallelism and redundancy. Linguistic scholars have identified a number of apparent grammatical mistakes in the Greek of Revelation.

Greyhound

KJV mistranslation in [Proverbs 30:31](#) (nlt “strutting rooster”). *See* Birds (Fowl, Domestic).

Grief

The emotional suffering caused by loss, misfortune, or disaster. To grieve means to cause or feel sorrow or distress.

What Are Examples of Grief in the Bible?

The concept of grief appears in the Bible frequently:

- Isaac and Rebekah experienced grief when their son Esau married a Hittite woman ([Genesis 26:35](#))
- God mourned the pain Israel caused themselves by their disobedience ([Judges 10:16](#))
- Hannah was sad because she had no son, so much so that she looked drunk while praying ([1 Samuel 1:16](#))
- Samuel prayed all night because he was grieved by King Saul's disobedience ([1 Samuel 15:11](#))
- Job was very sad over his personal loss ([Job 2:13](#); compare [6:2](#); [16:6](#))
- The psalmists expressed distress and sadness ([Psalms 6:7](#); [31:9–10](#); [69:26](#); [73:21](#); [95:10](#); [112:10](#))
- The book of Lamentations is devoted to the expression of grief
- The prophets speak of a judgment that is caused because Israel grieves God
- Jesus experienced sorrow and distress, including crying over the death of a friend ([Mark 3:5](#); [John 11:33](#); [35](#))
- The Jews grieved when the apostles taught about Christ ([Acts 4:2](#))
- The apostle Paul taught believers not to grieve one another ([Romans 14:15](#))
- The apostle Paul did not want to cause any sorrow himself ([2 Corinthians 2:1–5](#))
- The believer is not to grieve the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 4:30](#))
- A believer may experience grief and suffering in a foreign world ([1 Peter 2:19](#))
- Grief was expressed at a time of death through screams, wails, and laments ([Jeremiah 9:17–18](#); [Amos 5:16](#); [Mark 5:38](#))

See also Mourning.

Grove

A mistaken King James Version translation of a Hebrew word that was the name of a Canaanite goddess, Asherah. Often, sacred trees were symbols of that fertility goddess. Sometimes, wooden poles were set up. God commanded the Israelites to destroy those symbols. They were called "Asherim" and "Asheroth."

They had to cut them down and burn them ([Exodus 34:13](#); [Deuteronomy 12:3](#)). The poles were wooden and did not leave remains that could be identified. However, researchers discovered a large piece of carbonized wood lying between incense burners at an early sanctuary in Ai. It may have been a tree trunk from which the branches had been trimmed. Some researchers suggest it was an Asherah pole.

God strictly forbade the Israelites to worship Asherah or to build her sacred symbols. From time to time Israel disobeyed God and engaged in false worship. One account of the northern kingdom's downfall blames it on groves and the worship of the pagan goddess and her male counterpart, Baal ([2 Kings 17:7-18](#)). Jezebel, a priestess of the Tyrian Baal, promoted the spread of such idolatry.

The "grove" of [Genesis 21:33](#) in the King James Version was actually a tamarisk tree.

See also Canaanite Deities and Religion; Gods and Goddesses; High Place; Idols, Idolatry.

Guard, Courtyard of the

Perhaps an emergency detention area in seventh-century BC Jerusalem, when the city was under Babylonian attack. Although the prophet Jeremiah was placed under arrest there, he was still able to maintain his normal activities, indicating that the area was probably a small courtyard ([Jer 32:2-12](#); [33:1](#); [37:21](#); [38:6-28](#); [39:14-15](#); kjv "court of the prison").

Guard, Gate of the

Gate located in the north or northwest part of Jerusalem ([Neh 12:38-39](#), kjv "prison gate"), although unrelated to the courtyard of the guard

([3:25](#)), which was connected to the palace. Perhaps it was the same as the Muster Gate. *See* Jerusalem.

Guardian

A servant who was responsible to accompany, protect, and sometimes discipline his master's son until the boy reached maturity. Guardians supervised their charges' moral conduct and general behavior. Their methods of persuasion varied from physical punishment to shaming. Paul regarded the law of Moses as a "schoolmaster" (King James Version), "custodian" (Revised Standard Version), or "tutor" (New American Standard Bible) to lead us to Christ ([Galatians 3:24-25](#)). To return to the law represented a return to childhood.

Guardian Angel

See Angel.

Gudgodah

Alternate name for Hor-haggidgad, one of the stopping places in the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites ([Dt 10:7](#)). *See* Hor-haggidgad.

Guilt Offering

See Offerings and Sacrifices.

Gulf of Aqaba

The eastern branch of the Red Sea that separates Saudi Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula. The Red Sea has two northern gulfs. The gulf varies in width from 19 to 27 kilometers (12 to 17 miles). The gulf is 161 kilometers (100 miles) long.

The port city of Elath (or Eloth) is located at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba. It is mentioned in the account of the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness ([Deuteronomy 2:8](#)). From his port of Ezion-geber, King Solomon sent ships down the Gulf of Aqaba to Ophir ([1 Kings 9:26-28](#)).

Gull

Any of a number of birds from the family Laridae. The nlt “seagull” (kiv “cuckow”) in [Leviticus 11:16](#) and [Deuteronomy 14:15](#) is uncertain. *See* Birds (Seagull).

Gum

General name for tragacanth, used in trade and obtained from the sap of shrubs of the *Astragalus* genus ([Gn 43:11](#)). These shrubs grew widely in the Near East. Gum from the *Astragalus tragacantha* is still used commercially. *See* Plants (Aloe; Balm; Myrrh).

Guni

1. Naphtali's son and the grandson of Jacob ([Gn 46:24](#); [1 Chr 7:13](#)).
2. Abdiel's father from Gad's tribe ([1 Chr 5:15](#)).

Gunite

A descendant of Guni, son of Naphtali ([Numbers 26:48](#)).

See Guni #1.

Gur, Ascent of

Elevated place near Ibleam where Ahaziah, king of Judah, was smitten by the soldiers of Jehu of the northern kingdom. From Gur, Ahaziah fled to Megiddo, where he died ([2 Kgs 9:27](#)). Though its location is uncertain, some identify it with the Akkadian Gurra, about one-half mile (800 meters) south of Jenin.

Gurbaal

Town in the Negev occupied by Arabs, possibly in the neighborhood of Edom, which Uzziah of Judah conquered ([2 Chr 26:7](#), nlt mg).

Gymnasium

A gymnasium was a Greek school where young people learned physical education and academic subjects. When Greek culture spread across many countries, these schools became important places for teaching Greek culture. Students received training in sports, learning, and social skills. Only children from wealthy families could attend these private schools. Greek youths had to attend if they wanted to become citizens of their city.

At first, when a family from Macedonia called the Ptolemies ruled Jerusalem, the city did not have a gymnasium. Later, a different ruling family from Syria called the Seleucids took control. The Seleucids wanted everyone in their kingdom to follow Greek customs and ways of life. During this time, the Jewish high priest paid money to King Antiochus IV to get permission to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem ([1 Maccabees 1:13–15](#); [2 Maccabees 4:9](#), New Living Translation marginal note).

Conservative Jews avoided the gymnasium. They thought it influenced Jewish children to adopt Greek cultural norms. Conservative Jews also disapproved of the Greek practice of nude participation in athletic contests. Young Jews sometimes removed or hid their circumcision to enter competitions ([1 Maccabees 1:13–15](#)).

Alexandrian Jews were less opposed to the gymnasium than Jews in Jerusalem. But Alexandrian Greeks disapproved of including non-Greeks like Egyptians and Jews in gymnasiums. Roman policy made the graduates of the gymnasium Greek citizens. Once gymnasium graduates had citizenship, they could participate in local government.

The apostle Paul and early Christians did not seem to have negative views of gymnasiums. Paul used athletic language to depict the Christian life ([1 Corinthians 9:24–27](#); [Galatians 2:2](#); [5:7](#); [Philippians 1:30](#); [2:16](#)).