

good
NEWSBIBLE

Good News Bible

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Contents

Books of the Bible in alphabetical order	<i>page</i>
Welcome to the Good News Bible	iv
Where do I begin?	v
What to bear in mind as you read	vii
The main collections of books in the Bible	xv
Timeline	xviii

OLD TESTAMENT

The Law		<i>page</i>			<i>page</i>
1	Genesis	3	15	Ezra	448
2	Exodus	54	16	Nehemiah	460
3	Leviticus	96	17	Esther	477
4	Numbers	125	Poetic Books		
5	Deuteronomy	163	18	Job	485
Historical Books			19	Psalms	521
6	Joshua	200	20	Proverbs	615
7	Judges	224	21	Ecclesiastes	640
8	Ruth	249	22	Song of Songs	649
9	1 Samuel	254	25	Lamentations	777
10	2 Samuel	288	Major Prophets		
11	1 Kings	318	23	Isaiah	656
12	2 Kings	350	24	Jeremiah	716
13	1 Chronicles	382	26	Ezekiel	784
14	2 Chronicles	413	27	Daniel	835
			Minor Prophets		
			28	Hosea	851
			29	Joel	861
			30	Amos	866
			31	Obadiah	873
			32	Jonah	875
			33	Micah	878
			34	Nahum	884
			35	Habakkuk	887
			36	Zephaniah	890
			37	Haggai	893
			38	Zechariah	895
			39	Malachi	905

NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels		<i>page</i>			<i>page</i>
40	Matthew	911	48	Galatians	1131
41	Mark	951	49	Ephesians	1137
42	Luke	978	50	Philippians	1143
43	John	1020	51	Colossians	1148
The Good News Spreads			52	1 Thessalonians	1152
44	Acts	1050	53	2 Thessalonians	1156
Letters			54	1 Timothy	1159
45	Romans	1088	55	2 Timothy	1164
46	1 Corinthians	1105	56	Titus	1168
47	2 Corinthians	1121	57	Philemon	1170
			Prophecy		
			58	Hebrews	1172
			59	James	1185
			60	1 Peter	1190
			61	2 Peter	1195
			62	1 John	1198
			63	2 John	1202
			64	3 John	1203
			65	Jude	1204
			66	Revelation	1206

Maps	<i>page</i>
Index	1224
Word list	1230
About the Good News Bible	1257
	1261

Welcome to the Good News Bible

The Good News Bible is a clear, easy-to-read translation of the Bible. It uses simple, everyday language so that as many people as possible can read and understand it. This has made it a very popular translation, selling over 150 million copies worldwide.

What is the Bible?

The Bible isn't one book but a collection of books. These books were written at different times by different people. They include many types of writing: laws, stories, history, poetry, short sayings and proverbs, letters, visions, hymns and prayers, to name but a few.

One of the most important things to do when you start reading a different part of the Bible is to ask yourself what kind of writing you think it is. This will help you to understand what you are reading.

How are the books ordered?

It is also important to remember that the Bible is not organised according to when the books were written or when the events in them are set. The order of the books in the Bible is affected by what type of book they are. So all the books that contain laws are grouped together; all the books that tell the history of Israel are in one place; the Gospels are found next to each other, and so are the letters.

This can be confusing because when you read through the Bible, the time jumps around. It is worth remembering that this is because they are ordered by subject, not by historical date.

Why does the Bible have two sections?

The Bible has two main sections, known as 'Testaments'. This word means 'covenant' or 'promise' and refers to the promises God made to his people.

The first section, called by Christians the Old Testament, contains the story of God's

relationship with his people, now known as the Jews. This part of the Bible is seen as holy by Jews as well as by Christians and is known by a variety of names, including the Hebrew Scriptures.

The second section, the New Testament, tells the good news of Jesus Christ and what happened to Jesus' first followers. It is called the New Testament to emphasise that it is a continuation of the story in the Old Testament.

Finding your way around the Bible

When the different books of the Bible were first written, it was very hard to find your way around them. There were no chapters, no verses and, in the Greek New Testament, not even any spaces between words.

Over the years, people have developed ways of finding your way around the Bible more easily.

1. First you need to know whether a book is in the Old or the New Testament, and which page number it starts on. For this, turn to the Table of Contents and find its page number.

To make things easier, in this Bible we have produced two Tables of Contents, one showing the order in which the books appear in the Bible and the other in alphabetical order so that you can find the book title more easily.

2. Next you need to look at the reference for the verse you need. References are always given in this order: book title, chapter number and verse number. (The chapter and verse numbers are separated by a full stop.)

For example, Genesis 12.2 means the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis and the second verse of that chapter.

In this version, the book title and chapter numbers are repeated at the top of each page so that you can find them more easily.

3. Once you have found the book and the chapter number, you can find the verse number that you need within that chapter.

section of the Bible you are reading (see pages vi–vii)

name of the book you are reading, plus the chapters that appear on that page

page number

* at the end of a word tells you there is more information in the notes at the bottom of the column

* at the start of a word shows that there is a cross reference at the bottom of the column

chapter number

numbers in bold, e.g. 27.13 point to the chapter and verse

footnotes give information on the meaning of the text, notes on the translation, or different interpretations of what the original text meant

Major Prophets

ISAIAH 26–28 677

their ghosts will not rise, for you have punished them and destroyed them. No one remembers them any more.

15 **LORD**, you have made our nation grow, enlarging its territory on every side, and this has brought you honour.

16 You punished your people, **LORD**, and in anguish they prayed to you.

17 You, **LORD**, have made us cry out, as a woman in labour cries out in pain.

18 We were in pain and agony, but we gave birth to nothing. We have won no victory for our land; we have accomplished nothing.*

19 *Those of our people who have died will live again! Their bodies will come back to life. All those sleeping in their graves will wake up and sing for joy. As the sparkling dew refreshes the earth, so the **LORD** will revive those who have long been dead.

Judgement and Restoration

20 Go into your houses, my people, and shut the door behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until God's anger is over.

21 The **LORD** is coming from his heavenly dwelling place to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The murders that were secretly committed on the earth will be revealed, and the ground will no longer hide those who have been killed.

27 **1** *On that day the **LORD** will use his powerful and deadly sword to punish Leviathan, that wriggling, twisting dragon, and to kill the monster* that lives in the sea.

2 On that day the **LORD** will say of his pleasant vineyard, **3** "I watch over it and water it continually. I guard it night and day so that no one will harm it. **4** I am no longer angry with the vineyard. If only there were thorns and briars to fight against, then

I would burn them up completely. **5** **But** if the enemies of my people want my protection, let them make peace with me. Yes, let them make peace with me."

6 In days to come the people of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, will take root like a tree, and they will blossom and bud. The earth will be covered with the fruit they produce.

7 Israel has not been punished by the **LORD** as severely as its enemies, nor lost as many people. **8** The **LORD** punished his people by sending them into exile. He took them away with a cruel wind from the east.* **9** But Israel's sins will be forgiven only when the stones of pagan altars are ground up like chalk, and no more incense altars or



The fortified city lies in ruins (27:10)

symbols of the goddess Asherah are left.

10 The fortified city lies in ruins. It is deserted like an empty wilderness. It has become a pasture for cattle, where they can rest and graze. **11** The branches of the trees are withered and broken, and women gather them for firewood. Because the people have understood nothing, God their Creator will not pity them or show them any mercy.

12 On that day, from the Euphrates to the Egyptian border, the **LORD** will gather his people one by one, like someone separating the wheat from the chaff.

13 When that day comes, a trumpet will be blown to call back from Assyria and Egypt all the Israelites who are in exile there. They will come and worship the **LORD** in Jerusalem, on his sacred hill.*

A Warning to the Northern Kingdom

28 **1** The kingdom of Israel is doomed! Its glory is fading like the crowns of flowers on the heads of its drunken leaders. Their proud heads are well perfumed,

27.8 Verse 8 in Hebrew is unclear.
See also: 27:13 sacred hill: See 2.3.

23 Isaiah
Jerem
Lamen
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habak
Zephani
Haggai
Zechar
Malachi
Matt
Mark
Luke

verse number

sidebar navigation:

book number, in order of books of the Bible

name of the book you are reading

either the books that come next or, on the opposite page, those that come before the book you are reading

cross references show you other Bible passages that deal with the same or similar ideas

Where do I begin?

When you start to read the Bible it can be hard to know where to begin, and once begun, it can be hard to know where to go next.

The choice of where to start depends entirely on you. You may like to read whole books at a time. You may like to read to understand the big picture of the message of the Bible. You may like to read some of the most famous stories, story by story. Or you may like to explore themes. Whatever you choose, there are some ideas below to help you get started.

Reading a whole book at a time

If you want to read a whole book at a time, it is good to start with the books that are easier to read and move on to the more challenging ones later. In other words, don't start with Leviticus, which is a list of instructions that many people struggle to read; start with a story that is much easier to understand.

1. Start with a Gospel.

- Mark's Gospel is the shortest and is very easy to read (p. 951).
- You could try Luke's Gospel first (p. 978) and then, straight away, read Acts (p. 1050). Acts was also written by Luke and goes on to tell the story of how the good news of Jesus spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

2. Next, try a book with a good story from the Old Testament.

- Ruth (p. 249) and Jonah (p. 873) are both great stories and fun to read.
- 1 Samuel (p. 254) also has some interesting stories in it.
- Genesis (p. 3) has some of the best-known stories in the whole Bible.

3. Then you might like to look at one of the letters in the New Testament.

- Philippians (p. 1143), Ephesians (p. 1137) and Colossians (p. 1148)

are all good places to start with Paul's letters. Romans (p. 1088) is the longest and most complicated of them all, so you may like to leave that until you have read some of his other letters.

- Don't just read Paul's letters. Try 1 Peter (p. 1190) or James (p. 1185), which were written by other early Christians.

4. It is also good to read some of the prophecy and poetry in the Old Testament.

- The Psalms (p. 521) have been used in Jewish and Christian worship for over 2,500 years. Read some of the Psalms: some of the most popular are 1, 23, 37, 40, 46, 62, 84, 117, 121 and 139.
- The book of Isaiah (p. 656) has some inspiring passages. Have a look at 9.2–7; 35.1–10; 40.1–31; 52.13–53.12 and 61.1–11

You may notice that the laws (e.g. Leviticus) and the visions (e.g. Revelation) aren't on this list. This is because they are the hardest books in the Bible to read. Do read them, but get used to reading some of the other books first, and then, when you are ready, turn your attention to the more complicated parts of the Bible.

Reading to understand the big picture

Running through the Bible is the message of God's love for the world that he created. The story of the Bible is the story of how God tried to draw people back to him and mend their broken relationship. It can be helpful to trace this story through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

You can read the whole of this story through the 40 passages below. (If you don't have time to read them all, just read numbers 1, 2, 7, 15, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30 and 33.)

..... The Old Testament

1. *The world was created by God and it was good: **Genesis 1—2***
In the beginning, God created the world and all living creatures, including human beings.
2. *But it went wrong: **Genesis 3***
Adam and Eve disobeyed God and could no longer stay in the garden of Eden.
3. *So God decided to start again: **Genesis 6.5—22 and 8.1—9.17***
God decided to flood the world and start again, but he saved Noah and Noah's family and gave a rainbow as a sign that he would never flood the world again.
4. *God chose a family – the family of Abraham – to be his people: **Genesis 12.1—8***
God called Abraham to leave his home and follow him, and God promised that he would bless Abraham.
5. *God promised that Abraham's family would become a great nation: **Genesis 17.15—18.15***
God promised the elderly Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son together.
6. *But his family became slaves in Egypt: **Exodus 1***
Abraham's grandson, Jacob, moved to Egypt with his twelve sons (one of whom was Joseph), but as time went by, their descendants became slaves of Pharaoh.
7. *So God called Moses to free his people from slavery: **Exodus 3.1—4.13***
God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and called him to set his people free.
8. *And Moses led them out of Egypt: **Exodus 14—15***
Moses led the people out of slavery in Egypt. After crossing the Red Sea, they wandered in the wilderness.
9. *In the wilderness, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments: **Deuteronomy 5.1—22***
God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on the top of Mount Sinai.
10. *After 40 years, a new leader brought God's people to the Promised Land: **Joshua 3.1—4.7***
Joshua entered the Promised Land with God's people, and the twelve tribes settled there.
11. *In the Promised Land, they faced many enemies: **Judges 6—7***
God raised up a number of different leaders to face the people's enemies; one of these was Gideon, who led an army against the Midianites.
12. *And so the people asked for a king to lead them in battle: **1 Samuel 8.1—10.1***
Despite the prophet Samuel's uncertainty, God asked him to anoint Saul as king.
13. *God then chose David to be king: **1 Samuel 16***
Saul could not live up to the calling to be king, so God chose David to be king instead of him.

14. *David made Jerusalem the capital city: **2 Samuel 5.6—6.12***
David brought the Covenant Box to Jerusalem and united all twelve tribes.
15. *God's people kept on turning away from God: **Hosea 10.12—11.4***
Despite God's care for them, God's people turned away from him time and time again.
16. *So God became even more angry with them: **Micah 6.1—15***
God felt he had no choice but to punish his people for their dishonesty and wickedness.
17. *When they still would not listen, God sent the people away into exile: **2 Kings 24—25***
The people were punished and sent into exile in Babylon, far away from the land God had given them.
18. *But after punishment there was hope: **Isaiah 40***
God returned to his people and gave them comfort.
19. *Eventually they returned from exile and came back home: **Ezra 1***
King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree that allowed God's people to return home to Judah.
20. *But still they hoped that God would come and save them: **Malachi 3***
Malachi promised that a messenger of God would come to prepare the way for God to be with his people. The people yearned for a Messiah, someone like David who would bring them hope and peace.
-
The New Testament
.....
21. *In the end, God sent his son, born as a baby: **Matthew 1.18—25***
Mary gave birth to a baby, conceived by the Holy Spirit, to fulfil what people had hoped for, for so long.
22. *His birth was announced by angels and he was visited by shepherds: **Luke 2.1—20***
The angels confirmed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah whom God would send to save his people.
23. *Then he was visited by wise men from the east: **Matthew 2.1—18***
The king at the time, Herod the Great, was terrified when he learnt that a rival king had been born, and he tried to kill Jesus.
24. *Once Jesus was grown up, John the Baptist announced who he really was: **Mark 1.1—11***
John the Baptist made clear that he thought that Jesus was the Messiah – the one for whom God's people had waited so long.
25. *And Jesus began to call people to follow him: **Mark 1.14—18 and 2.14—17***
Jesus gathered around him twelve people who learned from him in everything that he said and did.
26. *Jesus healed people who were sick: **Mark 5***
People crowded to Jesus because he healed them of many different kinds of illnesses.
27. *He taught people about the Kingdom of God and what it meant to follow him: **Matthew 5***
This part of Jesus' teaching is taken from a part of the Bible that people call the Sermon on the Mount.
28. *He told stories to help them understand how to live: **Luke 10.25—37***
Jesus told many different parables (stories designed to teach a truth) of different lengths and styles.
29. *But he upset the leaders of his day and they put him to death: **Mark 15.1—37***
Jesus was crucified on a cross between two robbers.

What to bear in mind as you read

Throughout Christian history, people have found the Bible to be inspiring but not always easy to read. There are a few things to keep in mind, which may help you as you read the Bible.

1. Recognise that the Bible was written a long time ago.

Even the newest parts of the Bible are about 2,000 years old. Remember this as you read it, and try to imagine what it might have been like to live when the books were first written.

2. Don't read passages entirely on their own; look at what comes before and after them.

It's easy to take verses, or sometimes whole stories, out of context, by reading them by themselves. Try to work out where they fit in the bigger story or argument of the book. You'll get a much better sense of what's going on and what it all means.

3. Ask yourself what type of book you are reading.

We read different types of books differently. You would never read a list of phone numbers in the same way as you read a novel, so work out if the passage you are reading is poetry or prose, law or history, wise sayings or a vision, and then read with that in mind. It will make a big difference.

4. Read what's actually there, not what you think might be there.

It is all too easy to assume that we know what a Bible story says. This is particularly true for famous stories; we can think we know what it is about and not actually read it. So slow down and chew the story over. You'll often find that you understand it in a new way.

5. Read the Bible with other people.

We all bring our own experiences and thoughts to the Bible. It can help, therefore,

to ask how other people see it and read it. You'll gain a sense of what other people think the Bible says.

6. Don't read the Bible from start to finish, as you would a novel.

The Bible is not one book; it is a library of books. The books are not always printed in time order; instead, they often jump around from time period to time period. As a result, reading them in the order they are printed can be confusing and unhelpful.

7. Ask questions.

Use your brain while you read. Ask questions. Explore ideas. If you really can't understand something, make a note of it and come back later. Sometimes, returning to a difficult question can help.

8. Keep a notebook of your questions.

Make notes as you read. What inspires you? What confuses you? Which are your favourite verses? Jot them down. If you return to your notes later, they will remind you of what you enjoyed before. Sometimes, when you look back at what confused you, it is less troubling than it was before.

9. Don't worry about it.

Many people find parts of the Bible difficult to understand. It was written a long time ago. It comes from a different culture. If you find something difficult, move on. Focus on the parts you do understand and not the parts you don't.

10. Do keep going.

Above all, keep going. The more you read, the easier it gets.

The main collections of books in the Bible

Old Testament

Law

These books set out God's commandments for his people alongside the stories about their relationship with God.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

Historical books

These books lay out the history of God's people as they settled in the Promised Land, began to look for a king, went into exile in Babylon and then returned home.

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

Poetic books

These books contain a range of poems, prayers and wise advice.

- Job
- Psalms

- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Songs
- Lamentations

Major Prophets

These books contain prophecies from four of Israel's prophets. They are called the Major Prophets because of the length of their books, not necessarily the importance of the prophets.

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

Minor Prophets

These books contain prophecies from twelve of Israel's prophets. They are called the Minor Prophets because of the length of their books, not necessarily the importance of the prophets.

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

New Testament

Gospels

Four different accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

The good news spreads

The story of how the good news about Jesus spread from Jerusalem all the way to Rome.

- Acts

Letters

A number of letters from various key leaders of the earliest Christians, especially the apostle Paul, addressing issues of life, God and faith.

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

Prophecy

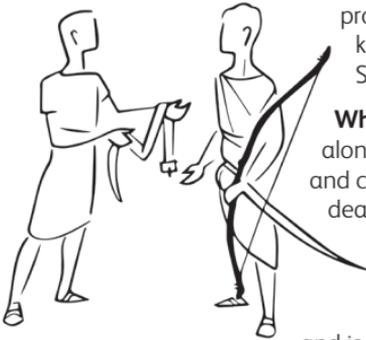
A vision of heaven seen by John

- Revelation

Timeline

It can often be difficult to date events or books of the Bible with any certainty. There is a lot of discussion about when the books in the Bible were written. This chart only indicates when the events each book describes may have been set. All dates given are very approximate. Books with ? after them are hard to place and could be set either earlier or later.

Rough date	Event	Books set in this period
Earliest times	Creation and flood	Genesis
1800 BC	The call of Abraham	Genesis
1250 BC	The exodus from Egypt and wilderness wandering	Exodus; Numbers; Leviticus; Deuteronomy
1300 BC	Entry into the Promised Land	Joshua
1300–1030 BC	The time of the Judges	Judges
1030–1010 BC	Saul is king	1 Samuel
1010–970 BC	David is king	1 Samuel; 2 Samuel; 1 Chronicles; Psalms
970–931 BC	Solomon is king	1 Kings; 2 Chronicles; Proverbs; Song of Songs; Ecclesiastes ? ; Job ?
930 BC	Israel splits in two and becomes Israel and Judah	1 and 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles; Hosea; Amos; Micah
722 BC	Israel (the northern kingdom) is destroyed by Assyria	2 Kings; 2 Chronicles; Isaiah; Joel; Obadiah; Jonah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah
597–586 BC	Judah is defeated by Babylon and the exile in Babylon begins	2 Kings; 2 Chronicles; Jeremiah; Lamentations; Ezekiel; Daniel
538 BC	The return from exile begins	Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi
6 BC – AD 27	Jesus is born, lives, dies and rises again	Matthew; Mark; Luke; John
AD 27	The disciples begin to spread the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth	Acts
AD 40	Paul begins his missionary journeys	Acts; Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews; James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2 and 3 John; Jude
The future	Jesus is recognised to be king over everything	Revelation

SAMUEL**The arrival of the kings**

What's it about? Samuel was a great man of God, a prophet and judge who anointed God's chosen kings. In 1 Samuel, we encounter a failed king, Saul, and a glorious king, David.

Who wrote it? We don't know, but 1 Samuel, along with 2 Samuel, could have been written and collated over a period of time after the deaths of Samuel, Saul and David.

Why read it? This first book of Samuel talks about how God is king. He is greater than any human king; he guides his people and is in control. Through the soap-opera-worthy storylines, God's will and power stand out.

What's it to me? Even though God is king and is in control, things aren't always rosy. David was made king by God and Samuel, but he didn't take up that role straight away. 1 Samuel shows that life following God's way might not be straightforward.

Elkanah and his Family at Shiloh

1 ¹There was a man named Elkanah, from the tribe of Ephraim, who lived in the town of Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham and grandson of Elihu, and belonged to the family of Tohu, a part of the clan of Zuph. ²Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³Every year Elkanah went from Ramah to worship and offer sacrifices to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. ⁴Each time Elkanah offered his sacrifice, he would give one share of the meat to Peninnah and one share to each of her children. ⁵And even though he loved Hannah very much he would give her only one share, because*

the LORD had kept her from having children. ⁶Peninnah, her rival, would torment and humiliate her, because the LORD had kept her childless. ⁷This went on year after year; whenever they went to the house of the LORD, Peninnah would upset Hannah so much that she would cry and refuse to eat anything. ⁸Her husband Elkanah would ask her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why are you always so sad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

Hannah and Eli

⁹⁻¹⁰One day, after they had finished their meal in the house of the LORD at Shiloh, Hannah got up. She was deeply distressed, and she cried bitterly as she prayed to the LORD. Meanwhile, Eli the priest was sitting in his place by the door. ¹¹*Hannah made a solemn promise: "Almighty LORD, look at me, your servant!

^{1.5} And... because; or To Hannah, however, he would give a special share, because he loved her very much, even though.

See my trouble and remember me! Don't forget me! If you give me a son, I promise that I will dedicate him to you for his whole life and that he will never have his hair cut."^{*}

¹² Hannah continued to pray to the LORD for a long time, and Eli watched her lips. ¹³ She was praying silently; her lips were moving, but she made no sound. So Eli thought that she was drunk, ¹⁴ and said to her, "Stop making a drunken show of yourself! Stop your drinking and sober up!"

¹⁵ "No, I'm not drunk, sir," she answered. "I haven't been drinking! I am desperate, and I have been praying, pouring out my troubles to the LORD. ¹⁶ Don't think I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I'm so miserable."

¹⁷ "Go in peace," Eli said, "and may the God of Israel give you what you have asked him for."

¹⁸ "May you always think kindly of me," she replied. Then she went away, ate some food, and was no longer sad.



Stop making a drunken show of yourself!
(1.14)

Samuel's Birth and Dedication

¹⁹ The next morning Elkanah and his family got up early, and after worshipping the LORD, they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the LORD answered her prayer. ²⁰ So it was that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named

1.11 *never have his hair cut:* A sign of dedication to the LORD (see Num 6.5).

him Samuel,^{*} and explained, "I asked the LORD for him."

²¹ The time came again for Elkanah and his family to go to Shiloh and offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and the special sacrifice he had promised. ²² But this time Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will take him to the house of the LORD, where he will stay all his life."

²³ Elkanah answered, "All right, do whatever you think best; stay at home until you have weaned him. And may the LORD make your^{*} promise come true." So Hannah stayed at home and nursed her child.

²⁴ After she had weaned him, she took him to Shiloh, taking along a three-year-old bull,^{*} ten kilogrammes of flour, and a leather bag full of wine. She took Samuel, young as he was, to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. ²⁵ After they had killed the bull, they took the child to Eli. ²⁶ Hannah said to him, "Excuse me, sir. Do you remember me? I am the woman you saw standing here, praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I asked him for this child, and he gave me what I asked for. ²⁸ So I am dedicating him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he will belong to the LORD." Then they^{*} worshipped the LORD there.

9

1 Sam.

Hannah's Prayer

2 ¹ *Hannah prayed:
"The LORD has filled my heart with joy;
how happy I am because of what he has done!
I laugh at my enemies;
how joyful I am because God has helped me!

- 2** "No one is holy like the LORD;
there is none like him,
no protector like our God.
3 Stop your loud boasting;
silence your proud words.
For the LORD is a God who knows,
and he judges all that people do.

1.20 *Samuel:* This name, which in Hebrew means "name of God", is here related to the Hebrew verb for "ask".

1.23 Some ancient translations *your*; Hebrew *his*.

1.24 Some ancient translations *a three-year-old bull*; Hebrew *three bulls*.

1.28 Some ancient translations *they*; Hebrew *he*.

See also: 2.1–10; Lk 1.46–55

2 Sam.
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chron.
2 Chron.
Ezra
Nehem.
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Eccles.
Songs
Isaiah
Jerem.
Lamen.
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea

- 4 The bows of strong soldiers are broken,
but the weak grow strong.
- 5 The people who once were well fed
now hire themselves out to get food,
but the hungry are hungry no more.
The childless wife has borne seven children,
but the mother of many is left with none.
- 6 The LORD kills and restores to life;
he sends people to the world of the dead
and brings them back again.
- 7 He makes some poor and others rich;
he humbles some and makes others great.
- 8 He lifts the poor from the dust
and raises the needy from their misery.
He makes them companions of princes
and puts them in places of honour.
The foundations of the earth belong to the LORD;
on them he has built the world.

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Num.
Deuter.
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

.....

1 Sam.

9

- 9 "He protects the lives of his faithful people,
but the wicked disappear in darkness;
a man does not triumph by his own strength.
- 10 The LORD's enemies will be destroyed;
he will thunder against them from heaven.
The LORD will judge the whole world;
he will give power to his king,
he will make his chosen king victorious."

11 Then Elkanah went back home to Ramah, but the boy Samuel stayed in Shiloh and served the LORD under the priest Eli.

The Sons of Eli

12 The sons of Eli were scoundrels. They paid no attention to the LORD¹³ or to the regulations concerning what the priests could demand from the people. Instead, when anyone was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with

a three-pronged fork. While the meat was still cooking,¹⁴ he would stick the fork into the cooking pot, and whatever the fork brought out belonged to the priest. All the Israelites who came to Shiloh to offer sacrifices were treated like this.¹⁵ In addition, even before the fat was taken off and burnt, the priest's servant would come and say to the one offering the sacrifice, "Give me some meat for the priest to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, only raw meat."

¹⁶ If the person answered, "Let us do what is right and burn the fat first; then take what you want," the priest's servant would say, "No! Give it to me now! If you don't, I will have to take it by force!"

¹⁷ This sin of the sons of Eli was extremely serious in the LORD's sight, because they treated the offerings to the LORD with such disrespect.

Samuel at Shiloh

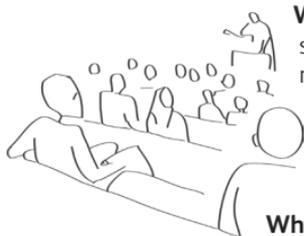
¹⁸ In the meantime the boy Samuel continued to serve the LORD, wearing a sacred linen apron.¹⁹ Each year his mother would make a little robe and take it to him when she accompanied her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.²⁰ Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say to Elkanah, "May the LORD give you other children by



Each year his mother would make a little robe (2.19)

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The beginnings of wisdom



What's it about? Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings about life, wisdom, happiness, eternity and more.

Who wrote it? Much of the book is attributed to Solomon, with other parts linked to people called Agur and Lemuel.

Why read it? Not really a book of instruction, Proverbs opens up thoughts on how to live God's way.

What's it to me? Cultures change, but people remain the same, meet similar situations and face similar challenges. This is why the guidelines for a good life in Proverbs are still worth reading.

The Value of Proverbs

1 ^{1*}The proverbs of Solomon, son of David and king of Israel.

²Here are proverbs that will help you to recognize wisdom and good advice, and understand sayings with deep meaning. ³They can teach you how to live intelligently and how to be honest, just, and fair. ⁴They can make an inexperienced person clever and teach young people how to be resourceful. ⁵These proverbs can even add to the knowledge of the wise and give guidance to the educated, ⁶so that they can understand the hidden meanings of proverbs and the problems that the wise raise.

Advice to Young People

^{7*}To have knowledge, you must first have reverence for the LORD.* Stupid people have no respect for wisdom and refuse to learn.

⁸Pay attention to what your father and mother tell you, my child. ⁹Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome

turban or a necklace improves your appearance.

¹⁰When sinners tempt you, my child, don't give in. ¹¹Suppose they say, "Come on; let's find someone to kill! Let's attack some innocent people for the fun of it!" ¹²They may be alive and well when we find them, but they'll be dead when we're through with them! ¹³We'll find all kinds of riches and fill our houses with loot! ¹⁴Come and join us, and we'll all share what we steal."

¹⁵Don't go with people like that, my child. Stay away from them. ¹⁶They can't wait to do something bad. They're always ready to kill. ¹⁷It does no good to spread a net when the bird you want to catch is watching, ¹⁸but people like that are setting a trap for themselves, a trap in which they will die. ¹⁹Robbery always claims the life of the robber — this is what happens to* anyone who lives by violence.

Wisdom Calls

^{20*}Listen! Wisdom is calling out in the streets and market places, ²¹calling loudly

1.7 To... LORD; or *The most important part of knowledge is having reverence for the LORD.*

See also: 1.1: 1 Kgs 4.32 1.7: Job 28.28; Ps 111.10; Prov 9.10

1.19 One ancient translation *what happens to;* Hebrew *the path of.*

See also: 1.20–21: Prov 8.1–3

at the city gates and wherever people come together:

22 “Foolish people! How long do you want to be foolish? How long will you enjoy pouring scorn on knowledge? Will you never learn? **23** Listen when I reprimand you; I will give you good advice and share my knowledge with you. **24** I have been calling you, inviting you to come, but you would not listen. You paid no attention to me. **25** You have ignored all my advice and have not been willing to let me correct you. **26** So when you get into trouble, I will laugh at you. I will mock you when terror strikes — **27** when it comes on you like a storm, bringing fierce winds of trouble, and you are in pain and misery. **28** Then you will call for wisdom, but I will not answer. You may look for me everywhere, but you will not find me. **29** You have never had any use for knowledge and have always refused to obey the LORD. **30** You have never wanted my advice or paid any attention when I corrected you. **31** So then, you will get what you deserve, and your own actions will make you sick. **32** Inexperienced people die because they reject wisdom. Stupid people are destroyed by their own lack of concern. **33** But whoever listens to me will have security. He will be safe, with no reason to be afraid.”

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Num.

Deuter.

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Sam.

2 Sam.

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chron.

2 Chron.

Ezra

Nehem.

Esther

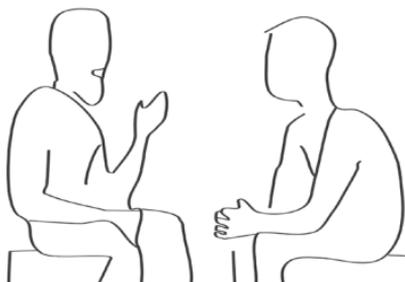
Job

Psalms

.....

Proverbs

20



Listen to what is wise and try to understand it (2.2)

The Rewards of Wisdom

2 ¹Learn what I teach you, my child, and never forget what I tell you to do. ²Listen to what is wise and try to understand it. ³Yes, beg for knowledge; plead for insight. ⁴Look for it as hard as you would for silver or some hidden treasure. ⁵If you do, you will know what it means to fear the LORD and you will succeed in learning about God.

6 It is the LORD who gives wisdom; from him come knowledge and understanding. ⁷He provides help and protection for those who are righteous and honest. ⁸He protects those who treat others fairly, and guards those who are devoted to him.

⁹If you listen to me, you will know what is right, just, and fair. You will know what you should do. ¹⁰You will become wise, and your knowledge will give you pleasure. ¹¹Your insight and understanding will protect you ¹²and prevent you from doing the wrong thing. They will keep you away from people who stir up trouble by what they say — ¹³those who have abandoned a righteous life to live in the darkness of sin, ¹⁴those who find pleasure in doing wrong and who enjoy senseless evil, ¹⁵unreliable people who cannot be trusted.

¹⁶You will be able to resist any immoral woman who tries to seduce you with her smooth talk, ¹⁷who is faithless to her own husband and forgets her sacred vows. ¹⁸If you go to her house, you are travelling the road to death. To go there is to approach the world of the dead. ¹⁹No one who visits her ever comes back. He never returns to the road to life. ²⁰So you must follow the example of good people and live a righteous life. ²¹Righteous people — people of integrity — will live in this land of ours. ²²But God will snatch the wicked from the land and pull sinners out of it like plants from the ground.

Advice to Young People

3 ¹Don't forget what I teach you, my child. Always remember what I tell you to do. ²My teaching will give you a long and prosperous life. ³Never let go of loyalty and faithfulness. Tie them round your neck; write them on your heart. ⁴If you do this, both God and people will be pleased with you.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. ⁶Remember the LORD in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. ⁷Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the LORD and refuse to do wrong. ⁸If you do, it will be like good medicine, healing your wounds and easing your pains. ⁹Honour

See also: 3.4: Lk 2.52 3.7: Rom 12.16

the LORD by making him an offering from the best of all that your land produces. **10** If you do, your barns will be filled with grain, and you will have too much wine to be able to store it all.

11 *When the LORD corrects you, my child, pay close attention and take it as a warning. **12** *The LORD corrects those he loves, as parents correct a child of whom they are proud. **13** Happy is anyone who becomes wise — who gains understanding. **14** There is more profit in it than there is in silver; it is worth more to you than gold. **15** Wisdom is more valuable than jewels; nothing you could want can compare with it. **16** Wisdom offers you long life, as well as wealth and honour. **17** Wisdom can make your life pleasant and lead you safely through it. **18** Those who become wise are happy; wisdom will give them life.

19 The LORD created the earth by his wisdom;
by his knowledge he set the sky in place.

20 His wisdom caused the rivers to flow and the clouds to give rain to the earth.

21 Hold on to your wisdom and insight, my child. Never let them get away from you. **22** They will provide you with life — a pleasant and happy life. **23** You can go safely on your way and never even stumble. **24** You will not be afraid when you go to bed, and you will sleep soundly through the night. **25** You will not have to worry about sudden disasters, such as come on the wicked like a storm. **26** The LORD will keep you safe. He will not let you fall into a trap.

27 Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. **28** Never tell your neighbours to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now. **29** Don't plan anything that will hurt your neighbours; they live beside you, trusting you. **30** Don't argue with others for no reason when they have never done you any harm. **31** Don't be jealous of violent people or decide to act as they do, **32** because the LORD hates people who do evil, but he takes righteous people into his confidence. **33** The LORD puts a curse on the homes of the wicked, but blesses the

homes of the righteous. **34** *He has no use for conceited people, but shows favour to those who are humble. **35** Wise people will gain an honourable reputation, but stupid people will only add to their own disgrace.

The Benefits of Wisdom

4 **1** Listen to what your father teaches you, my children. Pay attention, and you will have understanding. **2** What I am teaching you is good, so remember it all. **3** When I was only a little boy, my parents' only son, **4** my father would teach me. He would say, "Remember what I say and never forget it. Do as I tell you, and you will live. **5** Get wisdom and insight! Do not forget or ignore what I say. **6** Do not abandon wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will keep you safe. **7** Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do. Whatever else you get, get insight. **8** Love wisdom, and she will make you great. Embrace her,* and she will bring you honour. **9** She will be your crowning glory."

10 Listen to me, my child. Take seriously what I am telling you, and you will live a long life. **11** I have taught you wisdom and the right way to live. **12** Nothing will stand in your way if you walk wisely, and you will not stumble when you run. **13** Always remember what you have learnt. Your education is your life — guard it well. **14** Do not go where evil people go. Do not follow the example of the wicked. **15** Don't do it! Keep away from evil! Refuse it and go on your way. **16** Wicked people cannot sleep unless they have done something wrong. They lie awake unless they have hurt someone. **17** Wickedness and violence are like food and drink to them.

18 The road the righteous travel is like the sunrise, getting brighter and brighter until daylight has come. **19** The road of the wicked, however, is dark as night. They fall, but cannot see what they have stumbled over.

20 Pay attention to what I say, my child. Listen to my words. **21** Never let them get away from you. Remember them and keep them in your heart. **22** They will give life and health to anyone who understands them. **23** Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts. **24** Never say

20

Proverbs



Eccles.
Songs
Isaiah
Jerem.
Lamen.
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habak.
Zephani.
Haggai
Zechar.
Malachi

See also: **3.11:** Job 5:17 **3.11–12:** Heb 12:5–6
3.12: Rev 3:19

4.8 Embrace her; or Prize her highly.

See also: **3.34:** Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

The prophet against Edom



What's it about? Obadiah prophesied against the people of Edom, because they helped Judah's enemies.

Who wrote it? Obadiah, who may have lived in the sixth century BC.

Why read it? As well as the judgement on Edom, Obadiah tells of God's restoration of his people.

What's it to me? God's promise to restore his people tells us much about what he is like.

1*This is the prophecy of Obadiah — what the Sovereign LORD said about the nation of Edom.

The LORD will Punish Edom

The LORD has sent his messenger to the nations,
and we have heard his message:
"Get ready! Let us go to war against Edom!"

- 2 The LORD says to Edom,
"I will make you weak;
everyone will despise you.
- 3 Your pride has deceived you.
Your capital is a fortress of solid rock;
your home is high in the mountains,
and so you say to yourself,
'Who can ever pull me down?'
- 4 Even though you make your home
as high as an eagle's nest,
so that it seems to be among the stars,
yet I will pull you down.
- 5 "When thieves come at night,
they take only what they want.
When people gather grapes,
they always leave a few.
But your enemies have wiped you
out completely.

6 Descendants of Esau, your treasures
have been looted.

7 Your allies have deceived you;
they have driven you from your
country.
People who were at peace with you
have now conquered you.
Those friends who ate with you
have laid a trap for you;
they say of you, 'Where is all that
cleverness he had?'

- 8 "On the day I punish Edom,
I will destroy their clever men
and wipe out all their wisdom.
- 9 The fighting men of Teman will be
terrified,
and every soldier in Edom will be
killed.

Reasons for Edom's Punishment

- 10 "Because you robbed and killed
your brothers,* the descendants
of Jacob,
you will be destroyed and
dishonoured for ever.
- 11 You stood aside on that day
when enemies broke down their
gates.
You were as bad as those strangers

See also: 1.1–14; Is 34.5–17; 63.1–6; Jer 49.7–22; Ezek 25.12–14; 35.1–15; Amos 1.11–12; Mal 1.2–5

1.10 *your brothers:* The Israelites were descended from Jacob, who was the brother of Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

2 Kings
1 Chron.
2 Chron.
Ezra
Nehem.
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Eccles.
Songs
Isaiah
Jerem.
Lamen.
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos



You should not have gloated (v.12)

- who carried off Jerusalem's wealth and divided it among themselves.
- 12 You should not have gloated over the misfortune of your brothers in Judah. You should not have been glad on the day of their ruin. You should not have laughed at them in their distress.
- 13 You should not have entered the city of my people to gloat over their suffering and to seize their riches on the day of their disaster.
- 14 You should not have stood at the crossroads to catch those trying to escape. You should not have handed them over to the enemy on the day of their distress.

God will Judge the Nations

- 15 "The day is near when I, the LORD, will judge all nations. Edom, what you have done will be done to you. You will get back what you have given.

- 16 My people have drunk a bitter cup of punishment on my sacred hill.* But all the surrounding nations will drink a still more bitter cup of punishment; they will drink it all and vanish away.

The Victory of Israel

- 17 "But on Mount Zion some will escape, and it will be a sacred place. The people of Jacob will possess the land that is theirs by right.
- 18 The people of Jacob and of Joseph will be like fire; they will destroy the people of Esau as fire burns stubble. No descendant of Esau will survive. I, the LORD, have spoken.
- 19 "People from southern Judah will occupy Edom; those from the western foothills will capture Philistia; Israelites will possess the territory of Ephraim and Samaria; the people of Benjamin will take Gilead.
- 20 The army of exiles from northern Israel will return and conquer Phoenicia as far north as Zarephath. The exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sardis will capture the towns of southern Judah.
- 21 The victorious men of Jerusalem will attack Edom and rule over it. And the LORD himself will be King."

1.16 *sacred hill*: Mount Zion (see Zion in Word List).

Obadiah

31

THE BOOK OF JONAH

The prophet who ran away

What's it about? Jonah was called by God to speak to the people of Nineveh, in the Assyrian empire. After running away and being swallowed by a big fish, he finally delivered God's message.



Who wrote it? Although the book bears his name, we don't know if it was Jonah who wrote it.

Why read it? Jonah is by far the most well-known 'minor prophet', but the ending of the book is surprising.

What's it to me? Jonah was an unlikely prophet. He got angry with God when God forgave the people of Nineveh. God's forgiveness is for everyone – did Jonah not like this idea?

Jonah Disobeys the LORD

1 ¹*One day the LORD spoke to Jonah son of Amittai. ²He said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it; I am aware how wicked its people are."

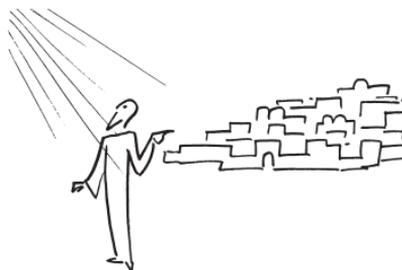
³Jonah, however, set out in the opposite direction in order to get away from the LORD. He went to Joppa, where he found a ship about to go to Spain. He paid his fare and went aboard with the crew to sail to Spain, where he would be away from the LORD. ⁴But the LORD sent a strong wind on the sea, and the storm was so violent that the ship was in danger of breaking up.

⁵The sailors were terrified and cried out for help, each one to his own god. Then, in order to lessen the danger,* they threw the cargo* overboard. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone below and was lying in the ship's hold, sound asleep.

⁶The captain found him there and said to him, "What are you doing asleep? Get up and pray to your god for help. Maybe he will feel sorry for us and spare our lives."

⁷The sailors said to one another, "Let's draw lots and find out who is to blame for getting us into this danger." They did so, and Jonah's name was drawn. ⁸So they said to him: "Now then, tell us! Who is to blame for this? What are you doing here? What country do you come from? What is your nationality?"

⁹"I am a Hebrew," Jonah answered. "I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made land and sea." ¹⁰Jonah went on to tell them that he was running away from the LORD.



Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it (1.2)

^{1.5} lessen the danger; or lighten the ship.

^{1.5} cargo; or equipment.

The sailors were terrified, and said to him, “That was an awful thing to do!”* **11** The storm was getting worse all the time, so the sailors asked him, “What should we do to you to stop the storm?”

1 Chron.

2 Chron.

Ezra

Nehem.

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Eccles.

Songs

Isaiah

Jerem.

Lamen.

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

⋮

⋮

⋮

Jonah

32



Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down (1.12)

Jonah's Prayer

2 From deep inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God:

2 “In my distress, O LORD, I called to you,

and you answered me.

From deep in the world of the dead

I cried for help, and you heard me.

3 You threw me down into the depths,

1.10 and said... to do!; or and asked him, “Why did you have to run away like that?”

See also: 1.17: Mt 12.40

to the very bottom of the sea, where the waters were all round me, and all your mighty waves rolled over me.

4 I thought I had been banished from your presence

and would never see your holy Temple again.

5 The water came over me and choked me;

the sea covered me completely, and seaweed was wrapped round my head.

6 I went down to the very roots of the mountains, into the land whose gates lock shut for ever.*

But you, O LORD my God, brought me back from the depths alive.

7 When I felt my life slipping away, then, O LORD, I prayed to you, and in your holy Temple you heard me.

8 Those who worship worthless idols have abandoned their loyalty to you.

9 But I will sing praises to you; I will offer you a sacrifice and do what I have promised. Salvation comes from the LORD!”

10 Then the LORD ordered the fish to spew Jonah up on the beach, and it did.

Jonah Obeys the LORD

3 **1** Once again the LORD spoke to Jonah. **2** He said, “Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to the people the message I have given you.” **3** So Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to walk through it. **4** *Jonah started through the city, and after walking a whole day, he proclaimed, “In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!”

5 The people of Nineveh believed God's message. So they decided that everyone should fast, and all the people, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth to show that they had repented.

2.6 the land whose gates lock shut for ever: A reference to the world of the dead (see 2.2).

See also: 3.4–5: Mt 12.41; Lk 11.32

MATTHEW**The story of Jesus, promised by God**

What's it about? Matthew tells his version of the story of Jesus, from birth to death and resurrection. He concentrates on Jesus' work and teachings, highlighting that Jesus is the promised Messiah – God's special saviour.

Who wrote it? Earliest known Christian traditions say that Matthew, also called Levi, a disciple of Jesus, wrote this Gospel. We do not know for sure.

Why read it? Matthew puts Jesus right at the centre of history. The Old Testament pointed to him, and he changed history beyond recognition.

What's it to me? Matthew records Jesus' teaching alongside Jesus' actions. We see Jesus practising what he preaches, giving us a prime example of what it means to live God's way. But Jesus is much more than a good man who lived long ago. According to Matthew, he is the saviour promised by God and he will be with us until the end of the world (28.20).

The Ancestors of Jesus Christ

(Lk 3.23–38)

1 This is the list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Abraham.

2-6a From Abraham to King David, the following ancestors are listed: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and his brothers; then Perez and Zerah (their mother was Tamar), Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Obed (his mother was Ruth), Jesse, and King David.

6b-11 *From David to the time when the people of Israel were taken into exile in Babylon, the following ancestors are listed:

David, Solomon (his mother was the woman who had been Uriah's wife), Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Uziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, and Jehoiachin and his brothers.

12-16 From the time after the exile in Babylon to the birth of Jesus, the following ancestors are listed: Jehoiachin, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, and Joseph, who married Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was called the Messiah.

17 So then, there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from then to the birth of the Messiah.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

(Lk 2.1–7)

18 *This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. 20 While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. 21 *She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus — because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 Now all this happened in order to make what the Lord had said through the prophet come true, 23 * “A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel” (which means, “God is with us”).

24 So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to do. 25 *But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

40

Visitors from the East

2 1 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterwards, some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem 2 and asked, “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. 4 He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, “Where will the Messiah be born?”

5 “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea,” they answered. “For this is what the prophet wrote:

6 * “Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.”



The same star... went ahead of them (2.9–10)

7 So Herod called the visitors from the east to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: “Go and make a careful search for the child, and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9-10 And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the east. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 11 They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

12 Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

The Escape to Egypt

13 After they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, “Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave.”

14 Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, 15 * where he stayed until Herod died. This was done to make what the Lord had said through the prophet come true, “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

The Killing of the Children

16 When Herod realized that the visitors from the east had tricked him, he was

See also: 1.18: Lk 1.27 1.21: Lk 1.31
1.23: Is 7.14 (LXX) 1.25: Lk 2.21 2.6: Mic 5.2

See also: 2.15: Hos 11.1

furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood who were two years old and younger — this was done in accordance with what he had learned from the visitors about the time when the star had appeared.

17 In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:

18 *A sound is heard in Ramah,
the sound of bitter weeping.
Rachel is crying for her children;
she refuses to be comforted,
for they are dead.”

The Return from Egypt

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20** and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel, because those who tried to kill the child are dead.” **21** So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went back to Israel.

22 But when Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there. He was given more instructions in a dream, so he went to the province of Galilee **23** *and made his home in a town named Nazareth. And so what the prophets had said came true: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

The Preaching of John the Baptist

(Mk 1.1–8; Lk 3.1–18; Jn 1.19–28)

3 **1** At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. **2** * “Turn away from your sins,” he said, “because the Kingdom of heaven is near!” **3** * John was the man the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he said: “Someone is shouting in the desert, ‘Prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!’”

4 * John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair; he wore a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. **5** People came to him from Jerusalem, from the whole province of Judea, and from all the country near the River Jordan. **6** They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan.

7 * When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, “You snakes — who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? **8** Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. **9** * And don’t think you can escape punishment by saying that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these stones and make descendants for Abraham! **10** * The axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. **11** I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. **12** He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out.”

The Baptism of Jesus

(Mk 1.9–11; Lk 3.21–22)

13 At that time Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. **14** But John tried to make him change his mind. “I ought to be baptized by you,” John said, “and yet you have come to me!”

15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.” So John agreed.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on him. **17** * Then a voice said from heaven, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

(Mk 1.12–13; Lk 4.1–13)

4 **1** * Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. **2** After spending forty days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry. **3** Then the Devil came to him and said, “If you are God’s Son, order these stones to turn into bread.”

40

Matt.

Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corin.
2 Corin.
Galat.
Ephes.
Philipp.
Coloss.
1 Thess.
2 Thess.
1 Tim.
2 Tim.
Titus
Philem.
Heb.
James

See also: **2.18:** Jer 31.15 **2.23:** Mk 1.24; Lk 2.39;
Jn 1.45 **3.2:** Mt 4.17; Mk 1.15 **3.3:** Is 40.3 (LXX)
3.4: 2 Kgs 1.8

See also: **3.7:** Mt 12.34; 23.33 **3.9:** Jn 8.33
3.10: Mt 7.19 **3.17:** Gen 22.2; Ps 2.7; Is 42.1;
Mt 12.18; 17.5; Mk 1.11; Lk 9.35 **4.1:** Heb 2.18; 4.15

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

The letter of transformation

What's it about? This is one of the few letters with an individual story behind it. The slave Onesimus had run away from his master, Philemon.

Who wrote it? Paul and Timothy are the writers.

Why read it? This is a great testimonial about a man's character and faith. We see the gospel of Jesus at work before our very eyes.

What's it to me? Whether we're like Paul or Onesimus, this letter tells us about repentance, God's grace and standing up for others.

¹From Paul, a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy —

To our friend and fellow-worker Philemon, ^{2*}and the church that meets in your house, and our sister Apphia, and our fellow-soldier Archippus:

³May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴Brother Philemon, every time I pray, I mention you and give thanks to my God. ⁵For I hear of your love for all God's people and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus. ⁶My prayer is that our fellowship with you as believers will bring about a deeper understanding of every blessing which we have in our life in union with Christ. ⁷Your love, dear brother, has brought me great joy and much encouragement! You have cheered the hearts of all God's people.

A Request for Onesimus

⁸For this reason I could be bold enough, as your brother in Christ, to order you to do what should be done. ⁹But because I love you, I make a request instead. I do this even though I am Paul, the ambassador of Christ Jesus, and at present also a prisoner

for his sake. ^{10*}So I make a request to you on behalf of Onesimus, who is my own son in Christ; for while in prison I have become his spiritual father. ¹¹At one time he was of no use to you, but now he is useful* both to you and to me.

¹²I am sending him back to you now, and with him goes my heart. ¹³I would like to keep him here with me, while I am in prison for the gospel's sake, so that he could help me in your place. ¹⁴However, I do not want to force you to help me; rather, I would like you to do it of your own free will. So I will not do anything unless you agree.

¹⁵It may be that Onesimus was away from you for a short time so that you might have him back for all time. ¹⁶And now he is not just a slave, but much more than a slave: he is a dear brother in Christ. How much he means to me! And how much more he will mean to you, both as a slave and as a brother in the Lord!

¹⁷So, if you think of me as your partner, welcome him back just as you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to my account. ¹⁹Here, I will write this with my own

v.9 the ambassador of Christ Jesus, and at present also a prisoner for his sake; or an old man, and at present a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus.

v.11 The Greek name Onesimus means "useful".



Welcome him back (v.17)

hand: *I, Paul, will pay you back.* (I should not have to remind you, of course, that you owe your very self to me.) ²⁰ So, my brother, please do me this favour for the Lord's sake; as a brother in Christ, cheer me up!

²¹ I am sure, as I write this, that you will do what I ask — in fact I know that you will do even more. ²² At the same time, get a room ready for me, because I hope that God will answer the prayers of all of you and give me back to you.

Final Greetings

²³ *Epaphras, who is in prison with me for the sake of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings, ²⁴ *and so do my fellow-workers Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke.

²⁵ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

.....
See also: v.23: Col 1.7, 4.12 v.24: Acts 12.12, 25, 13.13, 15.37–39, 19.29, 27.2; Col 4.10, 14; 2 Tim 4.10, 11

57

Philem.

.....

Heb.
 James
 1 Peter
 2 Peter
 1 John
 2 John
 3 John
 Jude
 Revel.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

The letter about Jesus

What's it about? The letter to the Hebrews focuses on Jesus – Jesus as God and man, as high priest, as the sacrifice for our sin.



Who wrote it? The writer of this letter is unknown. The title has led to the belief that it was written to a group of Jewish believers.

Why read it? The writer of the letter helps his readers to understand more about the nature of Jesus, particularly in supernatural terms. This is a cosmic picture of what God has done to bring his people back to him, and who Jesus is.



What's it to me? The list of faithful people in Hebrews 11 reminds us of the history of the

people of God, inspires us and places us at the end of that list.

God's Word through his Son

1 ¹In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets. ²but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. ³He reflects the brightness of God's glory and is the exact likeness of God's own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word. After achieving forgiveness for human sins, he sat down in heaven at the right-hand side of God, the Supreme Power.

The Greatness of God's Son

⁴The Son was made greater than the angels, just as the name that God gave him is greater than theirs. ⁵*For God never said to any of his angels:

"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father."
Nor did God say about any angel,
"I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son."

⁶*But when God was about to send his firstborn Son into the world, he said:

"All God's angels must worship him."

⁷*But about the angels God said,
"God makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."

⁸*About the Son, however, God said:
"Your kingdom, O God, will last* for
ever and ever!

You rule over your* people with
justice.

1.8 *Your kingdom, O God, will last; or God is your kingdom.*

1.8 *your; some manuscripts have his.*

See also: **1.6:** Deut 32.43 (LXX) **1.7:** Ps 104.4 (LXX)
1.8–9: Ps 45.6–7

See also: **1.5:** Ps 2.7; 2 Sam 7.14; 1 Chr 17.13

- 9 You love what is right and hate what is wrong.
That is why God, your God, has chosen you
and has given you the joy of an honour far greater
than he gave to your companions.”
- 10 *He also said:
“You, Lord, in the beginning created the earth,
and with your own hands you made the heavens.
- 11 They will disappear, but you will remain;
they will all wear out like clothes.
- 12 You will fold them up like a coat,
and they will be changed like clothes.
But you are always the same,
and your life never ends.”
- 13 *God never said to any of his angels:
“Sit here on my right
until I put your enemies
as a footstool under your feet.”
- 14 What are the angels, then? They are spirits who serve God and are sent by him to help those who are to receive salvation.

The Great Salvation

2 ¹That is why we must hold on all the more firmly to the truths we have heard, so that we will not be carried away.
²The message given to our ancestors by the angels was shown to be true, and all who did not follow it or obey it received the punishment they deserved. ³How, then, shall we escape if we pay no attention to such a great salvation? The Lord himself first announced this salvation, and those who heard him proved to us that it is true. ⁴At the same time God added his witness to theirs by performing all kinds of miracles and wonders and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will.

The One who Leads us to Salvation

⁵God has not placed the angels as rulers over the new world to come — the world of which we speak. ⁶*Instead, as it is said somewhere in the Scriptures:

- “What are human beings, O God,
that you should think of them;
mere human beings, that you
should care for them?”
- 7 You made them for a little while
lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and
honour,*
- 8 and made them rulers over all
things.”

It says that God made them “rulers over all things”; this clearly includes everything. We do not, however, see human beings ruling over all things now. ⁹But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, so that through God’s grace he should die for everyone. We see him now crowned with glory and honour because of the death he suffered. ¹⁰It was only right that God, who creates and preserves all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many children to share his glory. For Jesus is the one who leads them to salvation.

¹¹He purifies people from their sins, and both he and those who are made pure all have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his family. ¹²*He says to God:

“I will tell my people what you have done;
I will praise you in their meeting.”

¹³*He also says, “I will put my trust in God.” And he also says, “Here I am with the children that God has given me.”

¹⁴Since the children, as he calls them, are people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became like them and shared their human nature. He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, ¹⁵and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death. ¹⁶*For it is clear that it is not the angels that he helps. Instead, he helps the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷This means that he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order to be their faithful and merciful High Priest in his service to God,

58

Heb.

James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revel.

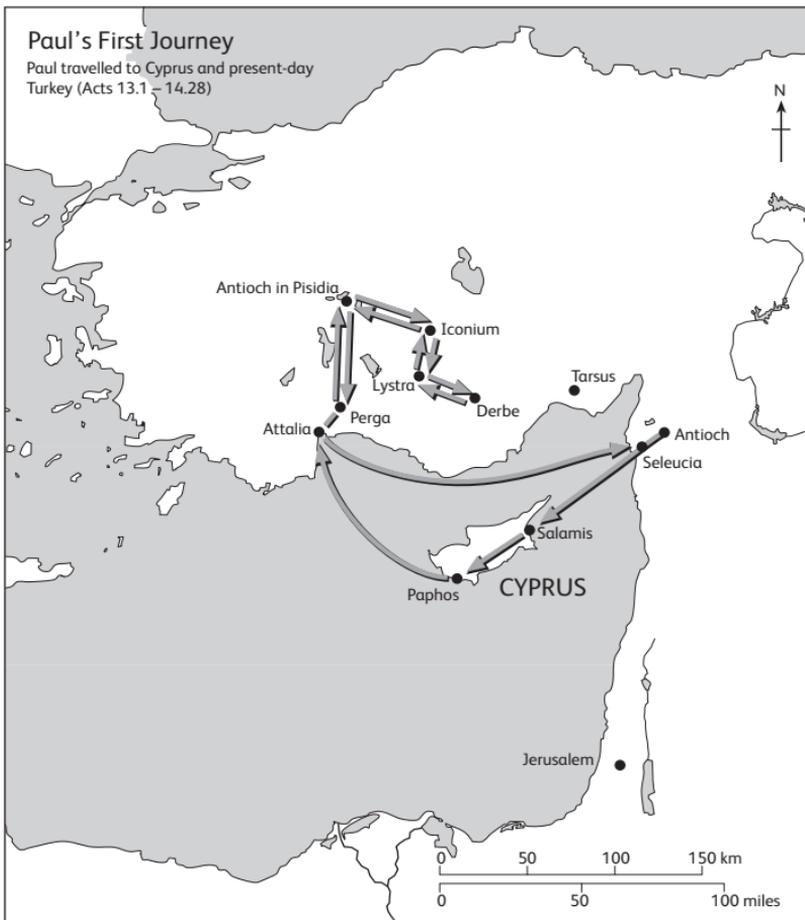
2.7 Many manuscripts add: *You made them rulers over everything you made* (see Ps 8.6).

See also: 1.10–12: Ps 102.25–27 (LXX)
1.13: Ps 110.1 2.6–8: Ps 8.4–6 (LXX)

See also: 2.12: Ps 22.22 2.13: Is 8.17, 18
2.16: Is 41.8–9

Paul's First Journey

Paul travelled to Cyprus and present-day Turkey (Acts 13.1 – 14.28)



Paul's Second Journey

This journey took Paul overland to Greece, returning by sea via Ephesus (Acts 15.36–18.22)



Paul's Third Journey

Ephesus was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia, now western Turkey (Acts 18.23–21.16)



Index

[OT] Old Testament [NT] New Testament

<i>Key word</i>	<i>Page number</i>	<i>Bible reference</i>	<i>Key word</i>	<i>Page number</i>	<i>Bible reference</i>
Aaron [OT]	57	Ex 4.14	Agrippa [NT]		
	58	Ex 5.1	(a) Herod Agrippa I	1065	Acts 12.1-4,6.11
	72	Ex 17.12		1066	Acts 12.19-23
	81	Ex 28	(b) Herod Agrippa II	1082	Acts 25.13-26.2
	83	Ex 29		1084	Acts 26.19,27-32
	86	Ex 32	Ahab [OT]	341	1 Kgs 16.28-33
	136	Num 12		342	1 Kgs 18.1-19.1
	143	Num 17		345	1 Kgs 20.2-22.40
	145	Num 20	Ahasuerus <i>see</i> Xerxes		
[NT]	1059	Acts 7.40	Amalek, Amalekite [OT]	72	Ex 17.8-16
	1175	Heb 5.4		230	Judg 6.3
	1176	Heb 7.11		232	Judg 7.12
	1178	Heb 9.4		269	1 Sam 15.2-20
Abel [OT]	6	Gen 4.2-9,25		286	1 Sam 30.1-18
[NT]	941	Mt 23.35		288	2 Sam 1.11-13
	999	Lk 11.51	Ammon, Ammonite [OT]	19	Gen 19.38
	1181	Heb 11.4		166	Deut 2.37
	1183	Heb 12.24		236	Judg 10.7-12.3
Abraham, Abram [OT]				297	2 Sam 10.1-11.1
born	12	Gen 11.26		300	2 Sam 12.26-31
married Sarai	13	Gen 11.29		402	1 Chr 19.1-20.3
migrated from Ur to Haran	13	Gen 11.31		435	2 Chr 26.8
called by God	13	Gen 12.1-5		436	2 Chr 27.5
went to Egypt	13	Gen 12.10-20		768	Jer 49.1-6
separated from Lot	14	Gen 13.7-11		804	Ezek 21.28-32
rescued Lot	14	Gen 14.13-16		808	Ezek 25.1-7,10
God's covenant with	15	Gen 15.18	Amorite [OT]	138	Num 13.29
name changed from Abram	16	Gen 17.1-22		147	Num 21.13
to Abraham	16	Gen 17.5		169	Deut 4.47
entertained angels	17	Gen 18.1-21		208	Josh 10.5-10
interceded for Sodom	17	Gen 18.22-23		225	Judg 1.34-35
banished Hagar and Ishmael	20	Gen 21.9-21		237	Judg 11.19-23
willing to offer Isaac	21	Gen 22.1-14	Ananias [NT]		
buried Sarah in Machpelah	22	Gen 23	(a) Ananias and Sapphira	1056	Acts 5.1-6
married Keturah	24	Gen 25.1	(b) Ananias of Damascus	1062	Acts 9.10-17
death and burial	25	Gen 25.8-9		1079	Acts 22.12-16
[NT]	913	Mt 3.9	(c) High Priest	1080	Acts 23.2
	980	Lk 1.73		1081	Acts 24.1
	1006	Lk 16.22-30	Andrew [NT]	914	Mt 4.18
	1032	Jn 8.33-58		952	Mk 1.16
	1091	Rom 4.1-22		970	Mk 13.3
	1133	Gal 3.6-29		1022	Jn 1.40,44
	1181	Heb 11.8-11,17		1027	Jn 6.8
	1187	Jas 2.21,23	Angel(s)	1037	Jn 12.22
Abshalom [OT]	291	2 Sam 3.3	(a) messengers and		
	301	2 Sam 13.21-18.33	agents of God [OT]	18	Gen 19.1,15
Achaia [NT]	1074	Acts 18.12,27		20	Gen 21.17
	1075	Acts 19.21		29	Gen 28.12
	1103	Rom 15.26		51	Gen 48.16
	1120	1 Cor 16.15		149	Num 22.22-35
	1121	2 Cor 1.1		344	1 Kgs 19.5-7
	1127	2 Cor 9.2		404	1 Chr 21.12-30
	1152	1 Thes 1.7-8		585	Ps 103.20
Adam [OT]	6	Gen 3.20-21		895	Zech 1.9-19
	6	Gen 4.1,25		896	Zech 3.1-6
	7	Gen 5.1-5		897	Zech 4.1-5
[NT]	1093	Rom 5.12-21		912	Mt 1.20-24
	1119	1 Cor 15.22,45-49	[NT]	914	Mt 4.11
	1160	1 Tim 2.13,14		928	Mt 13.39,41,49
Agabus [NT]	1065	Acts 11.28		932	Mt 16.27
	1077	Acts 21.10			

Word list

Words shown in italic type have their own entry in this list.

Abib The first month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-March to about mid-April. This month is also called *Nisan*.

Abys The place in the depths of the earth where, according to ancient Jewish teaching, the *demons* were imprisoned until their final punishment.

Acacia A flowering tree with hard and durable wood.

Adar The twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-February to about mid-March.

Agate A semi-precious stone of different colours, but usually white and brown.

Alabaster A soft stone, usually of a light creamy colour, from which vases and jars were made.

Aloes A sweet-smelling liquid produced from a plant. It was used as medicine and as a perfume.

Amen A Hebrew word which means "it is so" or "may it be so". It can also be translated "certainly", "truly", or "surely". In Revelation 3.14 it is used as a name for *Christ*.

Amethyst A semi-precious stone, usually purple or violet in colour.

Angel A spiritual being who acts as a messenger of God. Angels sometimes meet people in the Bible in ordinary human form, but often as brightly shining creatures of alarming appearance.

Anoint To pour or rub olive oil on someone in order to honour him or to appoint him to some special work. The Israelite kings were anointed when they took office, and so the king could be called "the anointed one". "*Christ*", the Greek word for "The Anointed One", is the title of the one whom God chose and appointed as Saviour and Lord.

Apostle Usually one of the group of twelve men whom Jesus chose to be his special followers and helpers. It is also used in the New Testament to refer to Paul and other Christian workers. The word means "messenger".

Areopagus A hill in Athens where the city council used to meet. For this reason the council itself was called Areopagus, even after it no longer met on the hill.

Artemis The Greek name of an ancient goddess of fertility, worshipped especially in Asia Minor.

Asherah A goddess of fertility worshipped by the Canaanites; her male counterpart was Baal. After the Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshipping these two gods.

Astarte A goddess of fertility and war who was widely worshipped in the ancient Near East.

Atonement, Day of The most important of Israel's holy days, when the *High Priest* would offer sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel (Leviticus 16). It was held on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (about 1 October). The Jewish name for this day is *Yom Kippur*.

Baal The god of fertility worshipped by the Canaanites; his female counterpart was *Asherah*. After the

Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshipping these two gods.

Baal-of-the-Covenant A name by which the god *Baal* was known by the people of Shechem.

Balsam A tree from which sweet-smelling resin was obtained; the resin was used for perfume and medicine.

Baptise A word meaning to be submerged in water. Baptism is a ritual that symbolises beginning a new life.

Beelzebul A New Testament name given to the Devil as the chief of the evil spirits.

Behemoth A large legendary creature. Some scholars say it was the hippopotamus.

Beryl A semi-precious stone, usually green or bluish green in colour.

Bul The eighth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-October to about mid-November.

Burnt offering A kind of sacrifice in which all the parts of the animal were completely burnt on the altar; in other sacrifices only certain parts of the animal were burnt.

Calamus A sweet-smelling plant, like a reed.

Caravan A large group of people and animals travelling across a desert.

Carnelian A semi-precious stone, usually red in colour.

Cassia A spice made from the bark of a tree; it is very like cinnamon.

Chalcedony A semi-precious stone, usually milky or grey in colour.

Christ At first it was a title, the Greek word for the Hebrew "*Messiah*". It means "The Anointed One". Jesus was called "The Christ" because he was the one whom God chose and sent as Saviour and Lord.

Circumcise To cut off the foreskin of the penis. As a sign of God's covenant with his people Israelite boys were circumcised eight days after they were born (Genesis 17.9–14).

Cubincine A servant woman who, although not a wife, had sexual relations with her master. She had important legal rights and her master was referred to as her husband.

Coral A brightly-coloured stony substance found in the sea; it was used as jewellery.

Council The highest religious court of the Jews. It was made up of seventy leaders of the Jewish people. Its president was the *High Priest*.

Covenant An agreement, either between people or between God and a person or a group of people. In the Old Testament the term usually refers to the covenant made between God and the people of *Israel* at the time of Moses. In the New Testament, it refers to the agreement between God and humanity, guaranteed by the body and blood of Jesus (see *Lord's Supper*).

Covenant Box A wooden chest covered with gold. The two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them were kept in it. It is often called "the Ark of the Covenant".

- Cumin** A small plant whose seeds are crushed and used for seasoning foods.
- David's City** The part of Jerusalem which was captured from the Jebusites by King David.
- David's town** A name for Bethlehem, King David's boyhood home and the town where Jesus was born.
- Dedication, Festival of** A Jewish festival in which people remembered how Judas Maccabeus rededicated the altar in the Temple in 165 BC. The festival began on the 25th day of the month Kislev (about 10 December) and lasted eight days. The Jewish name for this festival is Hanukkah.
- Defile** To make a person unfit to worship God. Some foods and actions were forbidden by the *Law of Moses*. If people broke these laws they were not allowed into the place where they worshipped God. Such people could not take part in worship until they had gone through certain rituals.
- Demon** An evil spirit with the power to harm people; it was regarded as a messenger and servant of the Devil.
- Dill** A small plant whose stems, leaves and seeds are used for seasoning food.
- Disciple** A person who follows and learns from someone else. In the New Testament the word is used of the followers of John the Baptist and especially of the followers of Jesus, particularly the twelve *apostles*.
- Divination** The attempt to discover a message from God or the gods by examining such things as marked stones or the liver of a sacrificed animal.
- Dragon** A beast in old legends, thought to be like a huge lizard. It is also called a *serpent* and appears as a picture of the Devil (Revelation 12.3—13.4; 20.2–3).
- Elders** In the Old Testament this is a name given to certain respected leaders of a tribe, nation, or city. In the New Testament three different groups are called elders: (1) in the Gospels the elders are important Jewish religious leaders, some of whom were members of their highest *Council*; (2) in Acts 11–21 and the Letters, the elders are Christian church officers who were responsible for the work of the church; (3) in Revelation the 24 elders are part of God's court in heaven, perhaps as representatives of God's people.
- Elul** The sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-August to about mid-September.
- Ephod** A Hebrew word. Its meaning is not clear in a number of places. It usually refers to the piece of cloth worn over the shoulders by the *High Priest* which had the *Urim* and *Thummim* attached to it. In some places, however, it refers to something the people worshipped. In some other passages it seems to refer to an object used to foretell future events.
- Epicureans** Those who followed the teaching of Epicurus (died 270 BC), a Greek philosopher who taught that happiness is the highest good in life.
- Ethanim** The seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-September to about mid-October; it was later called Tishri.
- Ethiopia** The ancient name of the extensive territory south of the First Cataract of the River Nile was Cush. This region was called Ethiopia in Graeco-Roman times, and included within its borders most of modern Sudan and some of present-day Ethiopia (Abyssinia).
- Eunuch** A man who has had an operation which prevents him from having normal sexual relations. Eunuchs were often important officials in the courts of ancient kings, and the word may have come to be used of such officials, even if they had not had the operation.
- Fast** To go without food as a religious duty.
- Feldspar** A colourful, rather hard rock, often glassy in appearance.
- Fellowship offerings** A sacrifice offered to restore or keep a right relationship with God. Only a part of the animal was burnt on the altar; the rest was eaten by the worshippers or the priests.
- Flax** A small cultivated plant; the fibres of its stem are spun into thread used in making linen cloth.
- Frankincense** A valuable substance made from the sap of a certain tree, probably brought from Arabia. It was burnt to give a pleasant smell.
- Garnet** A semi-precious stone, usually red in colour.
- Gazelle** A kind of deer, known for its beauty and gracefulness.
- Gentile** A person who is not a Jew.
- Gospel** A word meaning 'good news'; it sums up the whole message of God's activity to rescue humanity.
- Hades** The Greek name used in the New Testament to refer to the world of the dead.
- Harrow** A metal frame used to break up the ground and level it after it has been ploughed.
- Harvest Festival** The Israelite festival celebrating the wheat harvest, held in the latter part of May, fifty days after Passover. The Jewish name for this festival is Shavuoth (the Feast of Weeks). It has also been called *Pentecost*.
- Hermes** The name of a Greek god who served as messenger of the gods.
- Herod's Party** A political party in New Testament times made up of Jews who wanted to be ruled by one of the family of Herod the Great rather than by the Roman governor.
- High Priest** The chief Jewish priest and president of their supreme *Council*. Once a year (on the *Day of Atonement*) he would enter the *Most Holy Place* in the Temple and offer a sacrifice for himself and for the sins of the people of Israel.
- Hyssop** A small bushy plant used in religious ceremonies to sprinkle liquids.
- Idol** A figure of an animal or human being, usually made of wood, stone or metal, and worshipped as a god.
- Incense** Material which is burnt in order to produce a pleasant smell. The Israelites used it in their worship.
- Israel** The name given by God to Jacob, grandson of Abraham; it later became the name for much of the land that the Jewish people lived in. In the New Testament, 'Israel' is often used as a word to describe the Jewish people.
- Jackal** A small wild animal like a fox.
- Jasper** A semi-precious stone of various colours. The jasper mentioned in the Bible was probably either green or clear.
- Javelin** A short, light spear used by soldiers in ancient times.
- Kislev** The ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-November to about mid-December.
- Lamb of God** A name given to Jesus, signifying his role as a sacrifice that brings forgiveness of sins.
- Law** The name which the Jews applied to the first five books of the Old Testament, also called "The Books of Moses". Sometimes, however, the name is used in a more general way for the entire Old Testament.