NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE

Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message



NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message



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QUICK START GUIDE

WHAT IS THIS STUDY BIBLE?

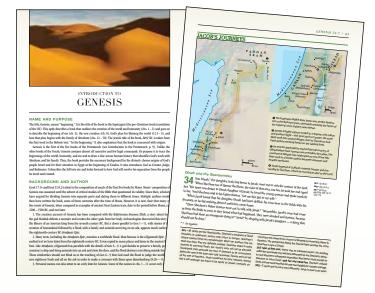
The *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* is an all new study Bible built on the truth of Scripture and centering on "biblical theology" — the ways in which many important themes work their way through Scripture and come to a focus in Jesus Christ. It's a comprehensive combination of newly crafted study notes, articles, book introductions and study tools.

WHAT DO THE FEATURES OF THIS STUDY BIBLE OFFER ME?

Book introductions: When was this book written? Why was it written? How does the book fit with the rest of Scripture? What is in it? Nearly every book of the Bible begins with an introduction that offers helpful information about the book. The book introductions answer questions you may have about the book, and each book introduction provides an outline of the book.

Cross reference system: Where does this word or term appear in other parts of the Bible? A cross reference system enables you to search the Scriptures for terms, ideas, and themes that reappear in various books.

Study notes: What is the Bible saying here? God's Word was written down many years ago by different authors in different settings. The study notes at the bottom of each page explain or give background on words, phrases, and the flow of the argument to aid you in better understanding what God is saying in his Word. Each note was thoughtfully crafted to guide you in more clearly comprehending the Word of God.



Maps, charts, illustrations, photos: Where did this happen? What else was going on during this time? The easyto-use maps and charts will shed light on the Bible, its places, and its times. Illustrations and photos provide images that will enrich your experience with God's Word and give you rich insight to aid your study, for example, by demonstrating or illustrating the many events in the Bible that are anchored in ancient history.

Articles: What does the Bible say about ...? At the end of the Bible is a library of biblical-theological articles covering topics such as "The Bible and Theology," "Law," "The Gospel," and "Justice." Their purpose is to help you trace major biblical themes throughout the canon.

Concordance: A concordance to the New International Version text is located at the back of the Bible. It will help you find the location of words or phrases that are found in the Scripture text.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

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	The Maccabean-Hasmonean Period
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Mork	
Mark	Jesus' Trials
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Greg D. Gilbert	The Gospel	
David G. Peterson	Worship	
Andreas J. Köstenberger	Mission	
Timothy Keller	Shalom	
Douglas J. Moo	The Consummation	

ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

Numbers

Nu, Num

ABBREVIATIONS

	General	[
ASV	American Standard Version	
ca.	about, approximately	
cf.	compare, confer	
ch., chs.	chapter, chapters	
e.g.	for example	
etc.	and so forth	
ESV	English Standard Version	
GNT	Good News Translation	
i.e.	that is	
KJV	King James (Authorized) Version	
lit.	literally, literal	
NASB	New American Standard Version	
NEB	New English Bible	
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	S
NT	New Testament	
0Т	Old Testament	L
Р	papyrus	
р., рр.	page, pages	
REB	Revised English Version	
V., VV.	verse, verses (in the chapter being commented on)	
	abbreviations of month also sometimes used, as	

Standard abbreviations of month names are also sometimes used, as well as a few other common abbreviations.

The following OT and NT abbreviations reflect the cross reference and concordance abbreviation first, followed by the abbreviation used elsewhere if different.

The Old Testament

Genesis	Ge, Gen
Exodus	Ex, Exod
Leviticus	Lev

Deuteronomy Dt. Deut Joshua Jos, Josh Judges Jdg, Judg Ruth Ru. Ruth 1 Samuel 1Sa, 1 Sam 2 Samuel 2Sa, 2 Sam 1 Kings 1Ki, 1 Kgs 2 Kings 2Ki, 2 Kgs 1 Chronicles 1Ch, 1 Chr 2 Chronicles 2Ch. 2 Chr Ezra Ezr. Ezra Nehemiah Ne, Neh Esther Est, Esth Job .Job Psalms Ps. Ps/Pss Proverbs Pr, Prov Ecclesiastes Ecc. Eccl ong of Songs SS. Sona Isaiah lsa Jeremiah Jer Lamentations La, Lam Ezekiel Eze, Ezek Daniel Da, Dan Hosea Hos Joel Joel Am, Amos Amos Obadiah Ob, Obad Jnh, Jonah Jonah Micah Mic Nahum Na, Nah Habakkuk Hab Zephaniah Zep, Zeph Haqqai Hag Zechariah Zec, Zech Malachi Mal

The New Testament

Matthew	Mt, Matt
Mark	Mk, Mark
Luke	Lk, Luke
John	Jn, John

Acts Ac, Acts Romans Ro. Rom 1 Corinthians 1Co, 1 Cor 2 Corinthians 2Co. 2 Cor Galatians Gal Ephesians Eph Php, Phil Philippians Colossians Col 1 Thessalonians 1Th, 1 Thess 2 Thessalonians 2Th. 2 Thess 1Ti. 1 Tim 1 Timothy 2 Timothy 2Ti, 2 Tim Titus Titus Philemon Phm, Phlm Hebrews Heb James Jas 1 Peter 1Pe. 1 Pet 2 Peter 2Pe. 2 Pet 1 John 1Jn, 1 John 2 John 2Jn, 2 John 3 John 3Jn, 3 John Jude Jude Revelation Rev

TRANSLITERATIONS

A simplified system has been used for transliterating words from ancient Biblical languages into English. The only transliterations calling for comment are these:

Transliteration Pronunciation

- ' Glottal stop
- h Similar to the "ch" in the German word Buch
- t Similar to the "t" in the verb "tear"
- Similar to the glottal stop
- s Similar to the "ts" in "hits"
- similar to the "s" in "sing"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of a study Bible is possible only because scores of people have contributed to the work. All of us involved in this project first want to thank God for the immeasurable privilege of spending so many hours studying the Bible and writing notes on it for the good of the people of God around the world. The hard work has been both privilege and pleasure.

The three associate editors, T. D. Alexander, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard S. Hess, have labored tirelessly and with outstanding scholarship and scrupulous attention to the biblical text. All of them have worked through all the notes, as well as the articles at the end of the volume, and commented extensively. The first two editors focused special attention on biblical theology; Richard Hess's expertise has been invaluable in the messy domains of archaeology, geography, and chronology.

Andrew David Naselli, the assistant editor, not only provided thousands of comments on individual details, but served as the administrator of the project, keeping a genial eye on our master chart, keeping the bits and pieces flowing to the right people at the right time, as parts were edited, rewritten, checked again, edited by the folk at Zondervan, and so forth. Geeks and others who read these lines may be interested to learn that not a single piece of paper was passed around the writers and editors. All of the work was done digitally.

All the editors want to express thanks for all the writers. Some wrote relatively short pieces; others were responsible for much lengthier contributions, the equivalent of a good-sized book. The value of this *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* is largely a reflection of their knowledge and skill. Some of them worked under very tight deadlines; all of them had to put up with incessant suggestions from the editors, as we struggled to impose a certain consistency of format and style on the submitted notes and articles. Each writer responded with singular grace.

It would not be possible to mention by name all the people at Zondervan who have contributed to the production of this *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. But it would be ungrateful and boorish not to mention the initial invitation to edit this study Bible that came to me from Maureen Girkins when she was CEO of Zondervan. In addition to her leadership, Chip Brown, Stan Gundry and Mark Schoenwald helped guide the Bible through its various stages. Similarly, the superior skills and good humor of Senior Editor Shari Vanden Berg and copyeditor Natalie J. Block place them at the very top of their profession. Senior Production Editor at Large Verlyn D. Verbrugge ably mediated the suggestions of the final review group, with his characteristic blend of careful scholarship and immaculate courtesy. Mike Vander Klipp, Kim Tanner, and Melinda Bouma lent their skills in a variety of capacities.

These names mean much to those of us who worked on this study Bible, but none of us will object in the slightest if you, the readers of this volume, forget our names, provided that as a result of this work you understand and love the Bible better, and recall the words of the living God: "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Soli Deo gloria.

D. A. Carson

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

English-speaking people have no shortage of study Bibles. I have more than a dozen in front of me as I write these lines. All study Bibles have certain features in common. They bring together in one fat volume the complete text of the English Bible, and, on the same page, explanatory notes, maps, illustrations, etc. to help readers understand what they are reading. There is a danger in this, of course: we would not want any reader to confuse the authority and reliability of the biblical text with the notes and commentary that we provide. Although we have tried our best to provide true and faithful comments, our added features never claim the inspiration that belongs to Scripture alone. But provided readers avoid the danger by being careful not to confuse the biblical words and the words of the accompanying notes, study Bibles have a great advantage: in one volume readers have both the text of Scripture and some basic aids to help them understand what they are reading.

That such helps are necessary should not come as a surprise, for the Bible itself depicts the importance of teaching the words of Scripture to others. When Philip sees the Ethiopian eunuch reading the book of Isaiah, he boldly asks him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). "'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?'" (8:31), which is exactly what Philip proceeded to do. That is how Paul understood his own ministry; his concern was to teach people "the word of God," which is variously identified with the gospel and with Scripture itself. For example, "Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God," (Acts 18:11). When Nehemiah and Ezra and others led the Israelites in reformation, "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read" (Neh 8:8).

Although all study Bibles have certain things in common, they vary quite a lot. Some are written by scholars who do not revere Scripture as the word of God, while others affirm Scripture as inspired. Different study Bibles are based on a variety of English translations. Some are long, detailed, and occasionally verbose; others aim for crisp brevity. Some add many maps, charts, and illustrations; others provide integrative theological essays.

So what characterizes this *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*? First, in common with the best study Bibles, all our contributors revere Scripture as the Word of God and joyfully bow to its authority. Our desire is not so much to be masters of the Word, as to be mastered by it. That shapes how we approach the text and how we write about it. Our aim is to bring glory to God by helping people think his thoughts after him, and to bring understanding and edification to his people as they do so.

Second, this study Bible is based on the NIV, which continues to be the best-selling, most widely circulated modern English version of the Bible in the world. This version excels in idiomatic accuracy. It remembers that not only the words of the original languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek — are inspired by God, but so also are the phrases, the sentences, the idioms, the kinds of writing that make up the Bible, and all must be taken into account and worked through to generate a smooth and faithful translation.

Third, this study Bible aims to provide enough detail to answer the questions that many readers raise when they read the Bible without indulging in all the details that might be better left to separate commentaries.

Fourth, in addition to the notes on the biblical text, this study Bible provides an excellent collection of charts, maps, brief essays providing the historical circumstances when each biblical book was written, and many photos and illustrations.

Finally, this study Bible emphasizes biblical theology. By this we mean that instead of focusing primary attention on how the Bible as a whole addresses many questions (which is what many people mean by "systematic theology"), we have tried to highlight the way various themes develop within the Bible across time. Nowhere is this clearer than in the 28 articles at the end of the Bible, which survey the way certain themes develop in the Bible, taking us to their climax in the book of Revelation — such themes as temple, for instance, and sacrifice, Jerusalem, kingship, Messiah, and many more. In this way we hope to encourage readers of the Bible to spot these themes for themselves as they read their Bibles, becoming adept at tracing them throughout the Scriptures. Such biblical theology enables readers to follow the Bible's themes in the terms and categories that the Bible itself uses.

All of us who have worked on this project will be satisfied if readers come away from the Bible with increased understanding, greater grasp of the gospel, greater confidence in Scripture, more love for the Lord Jesus, renewed fear of sin and renewed love for the church, and greater joy in God.

> *Soli Deo gloria*. D. A. Carson

PREFACE

The goal of the New International Version (NIV) is to enable English-speaking people from around the world to read and hear God's eternal Word in their own language. Our work as translators is motivated by our conviction that the Bible is God's Word in written form. We believe that the Bible contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, sheds unique light on our path in a dark world and sets forth the way to our eternal well-being. Out of these deep convictions, we have sought to recreate as far as possible the experience of the original audience — blending transparency to the original text with accessibility for the millions of English speakers around the world. We have prioritized accuracy, clarity and literary quality with the goal of creating a translation suitable for public and private reading, evangelism, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. We have also sought to preserve a measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English.

The complete NIV Bible was first published in 1978. It was a completely new translation made by over a hundred scholars working directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. The translators came from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, giving the translation an international scope. They were from many denominations and churches — including Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and others. This breadth of denominational and theological perspective helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias. For these reasons, and by the grace of God, the NIV has gained a wide readership in all parts of the English-speaking world.

The work of translating the Bible is never finished. As good as they are, English translations must be regularly updated so that they will continue to communicate accurately the meaning of God's Word. Updates are needed in order to reflect the latest developments in our understanding of the biblical world and its languages and to keep pace with changes in English usage. Recognizing, then, that the NIV would retain its ability to communicate God's Word accurately only if it were regularly updated, the original translators established the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). The Committee is a self-perpetuating group of biblical scholars charged with keeping abreast of advances in biblical scholarship and changes in English and issuing periodic updates to the NIV. The CBT is an independent, self-governing body and has sole responsibility for the NIV text. The Committee mirrors the original group of translators in its diverse international and denominational makeup and in its unifying commitment to the Bible as God's inspired Word.

In obedience to its mandate, the Committee has issued periodic updates to the NIV. An initial revision was released in 1984. A more thorough revision process was completed in 2005, resulting in the separately published TNIV. The updated NIV you now have in your hands builds on both the original NIV and the TNIV and represents the latest effort of the Committee to articulate God's unchanging Word in the way the original authors might have said it had they been speaking in English to the global English-speaking audience today.

Translation Philosophy

The Committee's translating work has been governed by three widely accepted principles about the way people use words and about the way we understand them.

First, the meaning of words is determined by the way that users of the language actually use them at any given time. For the biblical languages, therefore, the Committee utilizes the best and most recent scholarship on the way Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words were being used in biblical times. At the same time, the Committee carefully studies the state of modern English. Good translation is like good communication: one must know the target audience so that the appropriate choices can be made about which English words to use to represent the original words of Scripture. From its inception, the NIV has had as its target the general English-speaking population all over the world, the "International" in its title reflecting this concern. The aim of the Committee is to put the Scriptures into natural English that will communicate effectively with the broadest possible audience of English speakers.

Modern technology has enhanced the Committee's ability to choose the right English words to convey the meaning of the original text. The field of computational linguistics harnesses the power of computers to provide broadly applicable and current data about the state of the language. Translators can now access huge databases of modern English to better understand the current meaning and usage of key words. The Committee utilized this resource in preparing the 2011 edition of the NIV. An area of especially rapid and significant change in English is the way certain nouns and pronouns are used to refer to human beings. The Committee therefore requested experts in computational linguistics at Collins Dictionaries to pose some key questions about this usage to its database of English— the largest in the world, with over 4.4 billion words, gathered from several English-speaking countries and including both spoken and written English. (The Collins Study, called "The Development and

Use of Gender Language in Contemporary English," can be accessed at *http://www.thenivbible.com/about-the-niv/about-the-2011-edition/*.) The study revealed that the most popular words to describe the human race in modern U.S. English were "humanity," "man" and "mankind." The Committee then used this data in the updated NIV, choosing from among these three words (and occasionally others also) depending on the context.

A related issue creates a larger problem for modern translations: the move away from using the third-person masculine singular pronouns — "he/him/his" — to refer to men and women equally. This usage does persist in some forms of English, and this revision therefore occasionally uses these pronouns in a generic sense. But the tendency, recognized in day-to-day usage and confirmed by the Collins study, is away from the generic use of "he," "him" and "his." In recognition of this shift in language and in an effort to translate into the natural English that people are actually using, this revision of the NIV generally uses other constructions when the biblical text is plainly addressed to men and women equally. The reader will encounter especially frequently a "they," "their" or "them" to express a generic singular idea. Thus, for instance, Mark 8:36 reads: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" This generic use of the "distributive" or "singular" "they/ them/their" has been used for many centuries by respected writers of English and has now become established as standard English, spoken and written, all over the world.

A second linguistic principle that feeds into the Committee's translation work is that meaning is found not in individual words, as vital as they are, but in larger clusters: phrases, clauses, sentences, discourses. Translation is not, as many people think, a matter of word substitution: English word *x* in place of Hebrew word *y*. Translators must first determine the meaning of the words of the biblical languages in the context of the passage and then select English words that accurately communicate that meaning to modern listeners and readers. This means that accurate translation will not always reflect the exact structure of the original language. To be sure, there is debate over the degree to which translators should try to preserve the "form" of the original text in English. From the beginning, the NIV has taken a mediating position on this issue. The manual produced when the translation that became the NIV was first being planned states: "If the Greek or Hebrew syntax has a good parallel in modern English, it should be used. But if there is no good parallel, the English syntax appropriate to the meaning of the original is to be chosen." It is fine, in other words, to carry over the form of the biblical languages into English — but not at the expense of natural expression. The principle that meaning resides in larger clusters of words means that the Committee has not insisted on a "word-for-word" approach to translation. We certainly believe that every word of Scripture is inspired by God and therefore to be carefully studied to determine what God is saying to us. It is for this reason that the Committee has not insistely, however, it is how these individual words function in combination with other words that determines meaning.

A third linguistic principle guiding the Committee in its translation work is the recognition that words have a spectrum of meaning. It is popular to define a word by using another word, or "gloss," to substitute for it. This substitute word is then sometimes called the "literal" meaning of a word. In fact, however, words have a range of possible meanings. Those meanings will vary depending on the context, and words in one language will usually not occupy the same semantic range as words in another language. The Committee therefore studies each original word of Scripture in its context to identify its meaning in a particular verse and then chooses an appropriate English word (or phrase) to represent it. It is impossible, then, to translate related occurrences of a word in the original languages with the same English word in order to preserve the connection for the English reader. But the Committee generally privileges clear natural meaning over a concern with consistency in rendering particular words.

Textual Basis

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest edition of *Biblia Hebraica*, has been used throughout. The Masoretic Text tradition contains marginal notations that offer variant readings. These have sometimes been followed instead of the text itself. Because such instances involve variants within the Masoretic tradition, they have not been indicated in the textual notes. In a few cases, words in the basic consonantal text have been divided differently than in the Masoretic Text. Such cases are usually indicated in the textual footnotes. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain biblical texts that represent an earlier stage of the transmission of the Hebrew text. They have been consulted, as have been the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions concerning deliberate textual changes. The translators also consulted the more important early versions. Readings from these versions, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the scribal traditions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading. In rare cases, the translators have emended the Hebrew text where it appears to have become corrupted at an even earlier stage of its transmission. These departures from the

Masoretic Text are also indicated in the textual footnotes. Sometimes the vowel indicators (which are later additions to the basic consonantal text) found in the Masoretic Text did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original text. Accordingly, some words have been read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated in the footnotes.

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament has been an eclectic one, based on the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament. The translators have made their choices among the variant readings in accordance with widely accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where uncertainty remains.

The New Testament authors, writing in Greek, often quote the Old Testament from its ancient Greek version, the Septuagint. This is one reason why some of the Old Testament quotations in the NIV New Testament are not identical to the corresponding passages in the NIV Old Testament. Such quotations in the New Testament are indicated with the footnote "(see Septuagint)."

Footnotes and Formatting

Footnotes in this version are of several kinds, most of which need no explanation. Those giving alternative translations begin with "Or" and generally introduce the alternative with the last word preceding it in the text, except when it is a single-word alternative. When poetry is quoted in a footnote a slash mark indicates a line division.

It should be noted that references to diseases, minerals, flora and fauna, architectural details, clothing, jewelry, musical instruments and other articles cannot always be identified with precision. Also, linear measurements and measures of capacity can only be approximated (see the Table of Weights and Measures). Although *Selab*, used mainly in the Psalms, is probably a musical term, its meaning is uncertain. Since it may interrupt reading and distract the reader, this word has not been kept in the English text, but every occurrence has been signaled by a footnote.

As an aid to the reader, sectional headings have been inserted. They are not to be regarded as part of the biblical text and are not intended for oral reading. It is the Committee's hope that these headings may prove more helpful to the reader than the traditional chapter divisions, which were introduced long after the Bible was written.

Sometimes the chapter and/or verse numbering in English translations of the Old Testament differs from that found in published Hebrew texts. This is particularly the case in the Psalms, where the traditional titles are included in the Hebrew verse numbering. Such differences are indicated in the footnotes at the bottom of the page. In the New Testament, verse numbers that marked off portions of the traditional English text not supported by the best Greek manuscripts now appear in brackets, with a footnote indicating the text that has been omitted (see, for example, Matthew 17:[21]).

Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11, although long accorded virtually equal status with the rest of the Gospels in which they stand, have a questionable standing in the textual history of the New Testament, as noted in the bracketed annotations with which they are set off. A different typeface has been chosen for these passages to indicate their uncertain status.

Basic formatting of the text, such as lining the poetry, paragraphing (both prose and poetry), setting up of (administrativelike) lists, indenting letters and lengthy prayers within narratives and the insertion of sectional headings, has been the work of the Committee. However, the choice between single-column and double-column formats has been left to the publishers. Also the issuing of "red-letter" editions is a publisher's choice — one that the Committee does not endorse.

The Committee has again been reminded that every human effort is flawed — including this revision of the NIV. We trust, however, that many will find in it an improved representation of the Word of God, through which they hear his call to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and to service in his kingdom. We offer this version of the Bible to him in whose name and for whose glory it has been made.

The Committee on Bible Translation

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

> GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY

THE PENTATEUCH

T. D. Alexander

Designation

The Pentateuch consists of the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The English title "Pentateuch" comes from the Greek term *pentateuchos*, which means "five-volume work," a title that can be traced back to the third century AD. While Christians have tended to prefer the designation "Pentateuch," Jews have traditionally referred to these books by the title "Torab," a Hebrew term usually translated "law," although a better translation might be "instruction." The designation "law" goes back before the time of Jesus; the prologue of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha (written about 132 BC) uses "Law" to denote the first five books of the OT.

While the use of the term "law" for

the Pentateuch has a long history, in earlier times references to the "Book of the Law" (e.g., 2 Kgs 22:8,11; 2 Chr 17:9; cf. 2 Chr 34:14) and "the Law" (e.g., 2 Kgs 21:8; 2 Chr 25:4) probably refer to material now preserved in Deut 5-26 (or Deut 5-30). According to the book of Deuteronomy, the elderly Moses gave the Israelites "the law" that was to shape their lifestyle in the land of Canaan. This material extends from Deut 5:1 to 26:19 (or 30:20). Moses then entrusted a written copy of this law to the priests (Deut 31:9), who were to place it beside the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:26). Josh 1:7-8 mentions this same "Book of the Law." Various titles closely associated with Moses denote this "Book of the Law": the "Book of the Law of Moses" (e.g., Josh 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kgs 14:6; Neh 8:1), the "Law of Moses" (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 23:25; 2 Chr 23:18; 30:16; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Dan 9:11,13), and the "Book of Moses" (e.g., 2 Chr 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1). At some stage in the postexilic period, the title "Law" was applied to the whole of the Pentateuch.

Overview

The five books of Genesis to Deuteronomy narrate a remarkable story that consists of several distinctive chronological stages.

Primeval Era (Gen 1–11)

Gen 1-11, often called the primeval era, records a number of selective episodes in the early history of humanity.



Byzantine mosaic in the Basilica of St. Vitalis in Ravenna, Italy shows Moses receiving the Ten Commandments. © Mountainpix/Shutterstock

These events are highly significant because they shape the rest of the biblical story (see "Creation," p. 2642; "Sin," p. 2644).

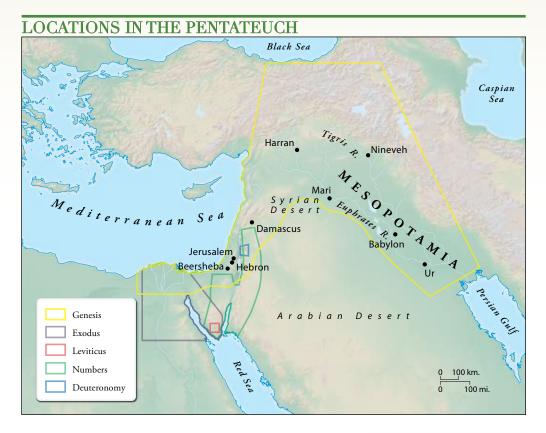
Patriarchal Period (Gen 12-50)

Gen 12–50 is often referred to as the patriarchal period. The lives of three men dominate it: Abraham, his grandson Jacob, and his great-grandson Joseph. Abraham's son Isaac also plays an important part in the story, as do Joseph's brothers, especially Judah. The special role this family has in God's purposes explains the prominence that Gen 12–50 gives them (see "People of God," p. 2672). God gives them — promises that anticipate (1) the creation of a nation that will take possession of the land of Canaan

> and (2) the coming of a future king, descended from Abraham, who will mediate God's blessing to the nations of the earth (see "Covenant," p. 2646; "The Kingdom of God," p. 2662). Through this promised king, God will reverse the consequences of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. These two principal promises determine the direction for the rest of the story in Exodus to 2 Kings and beyond.

From Egypt to Sinai (Exod 1:1—Num 10:10)

The book of Exodus jumps forward to a time when a succession of pharaohs in Egypt enslave and harshly treat Abraham's everincreasing descendants. Moses' birth and death frame the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy. As the one



whom God chose to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses takes center stage in these books.

Exod 1-15 focuses on God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, ending in a victory song (see "Exile and Exodus," p. 2659), and chs. 16-18 briefly describe their journey to Mount Sinai. Then the pace of the narrative slows down. The story gives attention to the unique covenant relationship that God establishes with the Israelites. Reporting this event and its immediate consequences dominates Exod 19-40, all of Leviticus, and Num 1:1-10:10. The creation of this covenant relationship is marked by (1) listing various obligations (e.g., the Ten Commandments) that the Israelites must fulfill and (2) constructing a tent, or tabernacle, that will become God's dwelling place among his chosen people (see "Law," p. 2649; "Sacrifice," p. 2656; "Temple," p. 2652). By living among them, the Lord transforms the Israelites into a holy nation. The implications of this are set out more fully in the book of Leviticus, which places special emphasis on how the Israelites must live holy lives (see "Holiness," p. 2676).

From Sinai to Moab (Num 10:11 — Deut 34:12)

After a period of almost one year, the Israelites leave Mount Sinai and journey through the wilderness toward the land of Canaan (Num 10:11 — 36:13). Unfortunately, the people's faith in God wilts. When fear of the nations living in Canaan causes them to rebel against God, God punishes them, and they spend 40 years in the wilderness. Only after the death of the adults who had left Egypt does it become possible for the next generation of Israelites to enter the land of Canaan. Whereas much of Numbers concentrates on



Fifteenth-century Hebrew manuscript shows Moses leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea.

Moses leads the Children of Israel across the Red Sea from a Jewish Prayer Book, Hamburg, 1427, German School/Staats-und Universitatsbibliothek, Hamburg, Germany/Bridgeman Images the failures of the Israelites, the final chapters of the book prepare them for life in the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy further develops this theme.

As Deuteronomy begins, the Israelites are camped to the east of the Jordan River near Jericho. Moses, close to death, encourages the people to renew the covenant that God initiated at Mount Sinai. Moses reviews the covenant obligations and reminds the people that obeying them will bring God's blessing and that disobeying them will lead to death. After setting out this challenge, the book of Deuteronomy ends by reporting the death of Moses in the land of Moab. While this brings to an end the period of Moses' leadership, the Pentateuch is an unfinished story. The Israelites are still outside the promised land, and God's promises to the patriarchs remain unfulfilled.

While people often view it as a selfcontained section of the Bible, the Pentateuch is very closely linked to that which follows. The books of Genesis to Kings form one continuous account, with every subsequent book presupposing everything the previous books recount. Therefore, we should interpret the individual books of the Pentateuch in light of this larger whole, which in turn needs to be read in the light of the whole Bible.

Author

Given the prominence of Moses in the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy, it is no surprise that he should be associated with the composition of the Pentateuch. In the various expressions for the Pentateuch, the name of Moses occurs frequently. Jesus himself refers to the Pentateuch as "the Book of Moses" (Mark 12:26), "the Law of Moses" (Luke 24:44; see John 1:45), and simply "Moses" (Luke 16:29; cf. Luke 24:27; 2 Cor 3:15). Not surprisingly, in view of the prominence these titles give Moses and the high standing in which later generations held him, Moses is an obvious candidate to be the author of the Pentateuch. Further support for this comes from the Pentateuch itself, which directly credits Moses with writing down sections of the material, most notably the "Book of the Covenant" in Exod 20:22 — 23:33 (see Exod 24:4,7), and the "Book of the Law" in Deut 5-26 or Deut 5-30 (see Deut 31:9,26). In the absence of obvious contenders, there is much to commend the view that Moses composed the Pentateuch.

Post-Mosaic Evidence

While the evidence in favor of Mosaic authorship is persuasive, some features of the Pentateuch may point to a different conclusion. Certain details presuppose a knowledge of events that occur after Moses' lifetime. Among some of the more obvious examples are these: Gen 13:7 seems to be written from the perspective of an author who lived at a time when there were no Canaanites or Perizzites living in the land of Canaan; Gen 14:14 refers to the city of Dan, but this name was given to the town of



Mount Nebo, where Moses gave his speech to the Israelites (Deut 32:49). © 1995 by Phoenix Data Systems

Laish only after the tribe of Dan captured it (Judg 18:29); and Gen 36:31 possibly alludes to the existence of an Israelite monarchy. Another feature that weighs against Moses' authorship is the manner in which the Pentateuch normally refers to him in the third person. Num 12:3 possibly presents the greatest difficulty: "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Would the most humble man on the earth write this? (By placing this verse in parentheses, the NIV implies that someone other than Moses wrote this.) And Deut 34 reports Moses' death. These and similar observations should caution against an overly dogmatic belief that Moses penned absolutely everything in the Pentateuch. At the very least we must allow for the possibility of editorial updating or explanatory additions. Moreover, at no point does the Pentateuch plainly state that Moses composed everything contained within these five books. As regards the book of Genesis, Moses may have taken over already existing written materials.

Modern Critical Scholarship

In the world of academic scholarship, the consensus of opinion largely dismisses the idea that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. The seeds for such an outlook may trace back to the end of the eighteenth century, when the Enlightenment concept of evolution or progress was applied to the development of religious ideas. Rejecting the biblical account of how Israelite religion began, a few scholars constructed their own theories based on the assumption that all religions evolve from a primitive to a more advanced form. In applying this philosophy to the Bible, these scholars argued that most biblical books were composed of materials from different chronological periods. Eventually, the German scholar Julius Wellhausen championed with considerable success a theory now known as the Documentary Hypothesis.

Wellhausen's Prolegomena to the

History of Israel (English translation published in 1885) offers a radically different way of viewing the history of Israelite religion. He rejects the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, arguing that four authors, now commonly referred to as the Yahwist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist, and the Priestly Writer, wrote most of the materials that comprise the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy. In terms of dating the work of these authors, Wellhausen places the tateuch was composed, this remains an issue of open debate. Unfortunately, the presuppositions of the Documentary Hypothesis still continue to influence OT scholarship.

A Literary Collage

The issue of authorship is complex because the materials that comprise the Pentateuch are not uniform in nature. The books of Genesis to Deuteronomy contain a rich blend of materi-

Although the story of the Pentateuch seems far removed from modern readers both chronologically and culturally and may frequently appear remote and obscure, it authoritatively explains the initial stages of God's redemptive activity in the world.

Yahwist at about 840 BC, the Elohist at about 700 BC, the Deuteronomist at about 623 BC, and the Priestly Writer at about 500 - 450 BC. By redating different sections of the Pentateuch in this way, Wellhausen rejects the long-standing tradition that Hebrew religion originated largely in the time of Moses. Rather, Wellhausen proposes that the true founders of Israelite religion were the prophets of the late ninth and eighth centuries BC. They were the men who inspired ethical monotheism (i.e., belief in one God linked to high ethical standards).

Although Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis dominated OT studies throughout the twentieth century and still enjoys some support, an increasing number of scholars have openly questioned its methodology and conclusions. While alternative theories have been proposed to explain how the Penals that reflect different literary forms. There are, for example, narratives of differing lengths and complexities, genealogies of varying kinds, paternal blessings in poetic style, songs, covenant obligations, case laws, instructions for the construction of cultic items, and directives for undertaking religious activities. If Moses shaped the Pentateuch as we know it, he probably took over materials that others composed, especially for the book of Genesis. Notwithstanding the variety of literary forms in the Pentateuch, these materials are skillfully blended together according to an overall plan. The Pentateuch is a literary collage in which different materials produce a remarkably rich and vibrant story.

The question of who wrote the Pentateuch must never divert attention from the more important task of understanding its message. Although many modern readers find the contents of the Pentateuch remote and obscure, the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy lay the foundation upon which the whole of Scripture rests. Without an awareness of these books, we cannot understand the rest of the Bible.

The Pentateuch From a Biblical Theology Perspective

Although the story of the Pentateuch is far removed from modern readers both chronologically and culturally and may frequently appear remote and obscure, it authoritatively explains the initial stages of God's redemptive activity in the world. It explains why our world displays every sign of being both ordered and chaotic at the same time, and it points forward in hope to a time when God will make all things right through Jesus Christ.

God's Creation Purpose

Genesis begins with God creating the

world and appointing human beings to rule on his behalf over all other earthly creatures (see "Creation," p. 2642). Underlying this commission is the expectation that God's vice-regents will fill the earth, extending the sanctuary of Eden in order to make the whole world into a divine residence (see "Temple," p. 2652). Implicit in all of this is the creation of a holy city where God will live surrounded by those who affectionately serve and worship him (see "The City of God," p. 2666).

Betrayal and Rebellion

Against this background, the early chapters of Genesis record how an extraordinary serpent tempts Adam and Eve into betraying God. Having been instructed to rule over all other creatures, they fail to exercise authority over the serpent, and by their actions they submit to its authority rather than God's (see "Sin," p. 2644). Their behavior has dire consequences: they are alienated from God and expelled from the Garden of Eden (see "Wrath," p. 2681). Although humanity retains its capacity to rule, it no longer does so as God intended. Violence is the hallmark of humanity's presence on the earth, resulting eventually in divine punishment through a devastating flood. In spite of this, even after the flood humanity remains defiant. Gen 11 records another incident of human hubris as people conspire in unity to construct a city with a tower that might give them access to heaven itself. The name "Babel" becomes synonymous with humanity's desire to replace God and rule both earth and heaven. Not surprisingly, their efforts fall far short of their arrogance as God comes down and causes the people to babble in confusion.

A Promised Savior

While the dominant theme of Gen 3-11 is humanity's rebellion against



Life-size replica of the tabernacle. Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com



Artist's representation of the New Jerusalem on a fourteenth-century tapestry. As the final chapters of Revelation anticipate, God will bring to perfect completion his purpose in creating this world, when the greenfield site of Eden is transformed into the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem, number 80 from 'The Apocalypse of Angers', 1373 – 87, Bataille, Nicolas/Musee des Tapisseries, Angers, France/Giraudon/Bridgeman Images

God and its tragic consequences for the earth, these chapters are not without a glimmer of hope. In his condemnation of the serpent, God pronounces a judgment that contains an important element of hope. God warns the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). The expectation that one of the woman's descendants will crush the serpent introduces a theme that runs throughout the book of Genesis and beyond. As we anticipate the woman's offspring, Gen 4 begins by focusing on how Eve's son Cain kills his brother Abel. The tragedy of this event is underscored by Cain's descendants appearing to follow in their father's footsteps. By the seventh generation, Lamech boasts of killing a man for striking him (Gen 4:23). Then, remarkably, the narrative jumps back in time to note that Adam and Eve had another son. Seth (Gen 4:25). Seth, Abel's replacement, keeps

alive the hope that the serpent may yet be overcome.

A genealogy in Gen 5 highlights Seth's importance and ends with the birth of Noah, "a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time" who "walked faithfully with God" (Gen 6:9). From Noah, another genealogy in Gen 11 leads on to Abram. Against the background of humanity's estrangement from God, the Lord indicates that through Abram "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). The extent of the narrative devoted to Abram/Abraham underlines his importance in God's redemptive purposes (Gen 11:27-25:11). He is to be "the father of many nations" (Gen 17:4), but not only in a biological sense. Abraham's offspring will be those who exercise faith in God as Abraham does. Furthermore, God promises that his blessing will come to "all nations on earth" through one of Abraham's descendants (Gen 22:18). This expectation builds upon God's

earlier promise regarding the offspring of the woman in Gen 3:15 and traces beyond Abraham to his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. God blesses them all, and they in turn mediate God's blessing to others. After Jacob, Joseph is the one who carries the mantle of blessing since his father appointed him firstborn over his older brothers (1 Chr 5:1-2). Although Genesis traces the line of "firstborn" sons from Abraham to Ephraim (Gen 48:17-20), Gen 38 unexpectedly focuses on the line of Judah, particularly his son Perez, who at birth breaks out in front of his "firstborn" twin brother. Zerah. Later, when Jacob blesses his 12 sons, he links future royalty to the tribe of Judah. God rejects the tribe of Ephraim as the royal tribe in the time of Samuel, and the tribe of Judah replaces it with David, son of Jesse, anointed king (Ps 78:67-72). Eventually, David's royal line leads to Jesus Christ, through whom God fulfills his promises to Abraham (Acts 3:22-26; Gal 3:16).

A Paradigm of Salvation

Whereas Genesis is especially interested in tracing the woman's offspring, the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy build on the expectation that Abraham's descendants will take possession of the land of Canaan, where God will reside among them. With this end in view, Exodus describes how God redeems the people of Israel from oppression in Egypt, ransoming from death their firstborn males. The account of the Passover provides a paradigm for divine salvation as God sanctifies the Israelites in order that they may become a royal priesthood and a holy nation. God subsequently ratifies a covenant with them before coming to reside in a newly constructed tabernacle in the middle of the Israelite camp (see "Temple," p. 2652). Not only does this series of events partially reverse the estrangement caused by Adam and Eve's rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden, but more important, it prefigures a much greater exodus that will come through Jesus Christ (see "Exile and Exodus," p. 2659).

A Holy Nation

In the light of God's presence among the Israelites, Leviticus emphasizes how the Israelites must reflect God's holy nature. In various ways, they are taught to associate holiness with wholeness and life, whereas uncleanness is associated with imperfection and death. Leviticus underlines that holiness requires moral perfection, not merely the performance of cultic rituals (see "Holiness," p. 2676).

The death of the exodus generation in the wilderness serves as a serious warning of the importance of continually trusting and obeying God. As the apostle Paul observes, "These things ... were written down as warnings for us" (1 Cor 10:11). Building on how God has punished the Israelites, in the book of Deuteronomy Moses emphasizes how the Israelites must demonstrate exclusive loyalty to God in order to enjoy the benefits of being God's chosen people. Having been rescued from slavery by God and after freely committing themselves to obey him fully and exclusively, God will judge the Israelites accordingly. Unfortunately, the remaining books of the OT witness in large measure to the failure of the Israelites, but they also look forward in anticipation to a time when God will institute a new covenant to replace the one ratified at Mount Sinai (see "Covenant," p. 2646).

From a biblical theology perspective, the Pentateuch is an essential component of Scripture. Not only does it explain the cause of the human predicament, but more important it points forward in hope to how God will address this issue through Jesus Christ. Ultimately, as the final chapters of Revelation anticipate, God will bring to perfect completion his purpose in creating this world, when the greenfield site of Eden is transformed into the new Jerusalem (see "Consummation," p. 2695).



INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

NAME AND PURPOSE

The title, Genesis, means "beginning." It is the title of the book in the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT). This aptly describes a book that outlines the creation of the world and humanity (chs. 1-2) and goes on to describe the beginning of sin (ch. 3), the new creation (ch. 9), God's plan for blessing the world (12:1-3), and how that plan begins with the family of Abraham (chs. 12-50). The Jewish title of the book, $Bere \delta t$, is taken from the first word in the Hebrew text: "In the beginning." It also emphasizes that the book is concerned with origins.

Genesis is the first of the five books of the Pentateuch (see Introduction to the Pentateuch, p. 9). Unlike the other books of the Torah, Genesis contains almost all narrative and few legal commands. Its purpose is to trace the beginnings of the world, humanity, and sin and to draw a line across human history that identifies God's work with Abraham and his family. Thus, the book provides the necessary background for the divinely chosen origins of God's people Israel and for their situation in Egypt at the beginning of Exodus. It also introduces God as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer. It describes the fall into sin and looks forward to how God will resolve his separation from the people he loved and created.

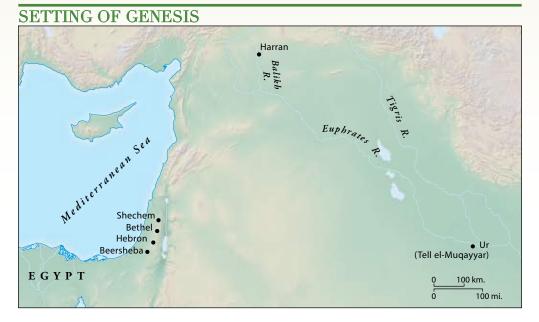
BACKGROUND AND AUTHOR

Exod 17:14 and Deut 31:9,24 attest to the composition of much of the first five books by Moses. Moses' composition of Genesis was assumed until the advent of critical studies of the Bible that questioned its validity. Since then, scholars have argued for dividing Genesis into separate parts and dating them to different times. Multiple authors would then have written the book, some of them centuries after the time of Moses. However, it is now clear that many of the events of Genesis, when compared to examples of ancient Near Eastern texts, date to the period before Moses, ca. 2200 - 1500 BC, and not later.

1. The creation account of Genesis has been compared with the Babylonian *Enuma Elisb*, a story about how the god Marduk defeats a monster and creates the other gods from her body. Archaeologists discovered this story in the library of an Assyrian king from the seventh century BC. But a closer parallel to Gen 1-11, with stories of the creation of humankind followed by a flood, with a family and animals surviving on an ark, appears much earlier in the eighteenth-century BC *Atrabasis Epic*.

2. Many texts, including the *Atrabasis Epic*, mention a worldwide flood. Most famous is the *Gilgamesb Epic*. The earliest text we have dates from the eighteenth century BC. It was copied in many places and times in the ancient Near East. Like *Atrabasis*, *Gilgamesb* has parallels with the details of Gen 6-9. A god decides to preserve a family, people construct a ship and bring animals into an ark and close the door, and the flood destroys everything outside the ark. These similarities should not blind us to the teaching of Gen 6-9 that God used the flood to judge the world and save righteous Noah and all on the ark in order to make a covenant with them upon disembarking (8:20—9:17).

3. Personal names can also attest to an early date for Genesis. Some of the names in chs. 1-11 occur only in the



earlier period of the ancient Near East. Methushael, Methuselah, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain appear only in the earlier second millennium BC, not later. In chs. 12-50 other names with forms such as Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, and Joseph appear frequently in the early second millennium BC, but much less in the later second millennium BC and hardly at all in the first millennium BC. How would the author(s) of Genesis have known how to use these names that are authentic to the early period and not the later?

4. Gen 14 describes a war involving international armies from across the ancient Near East. Many of the names of the invaders in 14:1,9 occur only in the second millennium BC: Amraphel the Babylonian, Arioch the Hurrian (from northern Syria), and Tidal the Hittite (from modern Turkey). They do not appear later in the ancient Near Eastern texts. Only in this period (2000 - 1500 BC) was it possible for armies to move across the entire Holy Land with relative freedom as they do here. Only in this early period (the time of Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) do the Elamites appear in texts as far west as they do in Gen 14.

5. Customs from the early second millennium BC recur later, but their concentration in Genesis is unique. Examples include the stipulation that a surrogate mother could be used in cases where the wife remains barren for a period of seven years (16:1-4) and the betrothal gift that allows the bridegroom to marry (34:12).

6. The city of Harran (11:31-32; 12:4; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4) appears in the accounts of Abram and his descendants. Ancient Near Eastern texts attest to the site as a well-populated city during the early second millennium BC, occupied by large tribal coalitions of Amorites.

7. In 37:12-17, Joseph's brothers graze the family's flocks some 60 miles (96.5 kilometers) north of their home in Hebron. Only in the early second millennium BC do we have records of similar shepherds (Amorites in north Syria) grazing their flocks and herds more than a hundred miles (160 kilometers) from their homes, where their families remained. In the biblical account of later shepherds such as David, there is no mention of grazing in such distant pastures.

8. Benjamin is the only son of Jacob named after the family migrates south to the area of Bethlehem (35:16-19). This name is identical to the eighteenth-century BC southern tribal confederation in Syria known as the Binu-Yamina. The name refers to the south. Along with Asher and Zebulon, these proper names were known in the second millennium BC.

9. Joseph's brothers sell him for 20 silver shekels (37:28). This price for a young male slave pertains only to the early second millennium BC.

These points provide evidence for the origin of the Genesis accounts early in the second millennium BC. How were they passed along to the time of Moses and later? We are not told. Perhaps this occurred through oral tradition among the decendants of Abraham. Alternatively, the discovery of a cuneiform tablet written in the early or middle

second millennium BC and preserved in Hebron, where Abraham lived (13:18; 23:2), gives evidence of authorship in Abraham's day and in one of his places of residence.

The evidence allows for the origins of the accounts preserved in much of Genesis to be dated to the early second millennium BC. It counters critical scholarship that attempts to date the Genesis narratives a thousand years later to the middle of the first millennium BC. Some scholars argue that the composition of Genesis became a means to tell stories about where some customs and names originated, e.g. why do Jews in the fifth century BC not eat the meat around the hip of an animal? Because their ancestor Jacob wrestled with someone who touched the socket of his hip and caused him to limp (32:25-32). This approach is sometimes called tradition history: although the event is recorded in the Bible, some critical scholars maintain that the account is a fabrication of a later author.

Another critical approach is to divide the biblical text into layers that form sources written at different times in Israel's history. This is sometimes called source criticism or the Documentary Hypothesis. The sources reflect different concerns. Thus, 1:1 - 2:3 emphasizes the Sabbath (2:1-3), and priests wrote it in the fifth century BC because they were interested in enforcing laws such as the Sabbath. At another time, an individual who was interested in tracing God's plan through history wrote 2:4-25 to emphasize that God was involved in the lives of people. This person created a history that extends beyond the Pentateuch and ultimately demonstrates how God chose David as king.

But note that in this example from the Documentary Hypothesis, Gen 1-2 do not need to be understood as coming from two separate writers. Instead, they represent two different emphases:

- 1:1—2:3 describes God as the creator of the cosmos. Its themes focus on God's sovereignty as Lord over all: the importance of Sabbath rest, humanity's rulership over creation, and the creation of abundant life.
- 2:4-25 emphasizes different themes: the creation of man, his home, his partner, and his work. At the beginning of all, God is both the transcendent Creator who is sovereign over all and the imminent Lord providing a world in full harmony with himself and the people he has created.

Thus, significant evidence exists for the antiquity of the book. Attestations of a single author from Israel's earliest period are not explicit but can be inferred as providing the necessary background for the opening chapters of Exodus. Joseph dies in Gen 50 with his extended family blessed and living in Egypt. Exod 1:1-7 repeats this information and goes on to introduce Israel's oppressed condition and the birth of its deliverer, Moses.

STRUCTURE

The book can be naturally divided into two parts: the world before Abram (chs. 1-11) and the world of Abraham and his descendants (chs. 12-50). Genealogies divide the book into subsections, each beginning with "the account of": "the heavens and the earth" (2:4); "Adam's family line" (5:1); "Noah and his family" (6:9); "Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons" (10:1); "Shem's family line" (11:10); "Terah's family line" (11:27); "the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael" (25:12); "the family line of Abraham's son Isaac" (25:19); "the family line of Esau" (36:1,9); and "Jacob's family line" (37:2). The genealogies tend to form groups of two: Noah's three sons and the line of Shem (chs. 10-11); Ishmael and Isaac (ch. 25); Esau and Jacob (ch. 36; 37:2, where Jacob's line is mentioned). In each of these cases, the first of the two is identified and described principally by the names of the descendants. The second line of the doublet (Shem, Isaac, and Jacob) goes on to deal with a single line of descendants with much greater development of the narratives surrounding the key figures through whom God will work specific promises. This is also true of the two major divisions of the entire book: chs. 1-11 and chs. 12-50. The first part deals with the world as a whole. It ends with humanity's failure in the tower of Babel and with the decision of God to work with a single descendant in Shem's line and with his offspring. The story of the second part of the book of Genesis thus emerges out of ch. 11.

These two major divisions depict the following theological themes:

1. God chooses again and again to focus his attention on a single individual or family and to work through them to accomplish his purpose. He is revealed as a personal God who relates to his people in a manner that suggests intimacy.

2. The same God remains sovereign in each generation and for all the families of the earth. This is clear from ch. 10, which identifies all people of the known world by tracing their origins to Noah and his sons. Therefore, all bear God's image (9:6).

3. The God who speaks the world into being in ch. 1 is the same God who saves Noah in chs. 6-9. He is the same God who calls Abram from his land and gives him promises of blessing (12:1-3). He is the same God who provides Isaac and sustains Abram/Abraham's line through Jacob/Israel and his 12 sons in Egypt. This God remains alive and active in each generation from the beginning of creation until the present one.

GENESIS AND SCIENCE

The contemporary reader of Genesis should strive to read the text as it was originally intended to be read by the ancient reader — not to presume that one can carry into this ancient writing all the assumptions and questions that we might have today. This requires care and knowledge of the purpose for which Moses wrote the text. We should exercise care to read the Bible in a manner that remains sensitive to the literary clues and nuances that the writer intended. This approach is possible but requires study and the guidance of the Spirit of God.

The question of the age of the earth is not automatically resolved with the use of the seven days in 1:1 - 2:3. In 2:4, Moses uses the same Hebrew word for "day" to summarize all the work of creation: "In the day when God created the heavens and the earth." Of course, this does not mean that the term "day" cannot refer to a 24-hour day in the seven days of creation. But it may also serve other purposes. For one, the use of days builds up to the final climactic seventh day of Sabbath rest. This forms one of the major theological emphases of the creation account. The Sabbath rest is built into creation and forms the goal of world history from its beginning. Another reason for the seven days may be connected with "the account of" in 2:4. While this term often precedes the genealogical lines, it can also fall in the midst of longer accounts of individuals and their families. This is true in the case of the last mention of this in Genesis, in the account of Jacob's family line (37:2). Much of the story has already been told. The same may be true of 2:4. How do the heaven and earth have a "family line"? There are no parents or children, only the beginning of the human race. Using a metaphor in which the sun and moon bring forth the earth would only confuse the reader in a strictly monotheistic world where these created things have no personhood and should not be worshiped. Instead, the author may have used the sequence of days to parallel the sequences of generations in the later family lines. Each day prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as each generation prepares for and gives way to the next day just as e

A second area concerns the expression "according to its/their kind(s)." This describes the plants (1:11-12), the fish of the sea (1:21), the land creatures (1:24-25), and all these as well as the birds (7:14). It is sometimes taken to mean that the text must describe exact reproduction and cannot allow for the gradual development of various forms of species. However, in Ezek 47:10 this same phrase refers to fish "of many kinds." If that is the case in Genesis, then it does not emphasize limitation of each life form to it specific species but emphasizes the diversity of each general life form: fish of many kinds, land creatures of many kinds, etc.

The role of Adam and Eve as the first human couple appears in chs. 2-4. While some may argue that these figures represent a symbolic or metaphoric story that has no relation to the early history of humanity, they must address the explicit presentation of the Hebrew text. The syntax of the text resembles that of later books such as 2 Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah. All readers understand that the authors of these books intended readers to accept them as history. The same should be true of a text such as ch. 3. Indeed, this becomes the witness of the memories of Genesis in the later biblical text (see Introduction: Genesis and History; Genesis and the New Testament).

GENESIS AND HISTORY

Modern journalism requires the testimony of independent sources to demonstrate the historical reliability of a report. We are not often blessed with multiple witnesses for Genesis. Nevertheless, evidence shows that the figures and events of chs. 12-50 fit into the world of the early second millennium BC and not a later time (see Introduction: Background and Author). If Gen 12-50 witnesses an authentic and ancient heritage in places where they can be tested, what can one say about the world of Genesis before Abram? As noted, some of the names in these genealogies are attested in the earliest sources for names of the West Semitic peoples, of whom Abram and his family formed a part.

Further, the occurrence of a divinely sent flood with universal impact on the human race is also preserved in some of the earliest texts recounting the primeval times (such as the eighteenth-century BC Old Babylonian *Atrabasis Epic*). At times the detailed agreement of these accounts (see also the story in the Old Babylonian version of and in later versions of *Gilgamesb*) suggests more than an independent witness to an ancient event. It may imply borrowing from a common source.

When we examine the account of the Sumerian King List from ca. 2000 BC, we find two important features that Gen 1-11 also shares: (1) A flood ended the cities named from earlier times (cf. 4:17), but survivors rebuilt cities after the flood. (2) The kings who ruled before the flood reigned for unusually long periods of time, often more than 10,000 years. This may preserve a memory of the actual event recorded in Gen 5, where those in Seth's line each lived for hundreds of years.

Examples such as these demonstrate the historical value of the early chapters of Genesis. They witness God's ongo-

ing presence and work among the people of the world, especially with the line of promise as traced through Seth and Shem. But this does not mean it is possible to date the specific times when these events took place. As is true of all human history, the Bible selects those events and peoples that serve its purposes in recounting the advance of God's kingdom and his work on earth. It reports these accurately but does not provide a complete record. Thus, when 10:24 asserts that "Arphaxad was the father of Shelah," this may mean that he was the grandfather or ancestor of Shelah. (Luke 3:35 – 36 inserts the name of Cainan between these two men in its genealogy.)

GENESIS AND THEOLOGY

God

While the key themes of creation, sin, judgment, and salvation permeate the book of Genesis, the first three chapters express this in the most concentrated way in Scripture. God asserts his lordship over the world by speaking it into existence and then pronouncing each day's work as "good." It is good in that it perfectly agrees with God's will. "Very good" (1:31) signals the end of the creation work and God's blessing upon it by setting apart the next and final day for rest (2:1-3). The end of ch. 2 shows God's design in terms of the harmony of relationships among God, his creation, and Adam and Eve. When sin (which God's holiness cannot tolerate) enters the human race, God punishes the couple with expulsion from his presence and from the garden (3:23-24). But he also provides a way to continue his relationship with them, and he promises that a time would come when he would deal the serpent a mortal blow (3:15). When violence on the earth increases, God sends the judgment of the flood (chs. 6-9). Although the human race seeks to advance without God, he disperses them across the earth (11:1-9).

Faith

God calls one man, Abram, to come away from his home and move to a land that God will show him. In doing so, God promises land, seed, and blessing for Abram and his offspring (12:1-3; 13:14-17). They will become instruments of blessing for everyone. As Abraham exercises faith, God is able to work through him and to magnify the promises and blessings. God not only promises offspring to Abraham (ch. 15), but he brings it about when Abraham and Sarah are far beyond the age to have children (21:1-5). Yet Abraham does not hold back when God demands that he sacrifice his son Isaac (ch. 22). With his knife raised, he was ready to kill his son, but the angel of the Lord intervenes, for now Abraham has demonstrated that he will trust God even with his most precious possession. For this reason God extends the promise beyond the land to occupation of the cities in the land (22:17). Abraham has trusted God and knows him to be just (18:25).

Grace

Isaac also receives the promise from God (26:3,24). God exercises his sovereignty in granting to Isaac's son Jacob the birthright, even though this overturns custom. Esau is the firstborn but God favors Jacob (25:21-34; 27:1-30). He chooses to bless Jacob with the promises given to his father and grandfather (28:13-15). Jacob's time with his uncle Laban involves one trick after another in which Laban seeks to get the better of Jacob and to profit by him (chs. 29-30). Nevertheless, God blesses Jacob at every step so that Jacob gains much wealth and a large family. God protects him from the anger of both his uncle Laban and his brother Esau. He confirms Jacob's blessing by changing Jacob's name to Israel (32:28). In his later life, however, Jacob would see his own sons trick him (ch. 37) as they sell their brother Joseph into slavery and return home to tell their father that a wild animal killed him.

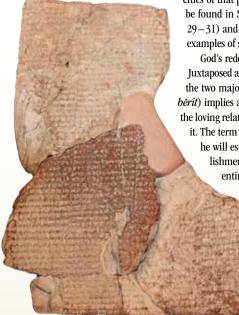
While God has worked with Abraham and Isaac through direct visits and has spoken with Jacob in dreams, he chooses to work behind the scenes with Joseph. Although God gives Joseph (a younger son of Jacob) the ability to interpret dreams, Joseph does not enjoy direct appearances from God. Whether resisting the temptation of Potiphar's wife or languishing in prison, Joseph serves responsibly, and God rewards him for it. Eventually, through his skill in interpreting dreams, Joseph is able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, who raises Joseph to second in command over Egypt (ch. 41). As Joseph gathers grain during the years of plenty, he is able to sell it in the famine years. He later reveals himself to his brothers and delivers his family from famine in Canaan, but that is only part of his work. God enables Joseph to provide grain for all of Canaan and Egypt (47:13-26), thereby preserving alive both the Egyptians who would later enslave Israel and the Canaanites who would lead Israel away from God. Joseph recognizes all of this. While his brothers meant to harm him, God worked it out for the good of Joseph and for the saving of many lives (50:19-20). God took his promise to Abraham to bless the nations of the world through him (12:2-3) and embodies it in Joseph as much as any of his predecessors.

Humanity

Three theological themes play important roles in the lives of major characters in Genesis: the image of God, the spread of sin, and the covenant. These three themes relate to the doctrine of humanity.

God creates humans in his image in 1:26-28. Although he commands them to reproduce like the plants and animals, he reserves a unique role for the human race. God appoints them, as those created in his image, to be leaders and rulers of his finished creation: God places the man in the Garden of Eden to take care to it, i.e., to maximize its life-giving potential (2:15). God reaffirms this image after the initial sin of Adam and Eve and the judgment of the flood (5:1; 9:6), and it becomes the basis for the prohibition of violence against and murder of others (9:6). As human society grows, God calls out Abram and his successors so that they reflect this image throughout the world and thereby bless the nations around them: Abram/Abraham gives Melchizedek, the king of Salem, a tenth of all he had with him (14:20). Later, Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20-33). Jacob enriches Laban while working for him (30:27,30; 31:38-41). God uses Joseph to bless Potiphar and the prison warden through his administrative skills (39:2-5,22-23). God provides Joseph with the opportunity to collect grain during years of bountiful harvests and to sell it during a famine (41:48-49,56-57). Joseph's provision for the starving multitudes leads to the salvation of his own family, of Egypt, and of Canaan (47:13-27). Joseph confesses that God accomplished the salvation of many lives (50:20). In this manner, the blessing of God was reflected through the lives of those who bore God's image faithfully.

In opposition to the work of God in the world, the spread of sin becomes a major theme in Genesis. Human sin begins in the Garden of Eden when the man and woman follow their own desires rather than the will of God (3:1-7). It grows as Cain murders his brother (4:1-8) and his descendant Lamech kills out of vengeance (4:23-24). Finally, there comes a time when evil controls every thought of every person, with the exception of Noah (6:5,8). Violence has corrupted the earth (6:11). The flood wipes out that sinful generation, but it does not end the rebellion in the hearts of people. Righteous Noah became drunk, and his son saw his nakedness (9:20-22). The builders of the tower of Babel thought only of themselves and their glory (11:1-8). Even Abram lies about Sarai his wife, bringing about diseases in Pharaoh's household (12:10-20); cf. Abraham and Abimelek in ch. 20 and Isaac and Abimelek in 26:7-11). Abram's nephew Lot chooses the well-watered but wicked land around Sodom (13:10-13) and, like Noah, became drunk and was seduced by his own daughters (19:30-38). God judges the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other



The Atrahasis Epic, ca. seventeenth century BC, contains stories of creation and the flood in a sequence similar to that of Genesis. © 2013 by Zondervan

cities of that plain. He destroys them with fire when not even ten righteous can be found in Sodom (18:20 - 19:29). The deception of Jacob and Laban (chs. 29-31) and the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers (37:12-28) provide further examples of sin.

God's redeeming love and grace are always at work in the midst of this sin. Juxtaposed against some of the greatest descriptions of sin and judgment appear the two major covenants that Genesis describes. The term "covenant" (Hebrew *bĕrît*) implies a relationship with God. Through a covenant God seeks to recreate the loving relationship that he had with Adam and Eve before human sin destroyed it. The term for "covenant" first occurs in 6:18, where God promises Noah that he will establish a covenant that will benefit all life. God confirms its establishment in 9:9,11. The promise is that God will never again destroy the entire world with a flood. In 12:1-3, God begins to create a covenant with Abram (see Introduction: Genesis and Theology [Faith]).

Abram believes God when God says that Abram will father a great nation (15:6). God makes the most solemn promise possible (15:1-21). He instructs Abram to divide the carcasses of various animals. At that point, Abram falls into a deep sleep, and in a dream God symbolically passes between the carcasses. In doing so, God swears by his own life that if his promises do not come true, he will be killed just like the animals were. The sign of the first covenant with Noah was the rainbow (9:13). The sign of the covenant God makes with Abraham is circumcision (17:11). This sign is related to the great increase in numbers that God promises he will give to Abraham and to his descendants (17:1-8).

GENESIS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Genesis lays the foundation for salvation history. It is no surprise, therefore, that the text has numerous connections with the NT. Four stand out. First, Paul repeatedly describes the sin and judgments of Gen 3 and applies them to the redeeming work of Christ. This is clearest in Rom 5:12-21: the sin and death that one man's (Adam's) transgression brought contrasts with the justification, righteousness, and life that one man (Jesus Christ) brings through his sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Jesus is a second Adam, succeeding where the first Adam failed.

Second, Gen 14:18 – 20 is a brief account about Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem who blesses Abram by God Most High and receives from Abram a tithe of what Abram had captured. This account forms the background for designating the Messianic king of Ps 110 as one who is also a priest "in the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). The NT book of Hebrews mentions Melchizedek nine times to connect Jesus' priestly ministry with the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17). Because Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek, so did all his descendants. This included Aaron and the priestly line of the tribe of Levi. Thus, this line of priests honored Melchizedek as superior. Jesus, the Messianic king, is in this priesthood (Ps 110), and therefore his priesthood surpasses that of Aaron and his line.

A third focus for the appearance of Genesis in the NT is the book of Revelation. The first book in the Bible describes how the serpent deceives the woman, and how her offspring consequently struggles with the serpent (Gen 3:1-15), and the last book describes how the serpent seeks to destroy the woman and her child (Rev 12:1-17). The serpent is ultimately defeated and is explicitly identified as Satan in the NT (Rev 20:2). The first Eden had an abundance of water and a tree of life that gave life to those who ate its fruit (Gen 2:10-14; 3:22). The new Eden of the restored world, the new Jerusalem, will have the river of the water of life with the tree of life growing on both sides of the river. The leaves of the tree will heal the nations (Rev 22:1-3). The curse of the ground (Gen 3:17) will no longer be present (Rev 22:3). Instead, the bounty of the Garden of Eden will return.

A final focus of Genesis in the NT appears in John 1:1-4, which consciously imitates the opening verses of Genesis. Theses verses refer to the Word, or Christ, who was present at the beginning and involved in the creation of the world. This parallels Gen 1:1 and identifies Jesus Christ with God and the Creator of the world. The light was present in Christ (John 1:4-5), parallel to the creation of light in Gen 1:3. Finally, the Gospel of John emphasizes life (see notes on John 1:1-18; 1:4), modeling one of the great themes of Gen 1, God's creation of abundant life and his blessing of that life.

OUTLINE

I. The Primeval History (1:1-11:26) A. In the Beginning (1:1-2:3)B. Adam and Eve (2:4-25)C. The Fall (3:1-24)D. Cain and Abel (4:1-26)E. From Adam to Noah (5:1-32)F. Wickedness in the World (6:1-8)G. Noah and the Flood (6:9 - 8:22)H. God's Covenant With Noah (9:1-17)I. The Sons of Noah (9:18-29) J. The Table of Nations (10:1-32)K. The Tower of Babel (11:1-9)L. From Shem to Abram (11:10-26)II. The Family of Abraham (11:27-25:18) A. Abram's Family (11:27-32)B. The Call of Abram (12:1-9)C. Abram in Egypt (12:10-20)D. Abram and Lot Separate (13:1-18)E. Abram Rescues Lot (14:1-24)F. The Lord's Covenant With Abram (15:1-21)G. Hagar and Ishmael (16:1-16)H. The Covenant of Circumcision (17:1-27)I. The Three Visitors (18:1-15)

J. Abraham Pleads for Sodom (18:16-33)K. Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed (19:1-29)L. Lot and His Daughters (19:30 - 38)M.Abraham and Abimelek (20:1-18)N. The Birth of Isaac (21:1-7)O. Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away (21:8-21) P. The Treaty at Beersheba (21:22-34)O. Abraham Tested (22:1-19)R. Nahor's Sons (22:20-24) S. The Death of Sarah (23:1-20)T. Isaac and Rebekah (24:1-67)U. The Death of Abraham (25:1-11)V. Ishmael's Sons (25:12-18) III. The Family of Isaac (25:19-36:43) A. Jacob and Esau (25:19-34)B. Isaac and Abimelek (26:1-33)C. Jacob Takes Esau's Blessing (26:34 – 28:9) D. Jacob's Dream at Bethel (28:10-22)E. Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram (29:1-14)F. Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel (29:15-30) G. Jacob's Children (29:31 — 30:24) H. Jacob's Flocks Increase (30:25-43) I. Jacob Flees From Laban (31:1-21)J. Laban Pursues Jacob (31:22-55) K. Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau (32:1-21) L. Jacob Wrestles With God (32:22-32)M.Jacob Meets Esau (33:1-20)N. Dinah and the Shechemites (34:1-31)0. Jacob Returns to Bethel (35:1-15)P. The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac (35:16-29)Q. Esau's Descendants (36:1-30)R. The Rulers of Edom (36:31-43)IV. The Family of Jacob (37:1 — 50:26) A. Joseph's Dreams (37:1-11)B. Joseph Sold by His Brothers (37:12-36)C. Judah and Tamar (38:1-30)D. Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (39:1-23)E. The Cupbearer and the Baker (40:1-23)F. Pharaoh's Dreams (41:1-40)G. Joseph in Charge of Egypt (41:41-57)H. Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt (42:1-38)I. The Second Journey to Egypt (43:1-34)J. A Silver Cup in a Sack (44:1-34)K. Joseph Makes Himself Known (45:1-28)L. Jacob Goes to Egypt (46:1-47:12) M.Joseph and the Famine (47:13-31)N. Manasseh and Ephraim (48:1-22)O. Jacob Blesses His Sons (49:1-28)P. The Death of Jacob (49:29 - 50:14) Q. Joseph Reassures His Brothers (50:15-21)R. The Death of Joseph (50:22-26)



GENESIS

The Beginning

In the beginning^a God created the heavens and the earth.^{b 2}Now the earth was formless and empty,^c darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God^d was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, ^e "Let there be light," and there was light.^f ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

1:1-11:26 The Primeval History. The Bible begins by telling the story of how the world began, how humanity fell into sin, and how God began to address that sin. This story describes God's creation of the world and all of life, the harmony that was in the world, the sin that destroyed that perfect harmony between God and his creation, the spiral of sin and violence, the judgment and salvation in the flood, the covenant that resulted, the common heritage of all people, the tower of Babel, and the family line to Abram. The cycle begins: God creates, and humanity sins. As the violence of humanity increases, God punishes people with a flood and delivers Noah and his family. Humans continue to sin. Yet God does not give up but brings hope in the family line that leads to Abram. 1:1-2:25 The opening chapters of Genesis contain two complementary descriptions of creation: one panoramic, one close-up. The first creation account (1:1-2:3) describes God as the creator of the universe and of all life in it. The second account (2:4-25) focuses on God's creation of the man and woman and their home. While it is possible that the account in ch. 2 continues the story of ch. 1, it may be that these are two creation accounts from different perspectives. Compare, e.g., the fact that each of the four Gospels has its own particular emphasis. Setting Gen 1 and Gen 2 side by side, we see God at once as sovereign Creator and as personally involved with the first people. The more general creation of the world is followed by the more specific focus on the first man and woman. The term "account" in 2:4a suggests that the creation accounts are related to the "accounts" of the lines of Cain and Seth (chs. 4-5) and of Noah's sons (chs. 10-11). In each case the accounts appear as a pair, where the second account tends to zoom in on a specific line and move the story forward.

1:1—2:3 In the Beginning. The biblical account of creation presents the one God as Creator of all. It emphasizes how God creates life, establishes rest, and forms humanity in his image. The scientific information as to how this came about is not in the text.

1:1 In the beginning. This single Hebrew word (*berēšīt*) denotes the start of a sequence of events (cf. Isa 46:10). God. Hebrew '*ēlāhīm*, used of Israel's deity and of other gods. It describes divinity, power, and the object of worship; it is the only word for God in ch. 1, which emphasizes God's power as creator of the universe. **created**. God is the subject of this verb every time it appears in the Bible (e.g., 1:21,27; 2:3 – 4).

 $\begin{array}{l} \textbf{1:1} {}^{a}\text{Jn} 1:1-2 {}^{b}\text{Job} 38:4;\\ \textbf{Ps} 90:2; \text{ Isa} 42:5; 44:24;\\ 45:12, 18; \text{Ac} 17:24;\\ \textbf{Heb} 11:3; \text{ Rev} 4:11\\ \textbf{1:2} {}^{c}\text{Jer} 4:23 {}^{a}\text{Ps} 104:30\\ \textbf{1:3} {}^{e}\text{Ps} 33:6, 9; 148:5;\\ \textbf{Heb} 11:3 {}^{f}\text{2Co} 4:6*\\ \textbf{1:5} {}^{e}\text{Ps} 74:16\\ \end{array}$

This is something that only God does. Although creation out of nothing is implicit in Gen 1, for more complete statements see Isa 45:7-18; Rom 11:36; Col 1:16–17. **the heavens and the earth**. Describes all creation by identifying the extremes, i.e., from the heavens above to the earth below, and everything between them. God creates the heavens and the earth, and he will create the new heavens and the new earth. Isaiah repeatedly stresses that the heavens and earth are created by God (Isa 40:12,22; 42:5; 45:12,18; 51:13,16), who will also form the new heavens and the new earth that will never pass away (Isa 65:17; 66:22). For some, Gen 1:1 summarizes the account that follows; therefore, v. 2 is not subsequent to the events of v. 1 but is the first point in the unfolding of the creation. Others understand it as the creation of an unformed and empty heavens and earth that God forms and fills in the remaining verses of ch. 1.

1:2 the earth. The focus of God's creation in ch. 1. formless and empty. This phrase occurs elsewhere only in Jer 4:23, where it identifies the judgment of God so that the land is unproductive, out of order, and incapable of fulfilling its purpose of producing life-sustaining food. Gen 1 is less concerned with the production of things and more concerned with the creation of life. This expression describes the world before the creation of life, before there was even a background or context in which life could flourish. In days 1-3, God creates the structure of that background, while in days 4-6, he fills this world with living creatures. darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Further portravs this time before creation in a pictorial manner. darkness. Anticipates the coming light, deep. This is a common noun in Hebrew that describes the deep waters. Elsewhere, it parallels the waters or seas (Job 38:16). These waters portray the potential of one of the mightiest destructive powers that the ancient world knew (Gen 7:11; 8:2). Spirit of God was hovering over. The Spirit hovers over all potential threats as God prepares to create life. Spirit. Identical to the word for "wind" in both the OT and NT. God's Spirit appears at this first act of creation and is found again at the beginning of the great creative and redemptive acts of God through history: the turning of the destructive flood waters ("wind," 8:1), at the "birth" of Israel in crossing the Red Sea (Exod 14:21; 15:8,10), the coming of the day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-29), the conception of Jesus

1:6 "Jer 10:12 1:7 'Job 38:8-11, 16; Ps 148:4 1:9 'Job 38:8-11; Ps 104:6-9; Pr 8:29; Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5 1:11 "Ps 65:9-13; 1:04:14 1:14 'PS 74:16 "Jer 10:2 "Ps 104:19 1:16 °Ps 136:8 PS 136:9 °D 38:7, 31-32; P8 8:3; Isa 40:26 ⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault^h between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it.ⁱ And it was so. ⁸God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,^j and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation:^k seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights¹ in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs^m to mark sacred times,ⁿ and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights — the greater light to govern^o the day and the lesser light to govern^p the night. He also made the stars.^q

(Matt 1:18,20; Luke 1:35), the act of coming to God the Father (John 3:5,8), and the advent of the church at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4,16-21). Although the term "Holy Spirit" occurs only a few times in the OT (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10-11), his creative and redemptive activity associate the Spirit of God with the NT Holy Spirit.

1:3 God said. All of creation and each part of it begins with the Word of God as in John 1:1–4, which also connects creation with light (both spiritual and physical). John's identification of the Word of God with Jesus Christ (John 1:14) draws out a doctrine that is not explicit in this text. Let there be light. Although God does not explicitly create light by using the terms "created," "formed," and "made" (as in the remainder of the six days), see Isa 45:7 for God creating light. and there was light. This response repeats the words of the command. Here, and throughout ch. 1 where the phrase, "there was" recurs, creation completely obeys God's command.

1:4 God saw. This describes the notice God takes of his own acts, as well of those of others (1:10,12,18,21,25,31; 6:2,12; Jonah 3:10). The quality of the light being "good" implies more than an aesthetic or moral judgment. The creation is good (1:10,12,18,21,25) because its creator is good (Pss 34:8; 100:5; Jer 33:11; Nah 1:7; 1 Pet 2:3). It follows God's plan exactly. **he separated the light from the darkness**. This characterizes the first three days of creation. Separating involves both distinguishing and purifying. God distinguishes between different items (here light and darkness) and thereby gives them an identity and integrity of their own. With light and darkness, the created order has daytime and nighttime.

1:5 called. This action repeatedly occurs in the accounts of creation (1:8,10; 2:19-20,23). "day." Here, as elsewhere, the name given identifies the purpose of the object (or person) so named even as the Creator God establishes its purpose by his authority. With light and darkness, this means that the day and night do not occur simultaneously, but in a sequence. Further, day does not intrude into night and vice versa. In this way time begins on the first day with "evening" (followed by night) and "morning" (followed by day). Time is logically the first element or dimension necessary for creating the world and for life to exist in it. The sun and moon are created on day four. first day. Or "day one." The term can be used interchangeably with "first" to denote the initial element in an assumed sequence, especially a sequence denoting days (e.g., Ezra 3:6; 10:16-17; Neh 8:2; Hag 1:1). The Hebrew word for "day" can refer to a 24-hour period or a larger period of time. For example, Gen 2:4 uses the same Hebrew word for "day" when it refers to the "account" of the heavens and the earth, that is, "on the day when they were created." Thus, seven days become one day. On the other hand, the Hebrew word "day" often refers to a 24-hour period (e.g., 7:11,13; 8:4-5,14).

1:6 vault. Has the root idea of a beaten metal plate; can also be trans-

lated "expanse" or "firmament." The Hebrew noun customarily carries the sense of the heavens or sky, where the sun, moon, and stars are found (vv. 14-17; Ps 19:1; Dan 12:3) and across which the birds fly (v. 20). The heavens also serve as the place where God lives (Ps 150:1) and as what lies above this world but beneath the divine throne (Ezek 1:22-26; 10:1). At the time Genesis was written, people thought the sky resembled a great dome or vault stretching from horizon to horizon. **1:7 separated.** The act of separation on the second day is between "the water under the vault" and "the water above it." While God will not recur until 7:11.

1:9-10 water under the sky ... dry ground ... "land" ... "seas." God creates the second (land) and third (seas) domains that will support life. gathered. The term emphasizes that the seas and dry ground are distinct. This recalls the destructive power of these waters to flood coastal towns and cities, and the limits that God has imposed. This boundary completes the three separate domains: sky, seas, and land. These are the three arenas in which movement and life take place.

1:11-13 These verses describe the last preparations for the coming of animal and human life. Producing the food that the living creatures will consume (vv. 29-30) forms the final element in the great landscape that the divine artist has created.

1:11 seed-bearing plants and trees ... fruit with seed in it. God enables plant life to reproduce. On the one hand, plants bear food not because people use the correct magic rituals to invoke gods of storm (e.g., Baal) and goddesses of fertility (e.g., Asherah). Rather, God creates food with its own power to reproduce within his world, so it does not run out. This envisions abundant food to provide for all the life that God creates (cf. the garden in chs. 2–3). **according to their various kinds.** This may refer either to each species, or "kind," of plant reproducing in accordance with its parent plant (e.g., beans do not produce corn) or to "many kinds" of plants and trees (e.g., "many kinds" in Ezek 47:10).

1:14–19 The creation of the sun, moon, and stars continues the theme of the first day (separating day from night), but here the purpose is "to mark sacred times, and days and years" (v. 14). The emphasis now shifts from providing the background domains in which created things can move to filling these domains. Thus, "fill" is not used for vegetation in vv. 11–13, but it appears in vv. 22,28 to describe the creation of animals and people. Beginning with the domain that is farthest away, God fills the sky with the sun, moon, and stars. A second purpose is to "give light on the earth" (v. 15).

1:16 two great lights. The sun and moon. The ancients worshiped the sun and moon as divine, so this creation account distinguishes the God of the Bible as the one who created and controls the sun and moon. ¹⁷God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night,^r and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.

- ²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it,⁸ according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."^{t 23}And there was evening, and there was morning the fifth day.
- ²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so.
 ²⁵God made the wild animals^u according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us^v make mankind in our image,^w in our likeness, so that they may rule^x over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^{*a*} and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,^y in the image of God he created them; male and female^z he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth^a and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

^a 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text the earth

1:17 set them in the vault of the sky to give light. A further manifestation of God's sovereignty. He controls where they are and what they do. God — not the sun and moon as gods — is responsible for the days, months, and years.

1:20-23 It is only on the fifth day, after God produces the necessary backgrounds, that living creatures appear. The fifth day corresponds to the sky and waters on the second day: God fills the sky with birds and the waters with fish.

1:20 teem. It points to a key element of this creation account: life is abundant and fills the world.

1:21 the great creatures of the sea. May refer to snakes (Exod 7:9-12) or sea monsters (Ps 74:13; Isa 27:1). **creatures.** Plural in Hebrew, but the rest of ch. 1 collectively uses the Hebrew singular to identify entire groups: plant and tree (v. 11); living creature and bird (v. 20); domestic animal, creature that moves along the ground, and wild animal (v. 24). Perhaps "creatures" refers not to a large group but to a few specific animals such as large and more feared sea creatures. God creates them and has complete power over them. **according to their kinds.** As in vv. 11–12 (see note on v. 11), this can describe all kinds of creatures.

1:22 Be fruitful and increase. God creates life and wants it to fill the earth.

1:24-25 God creates land animals on the sixth day, which corresponds to dry land appearing on the third day. The animals fit in three categories: "the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals" (v. 24). The first and third categories distinguish domestic and wild animals. The second group includes insects, reptiles, and other animals that remain close to the ground.

1:26-27 This last act of God's creative work is the climax.

1:26 us ... our ... our. "Us" portrays God deliberating in the midst of his court just as a king might have a court and discuss his plans among them (2 Kgs 22; Job 1 – 2; Ps 82; Isa 6). But "our" cannot be so easily explained in the context of the ancient world. No evidence exists for the creation of people in both the image of God and the image of his angels.

Only the image of God appears in v. 27. It seems more likely that "us" and "our" imply a greater complexity to God's nature as already suggested by the Spirit of God (v. 2; see note on 11:7). mankind. Hebrew ³ādām. This is used in ch. 1 for the human species just as every other creature (except "the great creatures of the sea" in v. 21; see note there) created in ch. 1 appears in the Hebrew singular and describes a class of animals (e.g., "bird" translated "birds," "wild animal" translated "wild animals"). In ch. 2, 'adam appears with a definite article ("the man") to describe the man placed in the garden. The personal name, Adam, has the same spelling. Ch. 1 does not focus on a single male (see the parallel "male and female" in 1:27) nor even on the first couple, but it focuses on the whole human race. image ... likeness. These are synonyms. Daniel 3:1 describes the statue of Nebuchadnezzar with the same Hebrew term for image; the statue represents the authority and power of the king and elicits obedience and worship from the multitude. Elsewhere in the ancient world, the same is true of this word "image," which appears alongside "likeness." A text from ancient Gozan contains both words, "image" and "likeness," and translates them into Assyrian by using the same word, meaning "statue" or a symbol of authority. Thus, in this context to be made in the image of God means to rule over the life in the three domains that God created. This rulership is a stewardship. It is illustrated in ch. 2, where the man takes care of the garden (2:15) and names the animals (2:20). In this context God placed humanity on earth to continue his rulership after he finished the work of creation. With the coming of Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God (Col 1:15), Christians are re-created (2 Cor 5:17) and become conformed to Christ as an expression of his image (Rom 8:29), with righteousness, holiness, and knowledge (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).

1:28 Be fruitful ... increase ... fill. God also commanded the animals to do this (v. 22), so it represents the creaturely basis of humanity. **subdue** ... Rule over. God commanded only humans to do this because only they are made in the image of God. The repetition of this idea (v. 26) underlines its importance.

1:18 'Jer 33:20,25 1:21 's Ps 104:25-26 1:22 'ver 28, Ge 8:17 1:25 'Jer 27:5 1:26 'Ps 100:3 's Ge 9:6; Jas 3:9 'Ps 8:6-8 1:27 'JC0 11:7 'Ge 5:2; Mt 19:4*; Mk 10:6* 1:28 'Ge 9:17; Lev 26:9 1:29 ^bPs 104:14 1:30 ^cPs 104:14,27; 145:15 1:31 ^dPs 104:24 ^c1Ti 4:4 2:2 ^fEx 20:11; 31:17; Heb 4:4* 2:3 ^gLev 23:3; Isa 58:13 2:5 ^hGe 1:11 ⁱPs 65:9-10

2

²⁹Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.^b ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.^c" And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made,^d and it was very good.^e And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.^{f 3}Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,^g because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Adam and Eve

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^{*a*} and no plant had yet sprung up,^h for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth^{*i*} and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶but streams^{*b*} came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man^{*c*} from the

^{*a*} 5 Or *land*; also in verse 6 ^{*b*} 6 Or *mist* ^{*c*} 7 The Hebrew for *man (adam)* sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground (adamab)*; it is also the name *Adam* (see verse 20).

1:29–30 God gives plants "for food" (v. 29) to sustain human and animal life. Vegetables and fruits form the foundation of the food chain for both herbivores and carnivores. Ch. 1 emphasizes abundant life; God provides abundant food, whose seeds guarantee that food will continue throughout the history of the world.

1:31 With the work of creation finished on the sixth day, all is now in perfect harmony with God's will. The result is more than good; it is "very good."

2:1 This verse concludes what the summary statement of 1:1 envisions. The same expressions for the heavens and for the earth appear in both verses, now adding all the elements ("all their vast array") that have been added since 1:1.

2:2 The creation "week" of seven days has been leading up to this point. The repeated phrases identifying the evening, morning, and ordinal number of each day finish and climax at "the seventh day." God had finished the work. Of creation. It is a day of rest, not one of further creative work. finished. The same Hebrew verb as the passive form translated "were completed" in v. 1. rested. God does not require rest because he is tired; he chooses to stop working because his creation is complete. The Hebrew root of "rested" forms the noun "Sabbath," and it carries the sense of stopping or ceasing.

2:3 made it holy. God's rest on the seventh day makes it different from the other days of the week. Although the law requiring Israel to observe the Sabbath comes later, the week is built into creation from the beginning. The seventh day as a time of rest climaxes God's work in ch. 1. All creation moves toward it. Both accounts of the Ten Commandments require Israel to observe the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15), and Exod 20:11 explicitly relates it to the seven days of creation and indeed to all special days and years in Israel's sacred calendars. If the Sabbath is the climax of creation, it is also the goal of the redeemed community and cosmos (Heb 4:9–11). Remembering the Sabbath every week contributes to idea that seven days, not months or years, describe the creation account.

2:4-25 Adam and Eve. The rest of ch. 2 reviews all that happens with the creation of the man and his home, his tasks, and his companion. The account contrasts with ch. 1 by focusing on the people rather than the cosmos.

2:4 This verse moves from the previous account and introduces the cre-

ation story of ch. 2. The creation of the heavens and the earth is explicitly described in 1:1-2:1, but the ongoing life of humanity in the world that God created begins its history in 2:4 and continues through the rest of Genesis. account. This term that stands between the two creation accounts also introduces the family lines of Seth (5:1,3), of Noah (6:9), and of Shem (11:10), where it refers to a family history or genealogy. The repetitive style of the seven days resembles the repetitive style of the genealogies. Thus, the story begins with the beginning of creation and God's word (1:1-4), which connects it with all the family histories through Genesis. The word of God that created the world continues in each generation and remains the same word down to the present. LORD. Translates the Hebrew name Yahweh, the personal and covenant name of God ("Jehovah" in the ASV). The Greek term for "Lord" translates this name in the earliest Greek translation of the OT. The meaning of Yahweh is unknown, but it sounds like a form of the verb "to be, become" (see Exod 3:14 and note). God. ' *elohîm*, a title for deity (see note on 1:1) and the name of God used up to this point in Genesis. In ch. 1, 'elohîm emphasizes God's power and majesty as the Creator of the universe. The rest of Genesis retains that title but adds God's personal name. "LORD" reflects the changed tone, which becomes more personal and is concerned with God's relationship with the man and woman. the earth and the heavens. This reverses the order of "the heavens and the earth" as found in the beginning of the verse (see also 1:1; 2:1). It forms a "mirror" in Hebrew poetry in which the elements between the two references become important. The two phrases repeat the same idea in the fashion of a poetic couplet: "when they were created. / when the LORD God made." The first line uses "created." the special verb applied only to God and appropriately emphasizing the cosmic creation of ch. 1 (where it occurs three times; it does not appear at all in the rest of chs. 2-4). The second line focuses on God's personal role in his relation to people, which ch. 2 emphasizes.

2:5 no shrub ... **no plant.** Plants, essential for the life of animals and people (1:29–30), are not present because rain and humans are absent. This resembles ch. 1, which also begins with the absence of life and the material to sustain it (1:2).

2:6 streams. God provides water to create the food.

2:7 man ... ground ... life ... living. Not only does the Hebrew for "man" ('ādām) sound like the Hebrew for "ground" ('ǎdāmâ), but the dustⁱ of the ground^k and breathed into his nostrils the breathⁱ of life,^m and the man became a living being.ⁿ

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden;^o and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life^p and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.^q

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^{*a*} and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^{*b*} ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris;^{*r*} it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."⁸

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."^t

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals^u and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, ^v that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam^c no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs^d and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^{ew} he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

^a 12 Or good; pearls ^b 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia ^c 20 Or the man ^d 21 Or took part of the man's side ^e 22 Or part

Hebrew for "life" ($hayy\hat{n}n$) sounds like the Hebrew for "living" ($hayy\hat{a}$). This identifies the two stages and components that construct the human person: the dirt of creation and the breath of God. The man is between the Lord God and the created world (Ps 8:4–8); he is a ruler, yet he is under authority (Gen 1:26–28).

2:8-9 God creates a home for the man.

2:8 garden. A place for plants and thus food and work (v. 5). the east. The first of many hints in this chapter that the garden, as a sacred place where people meet with God, foreshadows the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple, which both face eastward. **Eden**. Often thought to mean paradise, it may mean well-watered, abundant in streams. **there he put the man**. God takes the initiative with the man and guides him throughout the chapter.

2:9 the tree of life. This appears again in Genesis only in 3:22, just before the couple are banished from Eden, and it recurs in Rev 2:7; 22:2,14,19, where it heals all who come to it. the tree of the knowl-edge of good and evil. This forms the center for the one command that the Lord God gives to the first couple (v. 17). "Good" and "evil" represent moral and ethical categories. God designed this tree to teach the man and woman the difference between right and wrong, but first they must learn this by obeying what he has commanded.

2:10-14 This section describes how much water was available in Eden and names the connected rivers. The Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers are the best known. The name "Gihon" was also given to the underground spring beneath Jerusalem. It means "gusher" and could refer to another stream with this characteristic. "Cush" in the Bible is often connected with Africa but here may refer to an area in the Zagros Mountains east of the Tigris River, and thus east of Ashur, the name for the kingdom of Assyria. The Pishon River and land of Havilah are not otherwise known but may describe parts of central Saudi Arabia where gold has been located as well as a prehistoric riverbed that can be traced to the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates at the head of the Persian Gulf. This may be the site of Eden, but it is not so easy to understand how the water flows from it (rather than into it). These descriptions also look forward to another place where God meets his people: the temple in Jerusalem with its great "Sea" that holds the water in front of it (1 Kgs 7:23–44), with the Gishon spring beneath it, and with much gold and precious stones, such as onyx, within it (1 Chr 29:2).

2:15 to work it and take care of it. Similar verbs describe the role of the priests and Levites in the tabernacle and temple (e.g., Num 3:7–8; 8:26). These verbs, however, can also be translated "serve" and "guard." The man has a priestly role to protect the garden sanctuary (Gen 1:26). When he fails to do this and is expelled from Eden, the task of guarding the garden is given to cherubim (3:24).

2:16–17 You are free to eat from any tree ... but. In the Lord God's first words to the man in ch. 2, he graciously supplies abundant food and the freedom to eat it. As is customary in Hebrew speech, this general offer is followed by a specific exception: "but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The single forbidden tree contrasts with the many that are not forbidden. The reason for the prohibition is not explained. you will certainly die. This warning introduces death for the first time. If creation of life was "very good" (1:31) because it obeyed God perfectly, then the man's disobedience can bring death, the opposite of the life that God has given so freely.

2:18 not good. The opposite of the good creation of ch. 1. helper. The Lord God seeks a "helper" for the man so that he is not alone. The Hebrew term (but as a verb) is found later in 49:25, where God "helps" (is a helper for) Israel.

2:19-20 God's search for a helper involves the man's naming the animals. The man here discerns the purpose of the animals and so calls the creatures according to their role in creation. He exercises dominion over creation in general (see notes on 1:26,28).

2:22 rib. Always means "side" where it occurs elsewhere. As always, the Lord God initiates the action and takes from the man's side so that the woman is in every way human ('*ādām*; see 1:26; 2:7 and notes), just like the man.

2:7 (6 3:19 %Ps 103:14 'Job 33:4 "Ac 17:25 "1Co 15:45" 2:8 °Ge 3:23,24; Isa 51:3 2:9 °Ge 3:22,24; Rev 2:7; 22:2,14,19 °Eze 47:12 2:14 'Da 10:4 2:17 *Dt 30:15,19; Ro 5:12; 6:23; Jas 1:15 2:18 'Ico 11:9 2:19 'Ps 8:7 °Ge 1:24 2:22 *ICo 11:8,9,12 2:23 * Ge 29:14; Eph 5:28-30 2:24 * Mal 2:15 * Mt 19:5'; Mk 10:7-8'; 1Co 6:16'; Eph 5:31* 2:25 * Ge 3:7, 10-11 3:1 * 2:Co 11:3; Rev 12:9; 20:2 3:4 * Jn 8:44; 2:Co 11:3 3:5 * lsa 14:14; Eze 28:2 3:6 * Jsa 1:4-15; JJn 2:16 * IT 2:14 23The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;^x she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united^y to his wife, and they become one flesh.^z
²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked,^a and they felt no shame.

The Fall

3 Now the serpent^b was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.^{c 5}"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,^d knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable^e for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.[†] ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

2:23 bone of my bones. The man recognizes that the woman originates from himself. "woman"...man. Hebrew 'iššâ ... 'iš. Like 'ādām (masculine word for humans and the man) and 'ādāmâ (feminine word for ground) in v. 7 that connect man with the ground (see note on v. 7), these words sound similar and connect man with woman.

2:24 why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife. The physical creation of the woman by taking her from the man implies a natural relationship that is restored when the man and woman become "one flesh" by physically reuniting.

2:25 naked ... felt no shame. The two are in perfect harmony. There are no barriers and no shame from the absence of barriers. Ch. 2 ends with harmony between God and creation, between God and the human couple, between the couple and creation, and between the man and the woman (cf. 3:7).

3:1-24 *The Fall.* Continuing the creation account, the biblical story recounts what went wrong with the perfect harmony of ch. 2 and how sin changed everything so that the world has become the corrupted place that we know.

3:1 serpent. People in the ancient world considered snakes to be sources of long life, healing, and wisdom, but Israelites who were familiar with the food regulations of Leviticus would associate the serpent with unclean animals (Lev 11:42) and be suspicious. crafty. Hebrew *ārûm*. This rare Hebrew word, consistent with the snake's reputation for wisdom, sounds like the Hebrew for "naked" in 2:25 ('amrûummîm). The wordplay suggests that the serpent's craftiness will overturn the innocence symbolized by the couple's nakedness. Did God really say ...? God invites the man to eat from "any tree" (2:16), but the serpent denies what God says by adding the word "not." Such lies characterize the serpent's speech (3:4). Genesis does not explicitly identify the serpent as Satan, but the NT describes the devil as "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44) and "that ancient serpent" (Rev 12:9; 20:2). If everything was "very good" in 1:31, then evil has now entered the world. The source of this evil is not given, but it existed before Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Something was already amiss in the world.

3:2 We may eat fruit from the trees. The woman correctly qualifies the serpent's charge, but she diminishes God's grace by not emphasizing that they are "free" to eat from "any" tree (2:16).

3:3 the tree that is in the middle of the garden. She omits the name

of the tree, which contains the rationale for not eating from it. **you must not touch it**. A statement that God apparently never made. The effect creates an arbitrary command (God just chose any tree) and trivializes the offense in contrast to the punishment (death for touching fruit!). God originally spoke this command only to the man. Although the man is present in this exchange (v. 6), the woman speaks. How did she know what God said? We are not told whether God told her directly or whether the man passed the words along to her. The result indicts both the man and the woman in this transgression.

3:4 You will not certainly die. The snake lies, again quoting God's words (2:17) and placing a negative ("not") in front of them (see 3:1 and note).

3:5 God knows. Satan accuses God of selfish motives (cf. Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5). **your eyes will be opened ... knowing good and evil.** This seems to coincide with the tree's purpose. The man and woman both become aware of their nakedness (v. 7). But this knowledge does not exclude the punishment that God promised. So the serpent denies the sin's punishment but glorifies its reward. The lure is to "be like God" in a manner different from God's intent. Ironically, the human couple have been made in the "image of God" (1:27). They are to be like God by ruling over the earth on his behalf. God has provide a way in the garden (through obedience) and will ultimately provide another way (through the sacrifice of Christ; see 2 Pet 1:4), but God's way lacks the attractive false promise of the serpent's seemingly easier way.

3:6 good. God created everything "good" (ch. 1). All the food in the garden was good, but the woman thought only of this food and made what God had said was not good (to eat) into something that seemed good. **pleasing**. The Hebrew word also occurs in Num 11:4, where the Israelites "crave" meat, rebel, and are judged. **desirable**. The Hebrew root for "covet" (*hāmad*). The same form appears in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:17: Deut 5:21), where God also forbids desiring what is not yours. **saw** ... **took** ... **ate** ... **gave** ... **he ate**. The rapid-fire series of verbs suggests that everything happens quickly, so that the couple do not consider the consequences. By failing to rule over the serpent, the human couple betray God and permit evil to enter the garden.

3:7 realized they were naked. Their nakedness symbolizes their innocence (2:25), but now they have lost that innocence. So the first barrier is set up, symbolized by the fig leaves that separate them from each other, from the garden, and from God. The harmony has been lost. ⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking⁹ in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid^h from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, i and I ate."

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed^j are you above all livestock and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust^k all the days of your life.
¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^{al} and hers;^m he will crush^b your head,ⁿ and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.""

¹⁷To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

^a 15 Or seed ^b 15 Or strike

3:8 the cool of the day. The evening (when the heat of the sun and the cool of the coming darkness create currents of wind). they hid. Their sin separates them from God.

3:9 the LORD God called to the man. The man is addressed first.

3:10 I was afraid. The man confesses his fear due to the shame of nakedness.

3:11 Who told you ...? God is not ignorant but elicits open and honest confession so he can address the sin. A major theme of the Bible is that although people sin, God seeks them out in order to bring them to repentance. Ultimately, Jesus "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). 3:12–13 Instead of admitting their own guilt and responsibility, the man blames the woman, and the woman blames the serpent.

3:14 God said. God first addresses the serpent, who spoke first. **Cursed.** Among living creatures, only the serpent is cursed. **crawl.** Whatever the serpent may have been before this moment, he would now crawl. Falling down on one's stomach is an act of self-humiliation before a king or leader. Under the laws of Leviticus, crawling animals were designated as ritually unclean (Lev 11:42). **dust.** Symbolizes humiliation (18:27; Job 30:19; 42:6; Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; 65:25; Mic 7:17).

3:15 "Enmity." Extends beyond the woman and the snake to all future generations. your offspring and hers. Or "your seed and her seed" (see NIV text note). It is rare to refer to a woman's "seed." Genesis traces the line of seed from the woman (4:25). crush ... strike. These words translate the same Hebrew verb. The snake's attack at the heel of the woman is painful but not necessarily mortal, but the same action

by the woman and her seed against the snake's head will be mortal. This promise anticipates Rev 12 (especially 12:9) and the victory in Rev 19–20 (especially 20:2), where the dragon, "that ancient serpent," represents Satan, and the woman represents the mother of Jesus, who is her seed. Jesus' death and resurrection secures the final victory over Satan and death. His victory begins with his coming into the world at the incarnation (John 1:1–14) and will culminate when he returns. In Christian history, v. 15 has been called the Protoevangelium, the first announcement of the gospel. At both the beginning and the end, the Bible pictures Satan as a snake or dragon at war with God for the dominion of the earth and the human race.

3:16 make your pains in childbearing very severe. The Hebrew word for "pains" is identical to the "painful toil" assigned to the man in v. 17. desire. The Hebrew occurs elsewhere only in Song 7:10 and in Gen 4:7, which says that sin "desires" to control Cain but that Cain "must rule over it." That verse uses the same language as here and describes a struggle between sin and Cain. Here there is a breakdown in the original harmonious relationship between the man and the woman. Ideals such as care for one another (1 Pet 3:5–8) give way to conflict. As the NT suggests, this is not irreversible. The love that Song 7:10 suggests ("his desire is for me") can be restored. The reconciliation that Jesus Christ brought to the world by the forgiveness of sins (2 Cor 5:19) can restore the ideal harmony of the relationship that existed between the man and the woman before the fall. **3:17 Because you listened to your wife.** The man followed his wife rather than God in this instance. 1 Tim 2:14 states that the woman was

3:8 °Dt 23:14 *Job 31:33; Ps 139:7-12; Jer 23:24 3:13 '2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14 3:14 'Dt 28:15-20 *Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17 3:15 'Jn 8:44; Ac 13:10; 1Jn 3:8 "Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23; Rev 12:17 "Ro 16:20; Heb 2:14 3:16 'Ico 11:3; Eph 5:22 3:17 ° Ge 5:29; Ro 8:20-22 °Job 5:7; 14:1; Ecc 2:23 3:18 °Ps 104:14 3:19 °2Th 3:10 °Ge 2:7; Ps 90:3; 104:29; Ecc 12:7 3:22 °Rev 22:14 3:23 °Ge 2:8 °Ge 4:2 3:24 × Ex 25:18-22 > PS 104:4 °Ge 2:9 4:2 °Lk 11:51 4:3 °Nu 18:12 4:4 °Lev 3:16 °dE 13:2; 1 °Heb 11:4 "Cursed^p is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.^q
¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.^r
¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food^s until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."^t

²⁰Adam^a named his wife Eve, ^b because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²²And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life^u and eat, and live forever." ²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden^v to work the ground^w from which he had been taken. ²⁴After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side^c of the Garden of Eden of Eden the way to the tree of life.^z

Cain and Abel

4 Adam^{*a*} made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^{*d*} She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth^{*e*} a man." ²Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.^a Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.^{b 4}And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions^c from some of the firstborn of his flock.^d The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ^{e 5}but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

 $a^{a} 20,1$ Or *The man* $b^{b} 20$ Eve probably means living. $c^{c} 24$ Or placed in front $d^{c} 1$ Cain sounds like the Hebrew for brought forth or acquired. $e^{c} 1$ Or have acquired

deceived, but not the man. **Cursed.** God does not curse the man or woman, but he does curse the snake (v. 14) and the ground (here). The man (Hebrew ' $\bar{a}d\bar{a}m$) and the ground (Hebrew ' $\bar{a}d\bar{a}m$) are connected by more than similar sound (see 2:7 and note). The cursed ground is no longer in harmony with the man; it does not respond to his desire for food with immediate abundance. Outside the garden, the man and woman will in the future "eat the plants of the field" (v. 18), where "thorns and thistles" (v. 18) threaten to destroy food and require toil. **painful toil**. Uses the same Hebrew noun as in v. 16 (see note there) and includes the accompanying frustration and difficulty of bringing forth a harvest.

3:19 return to the ground. The result of physical death (cf. 2:7). Spiritual death began with the sin of v. 6 (1 Cor 15:22). These judgments on the woman and the man describe how life will be. The world has changed because of sin. While humans rightly do what they can to ameliorate the tragic consequences of the fall, ultimately it is God who will create a new heavens and a new earth (see 1:1 and note).

3:20 Adam names the woman after hearing God's judgment against her (v. 16). **Eve.** The name (Hebrew *ḥawwâ*) suggests the woman's unique role since it sounds like the Hebrew word that means to "give life" (Hebrew *ḥawâ*).

3:21 garments of skin. They protect Adam and Eve in the harsh world outside the garden. They also mark a separation and shame that the loss of innocence has brought. God had to kill some of the animals he created to make these garments. Although this text does not mention forgiveness or blood, as do Levitical texts (e.g., Lev 17:11; see Heb 9:22), it is understandable that many find here an anticipation of animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins (Lev 1; 3–7) and even of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

3:22 The man has now become like one of us. This affirms what the serpent predicted (v. 5). tree of life. God judges the couple with death and banishes them from the garden, denying them access to the tree of life, a blessing that God's people receive again in the new creation (cf. 2:9; Rev 2:7; 22:2; 14, 19).

3:23 banished. The sin's punishment includes removal from God's presence. Thus, sin disrupts the harmony of all parts of creation: between the ground and people, between one person and another, and between God and people. The couple forfeit their special relationship with God.

3:24 east side ... cherubim. This final scene further associates Eden with the later tabernacle and temple, which faced east and contained cherubim. **sword.** It points in every direction so that there is no way to enter the garden. By guarding the garden, the cherubim take on the role that previously had been delegated to the man (2:15).

4:1-26 Cain and Abel. The sin that Adam and Eve brought into the world passes on to their son Cain. In ch. 4 it leads to envy and violence that results in the murder of one brother by another. As the generations progress, the violence escalates so that Lamech, the last in Cain's line, commits murder to be avenged 11 times more than his ancestor, Cain. 4:2 Abel. Hebrew hebel, meaning "breath" or what passes away without leaving anything significant. It is a commentary on the short life of Abel and his lack of children and heirs.

4:3-5 If there is any hint as to the reason the Lord prefers Abel's sacrifice over Cain's, it may be that Abel offers the "fat portions" (v. 4), considered the best part of animals (Lev 3:16–17) from the "firstborn" (v. 4). Cain offers "some of the fruits of the soil" (v. 3), with no reference to their quality. Heb 11:4 attests to Abel's faith.



Two cherubs guarding a sacred tree, ca. 1400 BC, Cyprus. The author of Genesis uses similar imagery in Gen 3:24.

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

⁶Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;^f it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.⁹"

⁸Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^{*a*} While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.^h

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.ⁱ ¹¹Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear.¹⁴Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence;¹ I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."^k

¹⁵But the LORD said to him, "Not so^b; anyone who kills Cain¹ will suffer vengeance seven times over.^m" Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, ^c east of Eden.ⁿ

¹⁷Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then

^{*a*} 8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have "*Let's go out to the field*." ^{*b*} 15 Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well* ^{*c*} 16 Nod means wandering (see verses 12 and 14).

4:7 sin. Named here for the first time in the Bible, it is personified as someone lying in wait for Cain. it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. A conflict of wills, just as in 3:16, where the same words and structure appear.

4:8 Sin escalates to one brother murdering another. This first violent act between two people anticipates the increase in violence in Cain's line (vv. 23–24) and the violence that brings the flood in judgment (6:11–13).

4:9 Am I my brother's keeper? Cain's callous and deceptive response contrasts with Adam and Eve's naive and evasive responses (3:10–13).

4:10 blood cries out ... from the ground. The shedding of innocent blood pollutes the ground (Num 35:33–34). **cries out.** Abel represents the first of a long line of faithful people who die and cry out for vengeance (Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51); in contrast, Jesus' innocent blood provides mercy (Heb 12:24).

4:11 under a curse. The Lord curses Cain in relation to the ground (Deut 27:24). driven from the ground. Cain has polluted the land and

cannot remain there. Adam and Eve were driven from the garden; Cain is driven from all "ground."

4:12,14 restless wanderer. Cain must be on the move and leave nothing that will last.

4:12 it will no longer yield its crops. Cain works the ground (v. 2), so this punishment deprives him of his livelihood (v. 13).

4:14 whoever finds me will kill me. The penalty for murdering the innocent is death (Deut 19:11–13).

4:15 mark. The text does not say what the mark is, but it is readily visible and enables anyone to see that God marked Cain for his safety (see Ezek 9:4 for another protective mark).

4:16 Nod. Means "wandering," from the same Hebrew root in "restless wanderer" (vv. 12,14).

4:17–18 Cain... Enoch... Irad ... Mehujael ... Methushael ... Lamech. Together with Adam the genealogy of seven generations symbolizes the completion of the line. As seven symbolizes completeness, here it leads to a completeness of violence in Lamech's poem in vv. 23–24.

4:17 wife. Perhaps Cain's sister. city. Could be any settlement.

4:8 ^hMt 23:35; 1Jn 3:12 4:10 ¹Ge 9:5; Nu 35:33; Heb 12:24; Rev 6:9-10 4:14 ¹2Ki 17:18; Ps 51:11; 139:7-12; Jer 7:15; 52:3 ^kGe 9:6; Nu 35:19,21,27,33 4:15 ¹Eze 9:4,6 ^mver 24; Ps 79:12 4:16 ⁿGe 2:8

4:7 ^fNu 32:23 ^gBo 6:16

4:17 °Ps 49:11 4:23 °Ex 20:13; Lev 19:18 4:24 °Dt 32:35 °Ver 15 4:25 °Ge 5:3 'Ver 8 4:26 °Ge 12:8; 1Ki 18:24; PS 116:17; Joel 2:32; Zep 3:9; Ac 2:21; 1Co 1:2 5:1 °Ge 1:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10 5:2 °Ge 1:26; 1Co 15:49 5:5 °Ge 3:126; building a city, and he named it after his son^o Enoch. ¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Mehushael, and Mehushael was the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. ²²Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of^{*a*} bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

²³Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed^p a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. ²⁴ If Cain is avenged^q seven times,^r then Lamech seventy-seven times."

²⁵Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,^{bs} saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."^{t 26}Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time people began to call on^c the name of the LORD.^u

From Adam to Noah

This is the written account of Adam's family line.

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God.^{v 2}He created them male and female^w and blessed them. And he named them "Mankind"^d when they were created.

³When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image;^x and he named him Seth. ⁴After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.^y

^a 22 Or *who instructed all who work in* ^b 25 *Seth* probably means *granted.* ^c 26 Or *to proclaim* ^d 2 Hebrew *adam*

4:18 Enoch ... Irad. May be related to Erech and Eridu, two of the earliest cities in the south of ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq).

4:19 married two women. Genesis often mentions polygamy, which tends to end badly for those involved. Adah ... Zillah. Could mean "ornament" and "cymbal," suggesting the cultural activities in this family history.

4:20-22 tents ... livestock ... stringed instruments and pipes ... tools ... bronze and iron. In ancient Mesopotamian lore, there were a group of sages, one for each generation of kings in the age before the flood. They introduce major aspects of human culture. The Bible teaches that these inventors came from the line of Cain. Although their work could be used for good, in this case it seems to have led to greater violence.

4:22 Tubal-Cain. Like his ancestor Cain, his name means "metalsmith," another aspect of civilization (see note on vv. 20–22).

4:23 killed a man for wounding me. This is not the later "eye for eye" of the law (Exod 21:23-25; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21-22) but is inciting violence.

4:24 seventy-seven times. The anger is spelled out. As God promised sevenfold vengeance for any who tried to kill Cain (v. 15), Lamech's arrogance increases the vengeance another ten times in addition to the first seven. Cf. Matt 18:22, where Jesus transforms vengeance into forgiveness and uses the same number for how many times one must forgive. **4:25 Seth.** The word sounds like the Hebrew of "granted" in the phrase "granted me another child in place of Abel." In chs. 4–5, two lines of descendants are contrasted—one negative, the other positive. One is associated with violence, which links with the reason for the flood. The other leads to Noah. The positive comments associated with the birth of Seth — another seed in place of Abel — suggest some connection with the seed of the woman (see 3:15 and note).

4:26 Enosh. Hebrew for "man," similar to a meaning of Adam. God provides a new line of hope. **call on the name of the Lord.** An expression used elsewhere for prayer (12:8; 26:25; 1 Kgs 18:24; 2 Kgs 5:11; Joel 2:32).

5:1–32 From Adam to Noah. In contrast with the line of Cain (4:17–24), the regularity of Seth's line, its positive notes of God's blessing — Enoch (vv. 21-24) and Lamech (vv. 28-31) — and its extension beyond the seventh generation to Noah identify this as the line of hope.

5:1 account. See note on 2:4. These headings structure Genesis (2:4; here; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2). **the likeness of God.** This reaffirms the presence of God's image in humanity (see 1:26–28 and note on 1:26), despite the sin that has taken place since humanity's creation. It anticipates 9:6, which expands the sense of the image of God.

5:2-3 Mankind ... Adam. "Mankind" and "Adam" translate the same Hebrew word ('ādām). See note on 1:26.

5:5 930 years. Adam's life span and the life spans of others mentioned in this line far exceed today's human life span. Whether the long life spans are literal or serve a literary purpose, or both, the life spans of Enoch and Lamech may be symbolic (see notes on vv. 23,31). The ten names in this genealogy may suggest a selection of the line as in ch. 11 (cf. Luke 3:36, where the name Cainan is added to the line in Gen 11). Three kings listed in the Sumerian King List as ruling before the flood have reigns that add up to 72,000 years, and thus exaggerate these numbers. The connection with the line of hope (and not with Cain's line) suggests that God's blessing was on this line.

5:18 ^z Jude 1:14 5:22 ^aver 24; Ge 6:9;

11; Heb 11:5 5:29 ^dGe 3:17; Ro 8:20

6:1 °Ge 1:28

17:1; 48:15; Mic 6:8; Mal 2:6

5:24 ^b ver 22 ^c 2Ki 2:1,

⁶When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father^{*a*} of Enosh. ⁷After he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸Altogether, Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Altogether, Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Altogether, Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Altogether, Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch.^z ¹⁹After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Altogether, Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God^a 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴Enoch walked faithfully with God;^b then he was no more, because God took him away.^c

²⁵When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. ²⁹He named him Noah^b and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.^{dv} ³⁰After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Altogether, Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

 $^{32}\mbox{After}$ Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Wickedness in the World

6 When human beings began to increase in number on the earth^e and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans

^{*a*} 6 Father may mean ancestor; also in verses 7-26. ^{*b*} 29 Noah sounds like the Hebrew for comfort.

Sumerian King List, ca. 1800 BC, records kings who reigned tens of thousands of years "Before the Flood." Gen 5 also records ancient ancestors.

Sumerian King List giving rulers from 'before the Flood' to King Sin-magir of Isin (ca. 1827 – 17 BC) inscribed in cuneiform script, probably from Larsa, Iraq, Sumerian/ Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, UK/Bridgeman Images

5:9 Kenan. Means "little Cain."

5:12 Mahalalel. Means "praising God."

 $\mbox{5:15}$ Jared. Means "(God) has descended (from heaven)." This name given at birth may confess God's aid in a safe delivery.

5:21 Methuselah. Means perhaps "man/devotee of the spear/missile."
 5:23 365 years. There are also 365 days in a solar year. Enoch became famous for his faithfulness to God and as one who knew much about God (Jude 14–15).

5:24 God took him. The seventh from Adam does not die like the others (cf. the seventh day of creation [2:2-3], which does not end like the other six days). Enoch's acceptance by God gives hope to his contemporaries as well as those who read this account.

5:25 Lamech. Meaning unknown. Like the Lamech of Cain's line, this Lamech brings the genealogy to an end with a statement. Whereas Cain's Lamech looks backward and stresses vengeance and violence (4:23–24), this Lamech looks forward to one who will bring "comfort" (5:29), which in Hebrew sounds like "Noah."

5:27 969 years. Methuselah, the longest living person in the Bible, dies in the year of the flood (see 5:25,28; 7:6, where 187 + 182 + 600 = 969).

5:31 777 years. This lifespan, composed of the number "7," symbolizes a perfect and complete number of years.

6:1-8 Wickedness in the World. Violence continues to grow (cf. ch. 4) and leads to continual thoughts and acts of evil that bring God's judgment on the world.

6:1 increase. Humans continue to "increase in number" as God commanded (1:28), but they are corrupt.

6:2 sons of God. Four options explain this phrase: (1) They are angels. This is what the phrase refers to elsewhere in the OT (see Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 and NIV text notes; cf. Pss 29:1; 89:6) except for a related expression in Hos 1:10. Mark 12:25 may suggest that angels do not marry, but

the father ved a total

^{5:18} Enoch. Means "dedicate; dedication."

6:3 ¹/sa 57:16 ^oPs 78:39 6:4 ⁰/w1 3:33 6:5 ¹/se 8:21; Ps 14:1-3 6:6 ¹/sa 15:11,35; 15:3 (36:10,15:11,35; 6:8 ^k 6e 19:19; Ex 33:12, 13,17; Lk 1:30; Ac 7:46 6:9 (36:71; Eze 14:14, 20; Heb 11:7; 2Pe 2:5 ^mGe 5:22 6:10 ^o Ge 5:32 6:11 ^o Eze 7:23; 8:17 6:12 ^oPs 14:1-3 6:13 ^over 17; Eze 7:2-3 6:14 ⁽Heb 11:7; 1Pe 3:20 ^sEx 2:3 were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. ³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with" humans forever, ^f for they are mortal b_{3}^{0} their days will be a hundred and twenty years."

⁴The Nephilim^h were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

⁵The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.ⁱ ⁶The LORD regretted^j that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — for I regret that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.^k

Noah and the Flood

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,¹ and he walked faithfully with God.^{m 10}Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.ⁿ

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.^o ¹²God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.^p ¹³So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.^q ¹⁴So make yourself an ark of cypress^c wood," make rooms in it and coat it with pitch^s inside and out. ¹⁵This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits

^{*a*} 3 Or *My spirit will not remain in* ^{*b*} 3 Or *corrupt* ^{*c*} 14 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

Mark 12 refers to angels who are in heaven fulfilling their roles, not in a fallen state. (Compare 2 Pet 2:4–5, Jude 5–6, and the tradition of these angels as "Watchers" in some strands of Judaism.) (2) They are sons of Cain. But given how ch. 4 describes them, it is surprising that they would be called "sons of God." (3) They are sons of Seth. (4) They are otherwise unknown kings. But why call them "sons of God"? Some commentators combine two or more explanations.

6:3 a hundred and twenty years. God limits the life span of humans because of their increasing sin and increasing numbers so that they cannot do more violence. If Abraham lived 175 years (25:7) and Isaac lived 180 years (35:28), how can this statement be true? Either it describes the number of years remaining to the flood and the destruction of all of that sinful generation or it is a general observation about human life spans (and not true in every case).

6:4 Nephilim. The Hebrew word means "fallen ones." They also appear much later (Num 13:33). They are not an ethnic group but a social group of warriors, usually past "heroes" of legendary power. Here they illustrate the extent of violence in the world.

6:5 This concisely describes total depravity, which continues after the flood (8:21).

6:6 regretted. Does sin cause God to change his mind? Elsewhere the answer is no (Mal 3:6; Heb 6:17; Jas 1:17). Yet some passages suggest the opposite (1 Sam 15:11 [but see v. 29]; Jonah 3:10). God is involved personally with humanity. While his final purpose for humanity does not change, his means to carry that purpose forward may.

6:8 Ezekiel twice mentions Noah first in a list of righteous men who, despite the enormity of their merit, could not prevent the city of Jerusalem from facing judgment (Ezek 14:14,20). **favor**. Of the dozens of times that the Bible mentions favor or grace, this is the first (see "Love and Grace," p. 2684). Noah represents the minority who remain righteous despite evil all around; he was the first, but not the last. It is this small group of believers that God calls out in each generation—Abram (Gen 12:1–3), Israel (Exod 1–19), faithful exiles (2 Kgs 19; Isa 10:20–22)—until the coming of Christ, who though abandoned by his disciples remains faithful to death.

6:9-8:22 Noah and the Flood. The story of the flood has many par-

allels with ancient Babylonian accounts. Agreement in details (e.g., a single man and his family rescued, a window, birds sent from the ark, the sequence in a larger narrative) make coincidence unlikely to explain the relationship. There was a memory of a great flood, but the reasoning for it in the fictional stories of Babylonia have to do with divine decisions to deal with too much human noise and overpopulation. In contrast, the biblical account connects the flood with God's judgment for sin, especially violence. In some ways the flood story resembles the opening account of creation and may be viewed as a re-creation of the earth after it has been cleansed from the defilement of human sin.

6:9–22 Righteous Noah (v. 9; 7:1) explicitly obeys God's detailed commands (6:22). He saves his family through faith and is heir to the righteousness that comes by faith (Heb 11:7).

6:9-10 account. This "account" of Noah and his sons and all their families as they survive the flood signals an important new unit in Genesis by describing a major event rather than listing a genealogy.

6:11 violence. The fundamental nature of harmful and destructive corruption (cf. 9:6).



Artistic representation of the size of the ark (see Gen 6:15). © 1993 by Zondervan

long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.^{*a*} ¹⁶Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^{*b*} high all around. ^{*c*} Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.^t ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you,^u and you will enter the ark^v— you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰Two^w of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

²²Noah did everything just as God commanded him.^x

The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family," because I have found you righteous² in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean^a animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, ³and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. ⁴Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

⁵And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.^b

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. ⁷And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, ⁹male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month — on that day all the springs of the great deep^c burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens^d were opened. ¹²And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.^e

¹³On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. ¹⁴They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. ¹⁵Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark.^{f 16}The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷For forty days^g the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. ¹⁸The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire

a 15 That is, about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high or about 135 meters long, 23 meters wide and 14 meters high b 16 That is, about 18 inches or about 45 centimeters c 16 The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.

6:15 Noah would build a rectangular ark, six times longer than it was wide and ten times longer than it was high. Estimates suggest that all the land animals could be accommodated in the ark with more than half of it remaining for other uses.

6:22 did everything just as God commanded him. Noah models perfect obedience (7:5). events like the reception of the law (Deut 9:11) and the temptation of Jesus (Matt 4:2).

7:11 In the six hundredth year. The numbers identify when key events occur. The general chronology continues a theme already mentioned in 1:1-2:4 (see Introduction: Structure, 3; see also note on 2:4) that the same God who created and worked in each generation (including Noah's) continues to work today for creative and redemptive purposes. 7:16 the Lord shut him in. The security of Noah and his family within the Lord's provision contrasts with the danger faced by those outside. 7:19 all the high mountains ... were covered. If this includes Mount Ararat (in the Urartian mountain range in eastern Turkey), then the waters need to rise above 16.854 feet (5.137 meters). A natural reading suggests a global flood, and some find this in 2 Pet 2:5; 3:6. The reference may also imply a regional flood (nevertheless possessing tremendous severity) with impact affecting the whole human race, who may have remained in one area (Gen 11:1-9). In 41:57, "all the world" refers to the eastern Mediterranean lands, so in chs. 6-8 the flood may have covered only the part of the earth where people lived.

617 ¹Ge 7:4,21-23; 2Pe 2:5 6:18 ¹Ge 9:9-16 ¹Ge 7:1, 7,13 6:20 ¹Ge 7:15 6:22 ¹Ge 7:5,9,16 7:1 ¹Mt 24:38 ²Ge 6:9; Eze 14:14 7:2 ²uer 8; Ge 8:20; Lev 10:10; 11:1-47 7:5 ¹Ge 6:22 7:11 ⁶Eze 26:19 ⁴Ge 8:2 7:12 ⁸ver 4 7:15 ⁷IGe 6:19 7:17 ⁹ver 4

^{6:18} covenant. Hebrew *bërit*. This is its first occurrence in the Bible. God here prophesies the covenant of 9:8–17. As with the later covenants, God promises salvation and preservation. See "Covenant," p. 2646.

^{7:2} seven pairs ... clean ... one pair ... unclean. The additional clean animals might be used for sacrifice (8:20) or food (9:2–4). Although details about clean and unclean animals occur later (Lev 11; Deut 14), there was early awareness of the correct animals for proper sacrifices (Gen 22:13).

^{7:4} forty days and forty nights. Forty years characterizes a generation of wilderness wandering (Num 14:33–34; 32:13) and rulership over Israel (David, 2 Sam 5:4; Solomon, 1 Kgs 11:42; cf. Judg 3:11; 5:31; 8:28; 1 Sam 4:18; 2 Kgs 12:1), and forty days characterizes important

7:19 hPs 104:6 7:21 lGe 6:7,13 7:22 lGe 6:7,13 7:23 kMt 24:39; Lk 17:27; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5 lHeb 11.7 7:24 mGe 8:3 8:1 nGe 9:15; 19:29; Ex 2:24; 1Sa 1:11,19 °Ex 14:21 8:2 °Ce 7:11 heavens were covered.^{h 20}The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.^{*a,b* 21}Every living thing that moved on land perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.^{1 22}Everything on dry land that had the breath of life^j in its nostrils died. ²³Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth.^k Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.^l

²⁴The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.^m

But God rememberedⁿ Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, ^o and the waters receded. ²Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens^p had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. ³The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, ⁴ and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

⁶After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark ⁷and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. ⁹But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. ¹⁰He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. ¹²He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

 a 20 That is, about 23 feet or about 6.8 meters b 20 Or rose more than fifteen cubits, and the mountains were covered

7:23 Every living thing. Foreshadows the coming judgment of the cosmos by fire in 2 Pet 3:6–7.

7:24 a hundred and fifty days. Identical to 8:3. Rain comes in the first forty days (7:4,17), and the mountain tops become visible during the final forty days (8:5).

8:1 But God remembered Noah. At this turning point in the flood is the first use of the verb "remember." When God remembers, he acts for

judgment (Rev 16:19) or blessing (Gen 30:22; 1 Sam 1:19–20). Here he saves faithful Noah and those with him. Judgment is over and a new creation lies ahead. **wind.** See note on 1:2.

8:4 mountains of Ararat. Mountain range in modern eastern Turkey. Today Mount Ararat is the highest peak, but the wording of the text refers to the range.

CHRONOLOGY OF NOAH'S TIME IN THE ARK

Dates are in the form of month, day, and Noah's year, as given in the text. Hence, 2/10/600 means the tenth day of the second month in Noah's 600th year. Months are calculated at 30 days each. Dates in parentheses are extrapolations from dates explicitly given in the text.

	REFERENCE	EVENT	DATE		
Waters prevail: 150-day period	7:7,9,13	Noah, family, and animals enter ark	(2/10/600)		
	7:10-11	Flood begins	2/17/600		
	7:12	40 days of rain	(3/27/600)		
	8:3-4	Waters present 150 days until ark rests on dry ground	7/17/600		
Waters abate: 150-day period	8:5	Mountaintops visible	10/1/600		
	8:6-7	Raven sent out 40 days later	(11/10/600)		
	8:8	Dove sent out	(11/17/600)		
	8:10	Dove's second flight	(11/24/600)		
	8:12	Dove does not return	(12/1/600)		
	8:3	Waters fully abated after 150 days	(12/17/600)		
Fadh dalar 70 day and d	8:13	Noah opens the ark	1/1/601		
Earth dries: 70-day period	8:14-19	Earth dried out; Noah leaves ark	2/27/601		

Total time in ark: 370 days

¹³By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.^q ¹⁷Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you — the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground — so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it."^r

¹⁸So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. ¹⁹All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds — everything that moves on land — came out of the ark, one kind after another.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD⁸ and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean^t birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings^u on it. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma^v and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground^w because of humans, even though^a every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.^x And never again will I destroy all living creatures,^y as I have done.

> ²² "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."²

God's Covenant With Noah

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.^a ²The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. ³Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you.^b Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

⁴"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.^{e 5}And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal.^d And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.^e

> ⁶ "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed,^f for in the image of God⁹ has God made mankind.

^a 21 Or bumans, for

8:17 multiply ... be fruitful and increase. See 1:22,28, where God gave this command to animals and humans after creating them. God repeats it here as a new world begins, with the land having been cleansed from the defilement caused by the spilling of blood due to human violence.

8:20 altar. Almost always a place of animal sacrifice (though later some altars were used to burn incense).

8:21 Never again will I curse the ground. This promise may refer to the flood, or it may fulfill Lamech's promise that Noah would bring relief from the toil caused by the cursed ground (5:29). The effects of the curse (weeds and thistles, 3:18) remain, but for Noah, a man of the ground (9:20), the soil is productive. **evil from childhood.** God frankly acknowledges the human condition that will not be remedied by this judgment. **as I have done.** God will not again destroy life on earth by a flood, but he will continue to judge people (Matt 24:37–39; Luke 17:27–29), and he will move forward his plan of redemption for all (Gen 12:1–3).

8:22 This beautiful poem of promise launches the new world.

9:1-17 God's Covenant With Noah. God's salvation of Noah leads to the

command to preserve human life and not destroy people who are created in God's image. The sign of the covenant is the rainbow, by which God's promise is guaranteed.

9:1,7 Be fruitful and increase. See note on 8:17. This command is an "envelope" because the paragraph begins and ends with it.

9:3 food. The first explicit statement of a carnivorous diet. Although the olive leaf (8:11) signifies the return of agricultural life, it cannot provide Noah's children with sufficient food, especially in the first months after departing from the ark, when the harvest season has not yet begun (8:22).

9:4,5 lifeblood. Blood is the God-given sign of life (Lev 17:11). God forbids his people to eat blood as a way of recognizing that life belongs to him (Lev 17:10-14). This remains a regulation through the OT and into the NT (Acts 15:20).

9:6 by humans shall their blood be shed. In the context of the law, God bans the vendetta and commands death for shedding innocent blood (Exod 21:12–13; Deut 21:1–9) while recognizing different levels

8:16 9 Ge 7:13 8:17 'Ge 1:22 8:20 °Ge 12:7-8; 13:18; 22:9 t Ge 7:8: Lev 11:1-47 "Ge 22:2, 13; Ex 10:25 8:21 ^vLev 1:9, 13; 2Co 2:15 ^wGe 3:17 Ge 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9 9 Ge 9:11, 15; lsa 54:9 8:22 ZGe 1:14; Jer 33:20,25 9:1 a Ge 1:22 9:3 ^bGe 1:29 9:4 °Lev 3:17; 17:10-14; Dt 12:16,23-25; 1Sa 14:33 9:5 d Ex 21:28-32 e Ge 4:10 9:6 fGe 4:14: Ex 21:12. 14; Lev 24:17; Mt 26:52 ⁹Ge 1:26

^{9:5} I will demand an accounting. God will hold responsible "each human being" who takes the life of another.

9:7 h Ge 1:22 9:9 l Ge 6:18 9:11 l ver 16; Isa 24:5 h Ge 8:21; Isa 54:9 9:12 l ver 17; Ge 17:11 9:15 m Ex 2:24; Lev 26:42, 45; Dt 7:9; Eze 16:60 9:16 n ver 11; Ge 17:7, 13, 19; 28a 7:13; 23:5 9:17 o ver 12; Ge 17:11 9:18 ver 25-27; Ge 10:6, 15 9:19 a Ge 10:32 9:25 f ver 18 a Ge 25:23; Jos 9:23 ⁷As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."^h

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹"I now establish my covenant with you¹ and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant^j with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.^k"

¹²And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant¹ I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant^m between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenantⁿ between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

¹⁷So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant^o I have established between me and all life on the earth."

The Sons of Noah

 18 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) $^{p\ 19}$ These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth. q

²⁰Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded^{*a*} to plant a vineyard. ²¹When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵he said,

"Cursed be Canaan!" The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.^s"

²⁶He also said,

"Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

^a 20 Or soil, was the first

of intention in planning a murder and adjusting the punishment accordingly. **in the image of God.** See note on 1:26. Because human beings are formed in God's image, human life is so valuable that taking innocent life can only be paid for by the life of the one who took it in the first place. **9:9,11 my covenant.** The new world after the flood is characterized by covenants (6:18; see "Covenant," p. 2646). This covenant is for all of Noah's family, that is, for all the world (9:19; 10:1-32).

9:10 and with every living creature. This is God's only OT covenant with the animal kingdom.

9:11 Never again. This repeats the promise of 8:21–22 in the context of a covenant.

9:12–13 sign ... rainbow. Every major covenant that God makes in the Pentateuch has a sign: Abraham's covenant has circumcision (ch. 17) and Israel's covenant has the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11; 31:13,17; Deut 5:12–15). The sign assures us that God remembers his covenant (see note on 8:1) and acts on our behalf.

9:16 This verse ends the paragraph (vv. 12-16) as it begins, with an "envelope" emphasizing the sign and the parties involved — God and all life. See vv. 1-7 and note on 9:1,7.

9:18–29 The Sons of Noah. Even one so righteous as Noah (6:9) is subject to the temptations of sin. The sin of Noah's son Ham and the acts of Ham's brothers to preserve Noah's honor lead to a prophecy about the descendants of Noah's three sons.

9:18 Ham was the father of Canaan. This anticipates Canaan's coming role in the curse of vv. 25–27 and in the subsequent condemnation of the Canaanites (15:16–21; Deut 20:17).

9:21 he became drunk and lay uncovered. As in 19:30-38, drunkenness is connected with sexual immorality.

9:22 saw his father naked. The curse (v. 25) suggests that Ham does more than see his father naked. "Uncover the nakedness" refers to dishonoring a close relative by having incestuous relations, which God condemns (Lev 18:6–18; 20:11–12,17,19–21). This text and the events in this passage are extremely difficult to interpret.

9:23 covered. Shem and Japheth's action respects their father.

9:25 Cursed be Canaan! Why does Noah single out Canaan rather than Canaan's father, Ham? There are various views. If Canaan is the fruit of some sort of sexual immorality, Noah could have cursed this symbol of his shame. This also may anticipate the future role of the Canaanites under Joshua and under David and Solomon.

9:26 the Lorp, the God of Shem. Shem's line leads to Abram (11:10–26) and ultimately to Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1).

MAJOR COVENANTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

COVENANTS	REFERENCE	ТҮРЕ	PARTICIPANT	DESCRIPTION
NOAHIC	Gen 9:8–17	Royal Grant	Made with righteous (6:9) Noah and his descendants and every living thing on earth—all life that is subject to human jurisdiction	An unconditional divine promise never to destroy all earthly life with some natural catastrophe, the covenant "sign" (9:13,17) being the rainbow in the storm cloud
ABRAHAMIC A	Gen 15:6–21	Royal (land) Grant	Made with "righteous" Abram (his faith was "credited to him as righteousness," v. 6) and his descendants, v. 16	An unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of the land; a self-maledictory oath symbolically enacted it (15:18; see note on vv. 18–21)
ABRAHAMIC B	Gen 17	Suzerain-vassal	Made with Abraham as patriarchal head of his household	A conditional divine pledge to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants (cf. "as for me," v. 4; "as for you," v. 9); the condition: total consecration to the Lord as symbolized by circumcision
SINAITIC	Exod 19–24	Suzerain-vassal	Made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and as the people the Lord had redeemed from bondage to an earthly power	A conditional divine pledge to be Israel's God (as its protector and the guarantor of its blessed destiny); the condition: Israel's total consecration to the Lord as his people (his kingdom) who live by his rule and serve his purposes in history
PHINEHAS	Num 25:10–13	Royal Grant	Made with the zealous priest Phinehas	An unconditional divine promise to maintain the family of Phinehas in a "lasting priesthood" (v. 13; implicitly a pledge to Israel to provide it forever with a faithful priesthood)
DAVIDIC	2 Sam 7:5–16	Royal Grant	Made with faithful King David after his devotion to God as Israel's king and the Lord's anointed vassal had come to special expression (v. 2)	An unconditional divine promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the throne of Israel (implicitly a pledge to Israel) to provide it forever with a godly king like David and through that dynasty to do for it what he had done through David—bring it into rest in the promised land (1 Kgs 4:20–21; 5:3–4)
NEW	Jer 31:31–34	Royal Grant	Promised to rebellious Israel as it is about to be expelled from the promised land in actualization of the most severe covenant curse (Lev 26:27–39; Deut 28:36–37, 45–68)	An unconditional divine promise to unfaithful Israel to forgive it sins and establish his relationship with it on a new basis by writing his law "on their hearts" (v. 33)—a covenant of pure grace

MAJOR TYPES OF ROYAL COVENANTS/TREATIES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

ROYAL GRANT (UNCONDITIONAL)	PARITY	SUZERAIN-VASSAL (CONDITIONAL)
A king's grant (of land or some other benefit) to a loyal servant for faithful or exceptional service. The grant was normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued in their father's loyalty and service. (Cf. 1 Sam 8:14; 22:7; 27:6; Esth 8:1.)	A covenant between equals, binding them to mutual friendship or at least to mutual respect for each other's spheres and interests. Participants called each other "brother." (Cf. Gen 21:27; 26:31; 31:44–54; 1 Kgs 5:12; 15:19; 20:32–34; Amos 1:9.)	A covenant regulating the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The great king claimed absolute right of sovereignty, demanded total loyalty and service (the vassal must "love" his suzerain) and pledged protection of the subject's realm and dynasty, conditional on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to him. The vassal pledged absolute loyalty to his suzerain— whatever service his suzerain demanded—and exclusive reliance on the suzerain's protection. Participants called each other "lord" and "servant" or "father" and "son." (Cf. Josh 9:6,8; Ezek 17:13–18; Hos 12:1.)

Commitments made in these covenants were accompanied by self-maledictory oaths (made orally, ceremonially, or both). The gods were called upon to witness the covenants and implement the curses of the oaths if the covenants were violated.

10:1 ¹Ge 2:4 10:2 ^uEze 38:6 ^vEze 38:2; Rev 20:8 ^wIsa 66:19 10:3 ^xJer 51:27 ^vEze 27:14; 38:6 10:4 ²Eze 27:12,25; Jnh 1:3 10:6 ^a ver 15; Ge 9:18 ²⁷ May God extend Japheth's^a territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth."

²⁸After the flood Noah lived 350 years. ²⁹Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

The Table of Nations

O This is the account^t of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

The Japhethites

10:2-5pp — 1Ch 1:5-7

² The sons^b of Japheth:

Gomer,^u Magog,^v Madai, Javan, Tubal,^w Meshek and Tiras.

³The sons of Gomer:

Ashkenaz,^x Riphath and Togarmah.^y

⁴The sons of Javan:

Elishah, Tarshish,^z the Kittites and the Rodanites.^{c 5} (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)

The Hamites

10:6-20pp - 1Ch 1:8-16

⁶The sons of Ham:

Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan.^a

⁷ The sons of Cush:

Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteka.

The sons of Raamah:

Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was the father^d of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."

^a 27 Japbeth sounds like the Hebrew for extend.
 ^b 2 Sons may mean descendants or successors or nations; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31.
 ^c 4 Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:7); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text Dodanites
 ^d 8 Father may mean ancestor or predecessor or founder; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26.

9:27 extend Japheth's territory. Japheth in Hebrew means "to (cause to) open." His descendants are most distant from the land of Israel (10:2-5); they include people whom Abram's offspring would bless (12:1-3), some of whom David and Solomon may rule ("live in the tents of Shem"), and people who would become the object of Christian mission (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8).

10:1 – **32** *The Table of Nations.* This chapter divides into three groups according to the three sons of Noah (10:1). Although terms such as "sons of" and "father of" point to ethnic relations, some connections are surprising (e.g., Canaanites are not usually considered to be related to Egyptians as descendants of one ancestor — Ham). These names come to us as people groups; they may have migrated by the time they appear in historical records outside the Bible. All the people of the known world come from Noah. They are all made in God's image (9:6), and thus they are all equal before God. In contrast to past attempts to justify the enslavement of Africans by misinterpreting 9:25-27, ch. 10 celebrates the common origin and community.

10:1 account. See note on 2:4.

10:2 sons of Japheth. See note on 9:27. Japheth's descendants live in the most distant places from the land of Israel, particularly north and northwest. Most of the sons named may be connected with similarsounding names of places known from ancient sources. **Gomer.** Cimmerians from the Caucasus region who moved south to eastern Turkey and Armenia. **Magog.** Unknown; likely related to Gomer. **Madai.** Lived in northwestern Iran. **Javan.** Ionia, Greek cities in western Turkey. **Tubal, Meshek.** Tabal and Mushki, Phyrgian kingdoms in Cappadocia (modern central Turkey). **Tiras.** Could refer to the Etruscans, who migrated from Lydia to Italy in the eighth century BC.

10:3 Ashkenaz. Could refer to the Scythians, first encountered when coming from the north into the region of eastern Turkey. **Riphath.** Unknown. **Togarmah.** Til-garimmu, modern Gurun on the Upper Euphrates.

10:4 Elishah. Alashia on the south coast of Cyprus. Tarshish. Tarsus in Cilicia, the Adana region of modern Turkey. Kittites. Kition in Cyprus. Rodanites. Associated with the Greek island of Rhodes.

10:6 sons of Ham. These include Egypt and Canaan, areas south of the land of Israel. Cush. Sudan. Put. Coastal Libya.

10:7 Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteka ... Sheba and Dedan. On the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula or across the straits in Eritria and Djibouti. Raamah includes the western coastal area of Arabia, with Sheba in the south (1 Kgs 10:1-13; 2 Chr 9:1-12) and Dedan in the north.

10:8 Nimrod. In Hebrew this name uses a verbal form meaning "to rebel." He is connected with warfare, hunting, and ruling cities in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). He is a mighty hunter and kingdom ¹⁰The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon,^b Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in^{*a*} Shinar.^{*b*c 11}From that land he went to Assyria,^d where he built Nineveh,^e Rehoboth Ir,^{*c*} Calah ¹²and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah — which is the great city.

13 Egypt was the father of

the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines^f came) and Caphtorites.

¹⁵Canaan^g was the father of

Sidon^h his firstborn,^d and of the Hittites,^{i 16}Jebusites,^j Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite^k clans scattered ¹⁹and the borders of Canaan¹ reached from Sidon^m toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, as far as Lasha.

²⁰These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

The Semites

10:21-31pp — Ge 11:10-27; 1Ch 1:17-27

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was^e Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.ⁿ

22 The sons of Shem:

Elam,^o Ashur, Arphaxad,^p Lud and Aram.

²³The sons of Aram:

Uz,^q Hul, Gether and Meshek.^f

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of^g Shelah,

and Shelah the father of Eber."

²⁵Two sons were born to Eber:

One was named Peleg, b because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

^a 10 Or Uruk and Akkad — all of them in ^b 10 That is, Babylonia ^c 11 Or Nineveh with its city squares ^d 15 Or of the Sidonians, the foremost ^e 21 Or Shem, the older brother of ^f 23 See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew Masb. ^g 24 Hebrew; Septuagint father of Cainan, and Cainan was the father of ^b 25 Peleg means division.

builder (vv. 9-12), and his name may suggest that he is "against Yahweh." Later, both the Assyrians and the Babylonians are responsible for the destruction of Israel and Judah, respectively. In the light of how violence is picked up in the early chapters of Genesis, Nimrod appears to be the antithesis of what God wants, using power to build cities and kingdoms that stand in opposition to God's kingdom and city.

10:10 Nimrod's lordship of Babylon and Shinar (the ancient name for Babylonia) may suggest a connection with the tower of Babel (11:2,9; see note on 11:9). **Uruk [Erech], Akkad and Kalneh.** The region of Babylon along the southern Euphrates River.

10:11 Assyria. Along the Tigris River north of Uruk, Akkad, and Kalneh. Nineveh. A capital of Assyria. Rehoboth Ir. The Hebrew means "squares/spaces of (the) city" (see NIV text note). Calah. An Assyrian city. 10:12 Resen. Unknown.

10:13–14 The names are organized according to the number of consonants they contain rather than any geographic relationship. Ludites. Lydia in western Turkey. Anamites. Unknown. Lehabites. May be Libyans, though the name is spelled differently elsewhere (2 Chr 12:3; 16:8; Isa 66:19; Ezek 30:5; Dan 11:43; Nah 3:9). Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Kasluhites. Associated with the delta, southern Egypt, and elsewhere in northern Egypt (before Kasluhites moved to Greek islands, possibly where the Philistines came from). Caphtorites. Cretans.

10:15 – 19 Sidon. A coastal Lebanese city; Sidonians is another name for Phoenicians. Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites.

Inhabitants of Canaan who are to be removed when God gives the land to Israel (Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10). They probably originated in south Turkey (the Hittites were a kingdom in Turkey) and northwest Syria (if the Amorites are Amurru [Josh 13:4] and not the inhabitants of the hill country near the Jordan River [Deut 1:4,7]). **Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.** Kingdoms in northwest Syria. **Canaan.** An area known in Egyptian records of the second millennium BC and in early biblical texts (Num 13:17,21–22; 34:3–12; Josh 1:4) but not later. **Gaza.** Ancient and modern city at the southern boundary of Canaan along the Mediterranean. The eastern border of Canaan is the Jordan Valley, with Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim (14:2,8) southward and Lasha (Israelite Dan; Judg 18:29) in the north.

10:21 – 31 Ch. 11 repeats these descendants except for Joktan, the brother of Peleg (whose name means "divide, division"; see v. 25). Most of the places are east of the land of Israel.

10:22 sons of Shem. Shem is the origin of the term Semite. Elam. At the Persian Gulf. Ashur. A capital of Assyria (see v. 11 and note). Aram. The Arameans north and east of the land of Israel.

10:23 Uz. Job's land (Job 1:1). Hul, Gether. Appear elsewhere only in 1 Chr 1:17. Meshek. See note on v. 2.

10:25 Eber. This is the name from which the term "Hebrew" is derived. **the earth was divided.** This may refer to the division of people in 11:1-9 (see 10:8-12 and notes).

10:10 b Ge 11:9 CGe 11:2 10:11 d Ps 83:8; Mic 5:6 ^e Jnh 1:2; 4:11; Na 1:1 10:14 fGe 21:32.34: 26:1,8 10:15 ⁹ ver 6; Ge 9:18 hEze 28:21 Ge 23:3,20 10:16 11.4 10:18 KGe 12:6; Ex 13:11 10:19 Ge 11:31: 13:12: 17:8 m ver 15 10:21 "ver 24; Nu 24:24 10:22 º Jer 49:34 PLk 3:36 10:23 9 Job 1:1 10:24 'ver 21

10:32 *ver 1 *Ge 9:19 11:2 *Ge 10:10 11:3 *Ex 1:14 **Ge 14:10 11:4 *Dt 1:28; 9:1 *Ge 6:4 *Dt 4:27 11:5 *ver 7; Ge 18:21; Ex 3:8; 19:11, 18, 20 11:7 *Ge 1:26 *Ge 42:23 11:8 *Ge 9:19; Lk 1:51 11:9 *Ge 1:19; Ck 1:51 ²⁶ Joktan was the father of

Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

³⁰The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country. ³¹These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

³²These are the clans of Noah's sons,^s according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth^t after the flood.

The Tower of Babel

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ²As people moved eastward,^{*a*} they found a plain in Shinar^{*b*u} and settled there.

³They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks" and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar^w for mortar. ⁴Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens,^x so that we may make a name^y for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."^z

⁵But the LORD came down^a to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us^b go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."^c

⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, ^d and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why it was called Babel^{ce} — because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

^{*a*} 2 Or *from the east*; or *in the east* ^{*b*} 2 That is, Babylonia ^{*c*} 9 That is, Babylon; *Babel* sounds like the Hebrew for *confused*.

10:26 Joktan. Most of the descendants of Joktan are unknown. **10:27 Hadoram.** Related to Syrian Hamath (v. 18; 1 Chr 18:9–10). **Uzal.** Associated with Danites and Greeks (Ezek 27:19 "Izal").

10:28 Sheba. See v. 7 and note.

10:29 Ophir. Coastal land famous for gold (1 Kgs 9:28; 10:11; 22:48). **Havilah.** See v. 7; 2:10–14 and notes. **Jobab.** The name of an Edomite king (36:33; 1 Chr 1:44) and a king of Madon, north of the land of Israel (Josh 11:1).

10:30 Mesha ... Sephar. Unknown.

10:32 the nations spread out. This does not happen until after the tower of Babel incident (11:1–9), so this verse does not follow chronological order.

11:1-9 *The Tower of Babel.* The people of the earth want to make a name for themselves, even if this means opposing God. God's creation of the many languages of the human race leads them to spread across the earth and give up their defiant plans.

11:2 people moved eastward. In the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent, the waters of the Persian Gulf receded in the fourth millennium BC. There is archaeological evidence that people lived there. People who have not yet "spread out over the earth" (10:32) settle in Shinar (i.e., Babylon, 10:10). They band together for security.

11:3 bake them thoroughly. Mud bricks can simply dry in the heat of the sun, but the strongest ones were fired in kilns. Oven-fired bricks were more expensive and used only for the facades of special buildings. **brick instead of stone.** Brick is characteristic building material in Mesopotamia, where it is far more abundant than building stone.

11:4 tower. Hebrew *migdāl*. It usually refers to a fortress and emphasizes security. Here it may be associated with the pyramid-shaped ziggurats that humans in early Mesopotamian cities used to access the divine world of the god they worshiped. In some views, the ziggurat was primarily a staircase for the god; the temple was

near the bottom of the stairs that went up the side of the ziggurat. The city was built to house the ziggurat, the temple, and other buildings for the priests, king, and army. **a name**. A reputation guaranteeing that one would be honored after death. This account intentionally contrasts with Abram and the "name" God promises him (12:1-3) by calling him out from the same urban environment and into a "backwater" land with little promise for security and worldly success. Because the people feared being "scattered" and were vulnerable, they planned to unite and build a powerful fortress that would allow them to call down their god to protect them and their descendants.

11:5 the Lorp came down to see. The builders constructed their tower to the heavens. Ironically, God had to descend to reach them.

11:6 nothing they plan to do will be impossible. It will not be beyond their reach. The tower is a central fortress that opposes God's plans. Cities, though at times blessed by God (e.g., Jerusalem) and centers for the expansion of the gospel (as in Acts), can also be evil centers of rebellion against God.

11:7 us. The plural pronoun may reflect the divine court, where decisions are made that overturn the deliberations of any human court, or it may suggest God's self-reflection as a deity far more complex in personhood than other gods (see note on 1:26). **confuse**. Hebrew *n-b-1*, a wordplay on "brick" (Hebrew *I-b-n*). This does not permanently remove the danger of the city, but it mitigates the threat of a one-world government where no alternative worship is allowed.

11:9 Babel. Babylon (see 10:8 – 10 and notes). Babel (Hebrew *b-b-l*) is a wordplay on "confused" (Hebrew *n-b-l*; see note on v. 7). The name "Babel" is translated as "Babylon" everywhere else in the OT. Babylon becomes symbolic of human opposition to God and the antithesis of the city that God desires to have constructed for his glory on the earth.

From Shem to Abram

11:10-27pp — Ge 10:21-31; 1Ch 1:17-27

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family line.

Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father^{*a*} of Arphaxad. ¹¹And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

 12 When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. $^{f\,13}$ And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.^b

¹⁴When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug.⁹ ²¹And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. ²³And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah.^{h 25}And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram,ⁱ Nahor^j and Haran.

Abram's Family

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.^{k 28}While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans,¹ in the land of his birth.²⁹Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai,^m and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah;ⁿ she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah.³⁰Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.⁰

^{*a*} 10 Father may mean ancestor; also in verses 11-25. ^{*b*} 12,13 Hebrew; Septuagint (see also Luke 3:35, 36 and note at Gen. 10:24) 35 years, be became the father of Cainan. ¹³And after be became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and bad other sons and daughters, and then be died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, be became the father of Shelab. And after be became the father of Shelab, Cainan lived 330 years and bad other sons and daughters

11:10–26 From Shem to Abram. This genealogy forms the most direct line in Genesis, with no notes or glosses. It is regular and formulaic, suggesting an interest only in recording the line to show the connection between Shem and Abram. The life spans of these patriarchs before Abram's grandfather remain unusually long, gradually descending from 500 to 200 years. Perhaps this demonstrates the effects of sin on even the best of the human race. See 6:3 and note.

11:10 account. See note on 2:4. **Shem.** Means "name," perhaps related to the "name" the Babel builders wanted and the "name" God promised Abram (see v. 4; 12:2 and notes).

11:18 Reu. The name means "friend" or "shepherd." Cf. Reuel, "friend of God" (Exod 2:18).

11:20–26 Serug ... Nahor ... Terah. Also place-names in the region of Harran in northern Mesopotamia. The homeland for Abram was in this region. Ur may have been a branch of the "family business" (Josh 24:2).

11:27—**25:18** The Family of Abraham. A new heading introduces the next major narrative section in Genesis. Almost every episode in 11:27—25:18 involves Abraham, who plays a very significant role in the outworking of God's redemptive plan.

11:27-32 Abram's Family. These verses provide background information essential for understanding the subsequent story: the death of Abram's brother, Haran, the father of Lot; the barrenness of Abram's wife, Sarai; the relocation of Terah's family to northern Mesopotamia. **11:27 This is the account of.** Marks the start of a new section in Genesis. The heading introduces Terah's immediate family. **Abram**. God

esis. The heading introduces Terah's immediate family. **Abram.** God later renames him Abraham (17:5). **11:28 Ur of the Chaldeans.** The remains of the ancient city of Ur,

located at Tell el-Muqayyar in Iraq, were excavated by Leonard Woolley from 1922 to 1934. His investigations revealed the existence of a well-developed urban culture at the end of the third millennium and the start of the second millennium BC, around the time that Terah's family lived there. To distinguish it from other cities with the same name, Ur is associated with the Chaldeans. The Kaldu people settled in southern Babylon about 1200 BC, giving their name to the region. The designation "of the Chaldeans" probably belongs to the period 1000–500 BC and is anachronistic, reflecting, like some other place-names in Genesis, geographic knowledge from a later time when the text of Genesis was updated. See Introduction to the Pentateuch, pp. 12–13.

11:29 Sarai. Later renamed Sarah (17:15).

11:30 childless. Sarai's inability to have children is a major obstacle to the fulfillment of God's promise that Abram will have many descendants and become a great nation (12:2). The same problem recurs with Rebekah (25:21) and Rachel (29:31). In each case, God enables a son to

 $\begin{array}{l} \textbf{11:12} \ {}^{t}Lk \ 3:35 \\ \textbf{11:20} \ {}^{t}Lk \ 3:35 \\ \textbf{11:24} \ {}^{h}Lk \ 3:34 \\ \textbf{11:26} \ {}^{t}Lk \ 3:34 \ J_{JOS} \ 24:2 \\ \textbf{11:27} \ {}^{t}ver \ 31; \ 6e \ 12:2 \\ \textbf{12:27} \ {}^{t}ver \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:28} \ {}^{t}ver \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:29} \ {}^{t}wer \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:29} \ {}^{t}wer \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:29} \ {}^{t}wer \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:29} \ {}^{t}wer \ 31; \ 6e \ 15:7 \\ \textbf{11:30} \ {}^{t}wer \ 6e \ 16:1; \ 18:11 \\ \end{array}$

11:31 P Ge 15:7; Ne 9:7; Ac 7:4 9 Ge 10:19 12:1 'Ac 7:3*; Heb 11:8 12:2 °Ge 15:5: 17:2.4: 18:18; 22:17; Dt 26:5 tGe 24:1,35 12:3 "Ge 27:29; Ex 23:22: Nu 24:9 VGe 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; Ac 3:25; Gal 3:8* 12:4 "Ge 11:31 12:5 × Ge 14:14; 17:23 12:6 ^yHeb 11:9 ^zGe 35:4; Dt 11:30 ^aGe 10:18 12:7 b Ge 17:1; 18:1; Ex 6:3 °Ge 13:15,17; 15:18; 17:8; Ps 105:9-11 ^dGe 13:4

³¹Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans^p to go to Canaan.^q But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

³²Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

The Call of Abram

2 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."

² "I will make you into a great nation,^s and I will bless you;^t
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.^a
³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;^u and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.^{vn b}

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.^{w 5}He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people^x they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

⁶Abram traveled through the land^y as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh² at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites^a were in the land. ⁷The LORD appeared to Abram^b and said, "To your offspring^c I will give this land."^c So he built an altar there to the LORD,^d who had appeared to him.

^a 2 Or be seen as blessed ^b 3 Or earth / will use your name in blessings (see 48:20) ^c 7 Or seed

be born who becomes an important link in the unique family line traced throughout Genesis.

11:31 Terah's family moves from southern to northern Mesopotamia. Harran. Located in Turkey at Eskiharran, the modern name meaning "old Harran." In Hebrew script the place-name Harran differs markedly from the name of Lot's father (Haran).

11:32 205 years. Taking into account the numbers given in v. 26 and 12:4, Terah would have been 145 years old when Abram left Harran. If Terah lived for 205 years, he would have died long after Abram's departure for Canaan. Yet in Acts 7:4 Stephen states that Abram departed from Harran after Terah's death. Stephen's remark corresponds with the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, a very early version of Genesis through Deuteronomy, which claims that Terah died when he was 145 years old. The figure of 205 years may be due to a mistake by an early copyist.

12:1-9 *The Call of Abram.* Having set the scene in 11:27–32, the account of Abram's relationship with God begins with a significant agenda-setting speech that will influence both Abram's immediate future and the long-term future of all humanity.

12:1 – 3 God's invitation to Abram is a key passage in the book of Genesis. It places Abram at the heart of God's plans to reverse all that has gone wrong since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden (3:22–24). Adam and Eve's disobedience resulted in divine displeasure and curses; Abram's obedience will bring blessing. God's call requires Abram to exercise tremendous faith. He must first abandon the security of family and country and then travel to a foreign land, confidently believing that God will give him both descendants and land, essential ingredients in order to become a "great nation" (12:2). At the time of his call, Abram and Sarai are childless (11:30).

12:2 name great. The promise that God will make Abram famous comes in the wake of the failed ambitions of the city-builders of Babel (11:4–8) and possibly has royal connotations (2 Sam 7:9). While God's promises have an explicit national dimension, this is subservient to the international aspect that marks the climax of the speech.

12:3 bless those who bless you. The theme of God's blessing others through Abram later links to the line of descendants traced initially through Isaac and Jacob (22:18; 26:4; 27:29; 28:14). In the NT Paul sees in this promise of blessing an advance announcement of the gospel (Gal 3:8), the blessing coming ultimately through Jesus Christ, the "seed" of Abraham (Gal 3:16; see Gen 22:18 and NIV text note). The apostle Peter likewise associates Jesus Christ with the fulfillment of God's promise to bless the families of the earth (Acts 3:25–26). Although the initial promises of nationhood and international blessing are conditional upon Abram's obedience, God later guarantees these by making two covenants with Abram (chs. 15; 17). See "Covenant," p. 2646.

12:4 Abram went. In faith Abram obeys God's call (Heb 11:8). **Lot.** Although he is sufficiently wealthy to have remained in Harran (13:5–6), since his father is dead (11:28), Lot decides that his future will be served best by accompanying Abram, his uncle. This too is an act of faith on the part of Lot.

12:5 people they had acquired. Abram appears to have had a substantial number of men attached to his household; some were bought from foreigners (17:12) and some were born in his household. Gen 14:14 refers to 318 trained men. Lot also had a separate retinue of men (13:7). 12:6 traveled through the land. Abram's journey brings him to Shechem in Canaan. His lifestyle as a seminomadic herdsman involved living in a tent away from urban settlements. Occasionally large trees identify the locations of his encampments (13:18). Heb 11:8–16 emphasizes that Abram intentionally lived in a tent because he anticipated the creation of a city designed and built by God. This hope distinguishes him from the God-defiant city-builders of Babel (11:1–9). Canaanites were in the land. Although God promises Abram the land of Canaan, it is already occupied.

12:7 The Lorb appeared. Genesis records a number of occasions when God appeared to the patriarchs. God pledges to transform Abram's present circumstances; at this stage Abram is both childless and landless. ⁸From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel^e and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. **12:8** ° Ge 13:3 **12:9** ^fGe 13:1,3

⁹Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.^f

Abram in Egypt

12:10-20Ref — Ge 20:1-18; 26:1-11

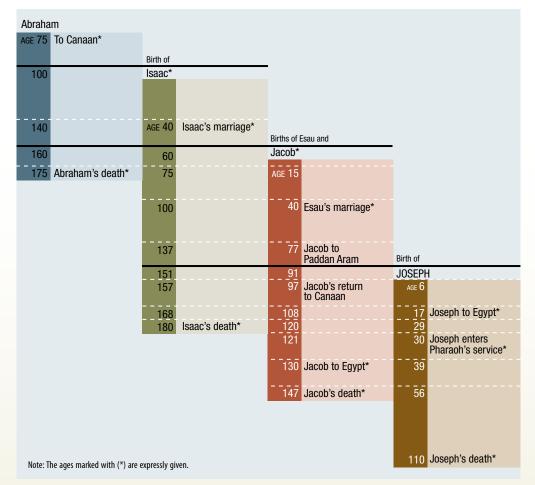
¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. ¹¹As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will

12:8 Bethel. Means "house of God" in Hebrew. **built an altar.** The religious practices of the patriarchs predate the construction of the tabernacle and later the temple. The altars built by the patriarchs anticipate a future time when God will dwell on the earth permanently. Although they did not view God as residing at these altars, they could encounter him there (Exod 20:24). Their existence served as reminders of the patriarch's special relationship with God and the promise of land.

12:9 Negev. Means "south" in Hebrew. See map, p. 2866. Abram moves southward from Shechem, eventually coming by stages to the Negev.
12:10-20 Abram in Egypt. Egypt was better equipped than Canaan to withstand famine caused by drought because of irrigation along the banks of the Nile River. Given Abram's southward trek from Harran to Canaan, Egypt was a natural place to seek refuge.

12:11-13 Rather than trusting in God's protection, Abram selfishly devises a cunning ruse.

INTEGRATED CHRONOLOGY OF THE PATRIARCHS



12:13 9 Ge 20:2; 26:7 12:17 h 1Ch 16:21 12:18 Ge 20:9: 26:10 13:1 Ge 12:9 13:3 KGe 12:8 13:4 Ge 12:7 kill me but will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister,⁹ so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

¹⁴When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. ¹⁵And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household^h because of Abram's wife Sarai. 18So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" i he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" ²⁰Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abram and Lot Separate

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev,^j with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went With him. ²Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

³From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, ^k to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴ and where he had first built an altar.¹ There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

⁵Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were

12:16 camels. It is often stated that references to camels in Genesis are anachronistic because camels were not domesticated until the end of the second millennium BC. Archaeological evidence for the early domestication of camels is understandably limited given their use in desert regions. Even in Genesis they are usually mentioned in contexts involving long-distance travel close to deserts (e.g., 24:10-64; 31:17,34; 37:25). Recent research, however, suggests that people used camels as early as the third millennium BC. Genesis tends to mention them at the very end of lists of possessions (30:43; 32:7), possibly suggesting that they were the least numerous of the animals the patriarchs owned. 12:17 serious diseases. A minimum of detail is given regarding Pharaoh's punishment. There is no reason to assume that these are related to any of the diseases recorded in Exod 7-12.

13:1-18 Abram and Lot Separate. After they return to Canaan, a conflict over pastureland causes Abram to give his nephew Lot first choice of the land. However, after the two men part company, God reiterates his promise to Abram that his descendants will possess all of Canaan.

13:6 land could not support them. The hill country to the east of Bethel (v. 3) provides inadequate pasture for all the livestock Abram and Lot own.



ABRAM'S TRAVELS

not able to stay together.^{m 7}And quarrelingⁿ arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land^o at that time.

⁸So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me,^p or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives.^q ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

¹⁰Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar^r was well watered, like the garden of the LORD,⁸ like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)^{t 11}So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹²Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain^u and pitched his tents near Sodom.^{v 13}Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.^w

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.^{x 15}All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring^{*a*} forever.^{y 16}I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land,^z for I am giving it to you."

 18 So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre^a at Hebron,^b where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.^c

Abram Rescues Lot

14 At the time when Amraphel was king of Shinar,^{bd} Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goyim, ²these kings went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim,^e and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).^{f 3}All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea Valley^g). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

⁵In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites^h in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites¹ in Shaveh Kiriathaim ⁶and the Horites¹ in the hill country of Seir,^k as far as El Paran¹ near the desert. ⁷Then they turned back and went to

^a 15 Or seed; also in verse 16 ^b 1 That is, Babylonia; also in verse 9

13:7 Canaanites and Perizzites. The presence of other inhabitants probably also limited the pastureland available to the livestock of Abram and Lot.

13:10 well watered. An abundance of water made the Jordan Valley an obvious choice for Lot, especially after the famine mentioned in 12:10. But the fertility of the land masks a hidden danger. **Sodom and Gomorrah.** Linked in 10:19 to Canaan, Noah's grandson, whom Noah cursed (9:25–27). The brief remark about their destruction anticipates the fuller description in ch. 19. The original location of these cities is unknown, although they were probably situated near the southern end of the Dead Sea.

13:11–12 Separating from Abram, Lot camps near Sodom. When we next read of him, he has settled within the city (14:12; see 19:3–11). In sharp contrast to Abram, the men of Sodom are antagonistic toward the Lord. As subsequent events reveal, Lot's choice seriously endangers his well-being on two occasions (chs. 14; 19).

13:16 like the dust of the earth. Although Abram remains childless, the Lord promises him that his descendants will be numerous. Elsewhere, God compares Abram's descendants to the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore (22:17; see 15:5).

13:18 altar. The one built by Abraham near Hebron was located relatively close to those mentioned in 12:6-8. All three altars were constructed in what would later be the central regions of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

14:1 – 24 Abram Rescues Lot. When a foreign confederation of four kings defeats an alliance of five Canaanite kings, they take captive Abram's nephew Lot. After Abram returns from successfully rescuing Lot and other captives, the kings of Sodom and Salem greet him. Abram's different responses to the two kings are exceptionally important, revealing how Abram rejects the spoils of battle in order to enhance his own standing within the land of Canaan. Although his defeat of the invading kings provides Abram with an opportunity to enrich himself further, he places his future hope in God, affirming through the gift of a tithe the truthfulness of Melchizedek's remarks. The events of this chapter portray Abram as worthy of royal status.

14:1-4 A dispute between two groups of kings results in a conflict in the Jordan Valley, where Lot is living. For 12 years the local kings have been subject to a foreign coalition composed of kings from the region of Mesopotamia and beyond. Although these kings are not known in existing extrabiblical sources, their names are typical of the territories associated with them.

14:1 Shinar. Region of southern Mesopotamia, later known as Babylonia (10:10; see Josh 7:21 and NIV text note). **Ellasar.** Possibly northern Mesopotamia, the name "Arioch" having been found in ancient texts from Mari and Nuzi. **Elam.** Region to the east of southern Mesopotamia. Only in the early second millennium BC is there evidence of Elamite armies advancing westward into Mesopotamia and possibly onward to Canaan. **Tidal.** The name may be of Hittite origin. The insertion of explanatory names in vv. 1-8 (e.g., Zoar [vv. 2,8] and Kadesh [v. 7]) point to the antiquity of this account.

14:5-7 Before they arrive in the Jordan Valley, the foreign coalition defeats various tribal groups whose territories lie along the King's Highway in Transjordan. After reaching the Gulf of Aqabah, they travel northward to Hazezon Tamar, known as En Gedi in 2 Chr 20:2.

13:6 m Ge 36:7 13:7 "Ge 26:20,21 ° Ge 12:6 13:8 PPr 15:18: 20:3 Ps 133:1 13:10 ' Ge 19:22.30 ^sGe 2:8-10; Isa 51:3 tGe 14:8; 19:17-29 13:12 "Ge 19:17,25,29 VGe 14:12 13:13 "Ge 18:20; Eze 16:49-50; 2Pe 2:8 13:14 × Ge 28:14: Dt 3:27 13:15 'Ge 12:7: Gal 3:16* 13:17 z ver 15; Nu 13:17-25 13:18 a Ge 14:13,24; 18:1 b Ge 35:27 c Ge 8:20 14:1 dGe 10:10 14:2 °Ge 10:19 ^fGe 13:10 14:3 9Nu 34:3, 12; Dt 3:17; Jos 3:16; 15:2,5 14:5 h Ge 15:20; Dt 2:11, 20 ⁱDt 2:10 14:6 JDt 2:12,22 KDt 2:1, 5,22 Ge 21:21; Nu 10:12

14:7 m 2Ch 20:2 14:8 " Ge 13:10; 19:17-29 ° Dt 29:23 14:10 P Ge 19:17.30 14:13 9 ver 24: Ge 13:18 14:14 'Ge 15:3 °Dt 34:1; Jdg 18:29 14:17 t2Sa 18:18 14:18 "Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6 * Ps 76:2; Heb 7:2 14:19 "Heb 7:6 *ver 22 14:20 yGe 24:27 2 Ge 28:22; Dt 26:12; Heb 7:4 14:22 a Ex 6:8; Da 12:7; Rev 10:5-6

En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazezon Tamar.^m

⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah,ⁿ the king of Admah, the king of Zeboyim^o and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim ⁹against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar — four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills.^p ¹¹The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. ¹²They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

¹³A man who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre^q the Amorite, a brother^{*a*} of Eshkol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household^r and went in pursuit as far as Dan.^{\$ 15}During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

¹⁷After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).^t

¹⁸Then Melchizedek^u king of Salem^v brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹and he blessed Abram,^w saying,

> "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.[×]
> ²⁰ And praise be to God Most High,^y who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.^z

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself."

²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "With raised hand^a I have sworn an oath to the LORD, God

^a 13 Or a relative; or an ally

14:8–11 Unable to repel the invading coalition, the local kings flee in disarray, leaving the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to be plundered.

14:13 Hebrew. Against the background of all the different ethnic groups mentioned in the first part of this chapter, Abram is designated a Hebrew. This is the first occurrence of this term in the Bible. It may be associated with the name Eber, first mentioned in 10:21, from whom the Israelites are descended. Although similar sounding, the name Hebrew is not associated with the people referred to as *habiru/hapiru* in the el-Amarna tablets of the fourteenth century BC.

14:14 trained men. This translates a rare Hebrew word that possibly refers to those who have had some form of military training. Through a surprise attack at night, Abram's relatively small force successfully routs their opponents, who flee northward toward their own territories (v. 15). Dan. The name that the Israelites gave to the city of Laish after they captured it (Judg 18:27-29). See Introduction to the Pentateuch, p. 9. 14:17-24 The different responses of the kings of Salem and Sodom to Abram's victory contrast a God-centered approach to life with a humancentered one. Recognizing God's place in human affairs, Abram is not prepared to enhance his own status within the land of Canaan by taking what belonged to others, even when it is captured in battle. Abram distances himself from the "winner takes all" attitude of the king of Sodom. Abram will not use the military power available to him to take control of the land of Canaan; rather, he waits on God to reward him (cf. 15:1). Genesis condemns the misuse of violence as a perversion of humanity's divinely given authority over the earth.

14:17 Valley of Shaveh. Later known as the King's Valley (2 Sam 18:18), it was east of Jerusalem.

14:18 Melchizedek. This form of name was common among second-

millennium BC Canaanites. Scholars debate its original meaning; it could possibly mean "Melek is just," "Zedek is my king," or "My king is just" (cf. Malkiel, meaning "El is my king," in 46:17), where Melek and Zedek are divine names. By NT times, the name was understood to mean "king of righteousness" (Heb 7:2). Although little is known of him, as a priest-king of Jerusalem associated with both righteousness and peace, Melchizedek became a figure of special significance (see Ps 110:4). The author of Hebrews argues that Jesus Christ is a priest belonging to the "order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,17); because Abram gives him a tithe. Melchizedek's priestly order is superior to the priests associated with the tribe of Levi (see Heb 5:5-10: 6:20-7:28 and notes). Salem. A shortened form of Jerusalem (Ps 76:2). "Salem" also resembles the Hebrew word for peace (Heb 7:2). God Most High. This is one of several designations Genesis uses for God in which various attributes gualify "EI," the common Semitic term for God (e.g., '*ēl rŏ*'*î*, "the God who sees me" [16:13]; '*ēl šadday*, "God Almighty" [17:1]; 'el'ôlām, "the Eternal God" [21:33]).

14:19 Creator of heaven and earth. Melchizedek's description of God implies that God is more than simply the creator of everything. He is also its possessor, a striking affirmation in the light of the human conflict over territory in the opening part of this chapter. Rejecting God's ownership of the earth lies at the heart of human sin.

14:20 a tenth. In order to affirm Melchizedek's remarks, Abram gives him a tithe, or tenth, of the recovered goods.

14:22 – 24 Abram swiftly dismisses the king of Sodom's offer. He will not become indebted to the king of Sodom in order to fulfill God's plan that he become a "great nation" (12:2). Although Abram has demonstrated that he is more than the equal of earthly kings, he recognizes Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,^b ²³that I will accept nothing belonging to you,^c not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' ²⁴I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me — to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share."

The Lord's Covenant With Abram

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram^d in a vision:

"Do not be afraid,^e Abram. I am your shield,^{af} your very great reward.^b"

²But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless⁹ and the one who will inherit^c my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant^h in my household will be my heir."

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars^j— if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring^d be."^k

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.¹

⁷He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

⁸But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, how can I know^m that I will gain possession of it?"

⁹So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other,ⁿ the birds, however, he did not cut in half.⁰ ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep,^p and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years^q your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved^r and mistreated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out⁸ with great possessions. ^{t 15}You,

^{*a*} 1 Or sovereign ^{*b*} 1 Or shield; / your reward will be very great ^{*c*} 2 The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain. ^{*d*} 5 Or seed

that such greatness comes from God and is not the product of merely human effort.

15:1–21 *The Lord's Covenant With Abram.* The related issues of descendants and land dominate this chapter; both are essential to the future creation of a great nation. Whereas vv. 1–6 focus on Abram's childlessness, vv. 7–21 address the issue of how Abram can be certain that his descendants will possess the land of Canaan. The earlier conditional promise of nationhood (12:2) is now strengthened by a covenant that guarantees unconditionally a future fulfillment centuries after Abram's death.

15:1 very great reward. The events of ch. 15 are a sequel to Abram's rejection of the plunder taken from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Rather than place his hope in wealth acquired by force, Abram looks to God. Possibly, Abram's vision occurs at night, for v. 5 indicates that numerous stars are visible.

15:2 Eliezer of Damascus. His identity is uncertain; he is mentioned by name only here. He is highly trusted by Abram and is perhaps a slave who came originally from Damascus. During his journey to Canaan, Abram probably acquired men to look after his herds and flocks (17:23,27). Ancient Near Eastern texts provide examples of childless couples adopting a member of their household to be their heir. Because the meaning of the Hebrew text is slightly obscure (see NIV text note), the interpretation of this verse should be approached cautiously.

15:6 This verse is highly significant within the episode. Descriptive comments like this are very rare in OT narratives and are all the more important when they occur. Abram's trust in God becomes the basis upon which God views him as righteous. Only later is Abram circumcised (17:23-27). The concept of righteousness based on faith becomes an important biblical principle for how people are brought into a right relationship with God. In the NT Paul quotes this verse three times (Rom 4:3,22; Gal 3:6) to argue that Gentile Christians can be righteous through faith without being circumcised (Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:1-9). The apostle James observes that Abram's faith later expresses itself in good works (Jas 2:21-24).

15:9–17 The ritual described here has been interpreted in different ways. Based on possible parallels with Jer 34:18–19, this may be a self-curse in which God indicates that he will become like the dead animals if he breaks his promise to Abram. Alternatively, the "smoking firepot" (v. 17) may represent God; the animals, Abram's descendants; and the birds of prey, their enemies. If we adopt the symbolism of this second alternative, this unusual event anticipates the future presence of God among the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt.

15:13 four hundred years. God indicates clearly to Abram that his descendants will take possession of the land of Canaan only after a long period of time has elapsed. This figure, which may refer to all of the time spent in the foreign land and not just the period of oppression, is probably best understood as a round number, equivalent to the expression "four centuries" in English. Although Exod 12:40 states that the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, for at least 70 of these years they enjoyed protection from oppression while Joseph was still alive.

14:22 b ver 19 14:23 ° 2Ki 5:16 15:1 dDa 10:1 e Ge 21:17: 26:24: 46:3: 2Ki 6:16; Ps 27:1; Isa 41:10, 13-14 Dt 33:29; 2Sa 22:3,31; Ps 3:3 15:2 9Ac 7:5 15:3 h Ge 24:2.34 15:4 Gal 4:28 15:5 Ps 147:4; Jer 33.22 KGe 12.2 22.17. Fx 32.13. Ro 4:18*; Heb 11:12 15:6 Ps 106:31; Ro 4:3*, 20-24*; Gal 3:6*; Jas 2:23* 15:8 mLk 1:18 15:10 "ver 17; Jer 34:18 Lev 1:17 15:12 PGe 2:21 15:13 9 ver 16; Ex 12:40; Ac 7.6 17 Fx 1.11 15:14 SAc 7:7* tEx 12:32-38

15:15 "Ge 25:8 15:16 "1Ki 21:26 15:17 "ver 10 15:18 "Ge 12:7 "Nu 34:5 16:1 "Ge 11:30; Gal 4:24-25 "Ge 21:9 16:2 "Ge 30:3-4,9-10 16:3 "Ge 21:7; 16:5 "Ge 31:53 16:7 "Ge 21:17; 22:11, 15; 31:11 "Ge 20:1 16:10 "Ge 13:16; 17:20 however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.^{u 16}In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites^v has not yet reached its full measure.^u

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.^w ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land,^x from the Wadi^a of Egypt^y to the great river, the Euphrates — ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.^z But she had an Egyptian slave^a named Hagar; ²so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."^b

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan^c ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."^d

6"Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the LORD^e found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.¹⁸And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

⁹Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."⁹

¹¹The angel of the LORD also said to her:

"You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son.

^a 18 Or river

15:16 the sin of the Amorites. The population of Canaan consisted of various ethnic groups, among whom the Amorites appear to have been well established (vv. 19–21), especially in the hill country where the Israelites settled first (Num 13:29; Deut 1:7). God will dispossess the Amorites of their territory because of their immoral behavior. While God displays patience in not punishing them immediately, he will not tolerate their immorality forever. Later, the populations of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah will experience similar punishment for living immorally and disregarding their covenant commitments to God.

15:17 Assuming that vv. 1-6 are set during the night, Abram must have taken most of the day to prepare the animals. **a smoking firepot** with a blazing torch. After sunset this passes between the pieces. Since God's presence is frequently linked directly to fire (e.g., Exod 3:2; 13:21-22; 14:24; 19:18), it may be assumed that he is the one who passes between the divided animals.

15:18–21 The chapter concludes with a summary confirming that God made a covenant through which he pledged unconditionally to give to Abram's descendants the land of Canaan. This covenant guarantees that God will fulfill his earlier promise to make Abram into a great nation (12:2). All that is solemnly pledged here comes to fulfillment for a brief period during the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 4:21). The boundaries of the land extend from the Euphrates in the north to the Wadi of Egypt in the south (see v. 18 and note).

15:18 Wadi of Egypt. May refer to the eastern branch of the Nile (although this is not the usual Hebrew word for the Nile). Alternatively, it may refer to the Wadi el Arish, which lies to the east of the Nile.

16:1 – 16 Hagar and Ishmael. Sarai's desire to provide an heir for Abram

prompts her to adopt a custom referred to in a few ancient Near Eastern texts. Sarai offers her Egyptian maidservant Hagar to Abram in the hope that Hagar will bear a son on her behalf. After Hagar conceives, friction develops between the two women, causing Hagar to run away. In the end God sees Hagar's plight and persuades her to return. Perhaps Abram mistakenly assumes that Ishmael is the heir God promised. **16:3 wife**. Hagar's status changes from servant to wife, although she still has a secondary position within the household in relation to Sarai (25:6). Abram's taking a second wife does not indicate that God sanc-

tions bigamy. This was not something God required in order to fulfill his promises. Abram's actions hinder rather than help the outworking of God's plan for Abram. Scripture always portrays taking additional wives as problematic and less than the ideal.

16:5-6 Responding to the rift that develops between the two women, Abram acquiesces to Sarai's demand. As a result, Sarai treats Hagar harshly. Of Egyptian descent, Hagar flees toward her homeland.

16:7 angel of the Lond. The Hebrew word for "angel" may also denote a "messenger," and angels may have the appearance of human beings (18:2). While the expression "angel of the Lond" may denote a creature other than the Lord, it seems more likely in this instance, as sometimes elsewhere (e.g., Exod 3:2–4), that this is God himself. Not only does the angel speak with divine authority, but afterward Hagar refers to her experience in terms of having seen God (v. 13).

16:10 As a reward, the angel promises Hagar numerous descendants. This may have encouraged Abram to see Hagar's child as the divinely promised heir.

16:11 Ishmael. Hagar calls her son "God hears" (see NIV text note) in recognition of God's intervention.

You shall name him Ishmael,^{*a*} for the LORD has heard of your misery.^h ¹² He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward^b all his brothers.^{jn} 16:11 ^hEx 2:24; 3:7,9 16:12 ⁱGe 25:18 16:13 ⁱGe 32:30 16:15 ^kGal 4:22 17:1 ⁱGe 28:3; Ex 6:3 ^mDt 18:13 17:2 ^oGe 15:18 17:4 ^oGe 15:18 ^pver 16; Ge 12:2; 35:11; 48:19 17:5 ^oGe 35:11 ⁱMt 1:6

¹³She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen^{*c*} the One who sees me."^j ¹⁴That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi^{*d*}; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar bore Abram a son,^k and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

The Covenant of Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty^e; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.^{m 2}Then I will make my covenant between me and youⁿ and will greatly increase your numbers."

³Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you:^o You will be the father of many nations.^o ⁵No longer will you be called Abram.^f; your name will be Abraham,^{gq} for I have made you a father of many nations.^{r 6}I will make you very fruitful;^s I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.^{t 7}I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between

^a 11 Ishmael means God bears. ^b 12 Or live to the east/of ^c 13 Or seen the back of ^d 14 Beer Labai Roi means well of the Living One who sees me. ^e 1 Hebrew El-Shaddai ^f 5 Abram means exalted father. ^g 5 Abraham probably means father of many.

16:12 Although the angel commands Hagar to submit to Sarai (v. 9), he states that her son's independent spirit will bring him into conflict with others.

16:13-14 God's unexpected intervention makes a deep impression on Hagar. His concern for her plight causes her to name him "El Roi" ("the God who sees me") and the well "Beer Lahai Roi" (see NIV text note). Not only does God see her, but she has also seen him.

16:15 After Hagar returns to Abram's household and her son is born, Abram names him. Recognizing Ishmael as his heir, Abram must have believed that here was God's solution to the continuation of his family and the fulfillment of the divine promise of nationhood. Regrettably, Ishmael was not the promised son that God intended Abram and Sarai to have. Their attempt to fulfill God's plan by human effort ultimately fails. As the ongoing story of Abram's life reveals, in his time God enables Sarai to give birth to Isaac. The contrast between the son of promise and the son of the slave woman is later used by Paul in his letter to the Galatians to illustrate the distinction between acquiring salvation through faith in Christ and failing to merit salvation through human endeavor (Gal 4:21–31).

17:1-27 The Covenant of Circumcision. Having previously made a covenant with Abram to guarantee the divine promise of nationhood (ch. 15), the Lord now appears to Abram in order to either establish another covenant or develop further the one already made in Gen 15. Coming 13 years after the birth of Ishmael, this covenant involves the birth of Sarai's son, with whom God will establish the covenant in the next generation. At the heart of this covenant is God's promise to bless the nations of the earth (12:3), which the change of Abram's name to Abraham reflects. God's speech to Abraham moves from God's part (vv. 4-8) to that of Abraham (vv. 9-14) and then to Sarah (vv. 15-16). 17:1 God Almighty. God introduces himself to Abram as El Shaddai (see NIV text note). While the precise meaning of Shaddai is debated, the designation most likely underlines God's power, anticipating God's promise to provide Abram a son through Sarai, who is now 89 years old. walk before me. Elsewhere those who "walk with" God display a positive, consistent relationship with him (e.g., Enoch [5:22]; Noah [6:9]). **blameless.** The Hebrew elsewhere denotes sacrificial animals that are without blemish. Abram must resemble Noah (6:9), with whom God also made an everlasting covenant (9:1–17).

17:2 Then I will make my covenant. Unlike the covenant in ch. 15, the establishment of this covenant is conditional based upon Abram remaining faithful to God.

17:4,5 father of many nations. Repeated for emphasis, this phrase encapsulates the covenant.

17:5 By changing the patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham (see NIV text notes), God conveys the purpose of this covenant. **father**. Although this term usually points to a biological relationship, here it is metaphoric, picking up God's earlier promise that through Abram "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (12:3). As the spiritual father of many nations, Abraham will bring God's blessing to them. For this reason, the males circumcised in 17:27 include those who are not Abraham's offspring (see v. 12). Later in Genesis, Joseph, who brings blessing to the nations, states that God made him "father to Pharaoh" (45:8; see Judg 17:10 for another metaphoric use of "father"). **many nations**. The international dimension of this covenant is important and indicates that circumcised he onster Paul views the "offspring" of Abraham as including Gentiles who share Abraham's faith (Rom 4:16–17; 15:8–12; Gal 3:6–9,29; cf. Rom 9:6–7).

17:6 I will make you very fruitful. This promise recalls God's blessing of humanity at creation (1:28), which was later renewed with Noah (9:1). Through Abraham God will eventually fulfill his plan to fill the earth with people who will live in harmony with their Creator. I will make nations of you. This underlines the international nature of the covenant, for Abraham was the biological father of only a few nations. kings will come from you. This possibly looks backward to the theme of ruling mentioned in 1:26–28 and looks forward to the establishment of a monarchy within Israel.

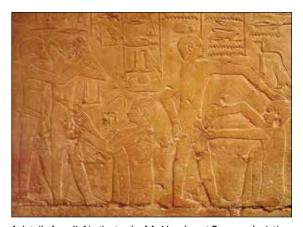
17:7 everlasting. This covenant looks toward the future and will be established with future generations of Abraham's descendants, beginning with Isaac (v. 21).

17:7 "Ex 29:45,46 'Ro 9:8; Gal 3:16 17:8 "Ps 105:9,11 *Ge 23:4; 28:4; Ex 6:4 ^yGe 12:7 17:10 z ver 23; Ge 21:4; Jn 7:22; Ac 7:8; Ro 4:11 17:11 a Ex 12:48; Dt 10:16 b Ro 4:11 17:12 ° Lev 12:3; Lk 2:21 17:14 d Ex 4:24-26 17:16 º Ge 18:10 ^fGe 35:11; Gal 4:31 17:17 9 Ge 18:12: 21:6 17:19 h Ge 18:14; 21:2 Ge 26:3 17:20 ^jGe 16:10 kGe 25:12-16 Ge 21:18

me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God^u and the God of your descendants after you.^{v 8}The whole land of Canaan,^w where you now reside as a foreigner,^x I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you;^y and I will be their God."

⁹Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.^{z 11}You are to undergo circumcision,^a and it will be the sign of the covenant^b between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,^c including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people;^d he has broken my covenant."

¹⁵God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name



A detail of a relief in the tomb of Ankhmahor at Saqqara depicting a priest performing ritual circumcision, ca. 2600 BC.

will be Sarah. ¹⁶I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her.^e I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations;^f kings of peoples will come from her."

¹⁷Abraham fell facedown; he laughed⁹ and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

¹⁹Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son,^h and you will call him Isaac.^a I will establish my covenant with himⁱ as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers.^j He will be the father of twelve rulers,^k and I will make him into a great nation.¹²¹But my

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17:10-14 Certain covenants have signs associated with them (e.g., the rainbow [9:12-13]; the Sabbath [Exod 31:16-17]). Circumcision is the distinctive sign of this covenant.

17:10 circumcised. This required cutting the foreskin off of the penis. Associating this covenant with the male reproductive organ draws attention to the special offspring of Abraham through whom the benefits of the covenant will be mediated to others. In the first instance, the covenant will be established with Isaac, but not Ishmael, even though Ishmael is circumcised.

17:12-14 Every male within Abraham's household must be circumcised, including those bought as slaves from foreigners. Given the international aspect of the covenant, circumcision is not restricted to only those who are the biological descendants of Abraham.

17:14 will be cut off from his people. Applies to those who are not circumcised. While the precise nature of this cutting off is unclear, it undoubtedly implies exclusion from the community, if not death. To refuse circumcision would have been perceived as rejecting the significance of God's promises to Abraham. Much later, when these promises are being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul insists that the circumcision of the heart is more important than circumcision of the foreskin (Rom 2:25-29; cf. 1 Cor 7:18-19; Gal 6:15). For Paul, "righteousness" comes through faith in Christ, the one to whom circumcision pointed.

17:15 Sarah. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah; both forms mean "princess."

^a 19 Isaac means he laughs.

17:16 bless her. Although Sarah has been childless for many years (11:30), God states that he will bless her with a son. God's blessing, however, is not restricted to a son. Sarah will produce "nations," as well as "kings of peoples" (cf. 17:6). Once again this chapter underscores the international aspect of this covenant.

17:19 Isaac. Since Abraham laughed when God announced that Sarah will have a son (v. 17), it is ironic that their son should be called "he laughs" (see NIV text note). Later, when Sarah overhears that she will have a son, she also laughs (18:12-15). In both instances the laughter of Abraham and Sarah probably reflects their disbelief, given their ages (17:17). The motif of laughter recurs in the account of Isaac's birth (21:6). establish my covenant. Although Abraham considers Ishmael to be his son, God stresses that his covenant will be linked specifically to Isaac. While Ishmael and the other male members of Abraham's household will be circumcised before Isaac is born, God does not establish the covenant with them. descendants after him. God indicates that the covenant will pass from Abraham to Isaac and then on through Isaac to future generations. This links the blessing of the nations to the unique line of offspring descended from Abraham via Isaac and then Jacob. Ultimately this special lineage leads to Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1-17).

17:20 the father of twelve rulers. In spite of being passed over in favor of his yet-to-be-born brother, Ishmael's family will be important in its own right (25:12-18).

covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."^{m 22}When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

²³On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,ⁿ ²⁵and his son Ishmael was thirteen; ²⁶Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. ²⁷And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

The Three Visitors

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre^o while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ²Abraham looked up and saw three men^p standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,^{*a*} do not pass your servant by. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet^q and rest under this tree. ⁵Let me get you something to eat,^r so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs^b of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."

⁷Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them.⁸ While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he said.

¹⁰Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."^t

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were already very old,^u and Sarah was past the age of childbearing,^v ¹²So Sarah laughed^w to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord^x is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD?⁹ I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

^a 3 Or eyes, Lord ^b 6 That is, probably about 36 pounds or about 16 kilograms

17:23–27 Abraham confirms that he accepts everything God has said by circumcising all the males in his household.

18:1—**19:38** The three episodes that comprise this section center on Lot's dramatic rescue when God destroys Sodom. By comparing Lot's hospitality with Abraham's, the narrative explains why God saves Lot and his family. However, God punishes the remaining inhabitants of the city for their immorality.

18:1 – 15 *The Three Visitors.* Responding generously to the unexpected arrival of three "men" at his tent, Abraham graciously offers them hospitality that extends from washing their feet to providing a freshly prepared meal. While the text describes all three visitors as "men," one of them is the Lord (v. 1), and the others are angels (19:1). They disclose the purpose of their encounter with Abraham only when they set out to journey on to Sodom (v. 16–21).

18:1 the great trees of Mamre. As a seminomadic herdsman and tentdweller, Abraham may have regularly camped at this location (13:18).

18:2 three men. See note on vv. 1-15. Abraham must have viewed them as important visitors, for he runs to meet them and bows down to the ground before them. An elderly, wealthy herdsman would not normally greet visitors like this.

18:3-5 While Abraham treats all the visitors with respect, his initial word of invitation indicates that he views one of the men as more important than the others.

18:3 my lord. May be used to indicate respect for an important person (e.g., 23:6 ["Sir"]) or to address God in prayer (e.g., 20:4). From what is said, it is difficult to tell at what point Abraham recognized the special visitor as the Lord (see NIV text note).

18:5 something to eat. Abraham sets about preparing a lavish meal for his visitors. Abraham's actions underline his desire to satisfy his guests as best he can. He even stands (v. 8), waiting on them, while they eat the food. Stressing the importance of hospitality, Heb 13:2 possibly alludes to this occasion and also Lot's actions in Gen 19:1–3.

18:9–15 As the meal proceeds, the Lord promises that Sarah will bear Abraham a son in 12 months (v. 10).

18:11 – 12 Since Sarah has passed the age of bearing children, she laughs disbelievingly at the thought of giving birth to a son. Her reaction resembles that of Abraham in 17:17. Nothing, however, is "too hard for the LORD" (18:14).

17:21 "Ge 21:2 17:24 " Ro 4:11 18:1 °Ge 13:18: 14:13 18:2 P ver 16.22: Ge 32:24; Jos 5:13; Jdg 13:6-11; Heb 13:2 18:4 9Ge 19:2: 43:24 18:5 ' Jdg 13:15 18:8 °Ge 19:3 18:10 tRo 9:9* 18:11 "Ge 17:17 ^vRo 4:19 18:12 "Ge 17:17: 21:6 ×1Pe 3:6 18:14 y Jer 32:17.27: Zec 8:6: Mt 19:26: Lk 1:37; Ro 4:21

18:17 ZAm 3:7 ^aGe 19:24 18:18 b Gal 3:8* 18:19 ° Dt 4:9-10: 6:7 Jos 24:15; Eph 6:4 18:21 ° Ge 11:5 18:22 fGe 19:1 18:23 9 Nu 16:22 18:24 h Jer 5:1 18:25 Job 8:3.20: Ps 58:11; 94:2; Isa 3:10-11; Ro 3:6 18:26 ^j Jer 5:1 18:27 KGe 2:7: 3:19: Job 30:19: 42:6 18:32 | Jdg 6:39 m Jer 5:1

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

¹⁶When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. ¹⁷Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham^z what I am about to do?^a ¹⁸Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,^b and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.^a ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children^c and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD^d by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

²⁰Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹that I will go down^e and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

²²The men turned away and went toward Sodom,[†] but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.^b ²³Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?⁹ ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare^c the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?^{h 25}Far be it from you to do such a thing— to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"ⁱ

²⁶The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.^j"

²⁷Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,^{k 28}what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?"

"If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

²⁹Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"

He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it."

³⁰Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

³¹Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"

He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it."

³²Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more.¹ What if only ten can be found there?"

He answered, "For the sake of ten," I will not destroy it."

³³When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

^a 18 Or will use bis name in blessings (see 48:20)	^b 22 Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition
but the LORD remained standing before Abraham	^c 24 Or <i>forgive</i> ; also in verse 26

18:16–33 Abraham Pleads for Sodom. Perhaps out of concern for his nephew Lot (although he does not specifically mention Lot), Abraham questions the Lord about the forthcoming destruction of Sodom. The text already mentioned that Sodom's inhabitants are wicked (13:13), a point underlined by how Melchizedek contrasts with the king of Sodom (14:17–24). Abraham's concern centers on the possibility that the total destruction of the city may include people who are righteous. Cautiously, Abraham presents various scenarios to God, reducing by stages the number of righteous people in the city. Eventually, God reassures Abraham that he will not destroy Sodom if there are ten righteous people within the city.

18:18 all nations on earth. God's remarks emphasize the important role that Abraham will have in mediating God's blessing to the whole world. This recalls God's earlier promise in 12:2-3 and the covenant in ch. 17, which portrays Abraham as the "father of many nations" (17:5; see note there).

18:20-21 God does not take lightly his decision to destroy Sodom

and Gomorrah. The Lord's visit demonstrates that the destruction is punishment for their wrongdoing. There is no reason to assume on the basis of these verses that God's knowledge of all that occurs on earth is somehow limited. Before God punishes, he scrutinizes the situation with the utmost rigor.

18:23–26 Seizing the opportunity, Abraham questions the Lord regarding the fate of the righteous in Sodom. Will God treat the good and the bad in the same way? Abraham seeks reassurance that God will not act unfairly. See "Justice," p. 2679.

18:27 – 32 Acknowledging the inappropriateness of questioning God on this issue (v. 27), Abraham boldly ventures to do so, gradually reducing the number of righteous from fifty (v. 28) to ten (v. 32). In all likelihood, Abraham stops at ten because God has established the principle that the righteous will not be punished alongside the wicked, and reducing the number yet further seems petty or unbelieving. In the light of this, it is noteworthy that in ch. 19 only Lot and two of his daughters escape from the city when the angels warn them of its destruction.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 The two angels arrived at Sodomⁿ in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.^o When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²"My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet^p and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."

"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."

³But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.^q ⁴Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. ⁵They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."^r

⁶Lot went outside to meet them^s and shut the door behind him ⁷and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."^t

⁹"Get out of our way," they replied. "This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge!" We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

¹⁰But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness^v so that they could not find the door.

¹²The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here — sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you?^w Get them out of here, ¹³because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."^x

¹⁴So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry^{*a*} his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.^{*z*}

¹⁵With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away^a when the city is punished.^b"

¹⁶When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. ¹⁷As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives!^c Don't look back,^d and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸But Lot said to them, "No, my lords,^b please! ¹⁹Your^c servant has found favor in your^c eyes, and you^c have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. ²⁰Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it — it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared."

^a 14 Or were married to ^b 18 Or No, Lord; or No, my lord ^c 19 The Hebrew is singular.

19:1–29 Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed. Although Sodom is destroyed, Lot escapes with two of his daughters due to the intervention of the angels. Lot's desire to protect his "visitors" from being sexually abused by the men of Sodom sets him apart from the rest of the population. His hospitality and protection of the men is an indicator of his righteousness (2 Pet 2:7–8).

19:1 – 3 Lot previously camped "near Sodom" (13:12), but now he lives within the city. His hospitable response to the visitors closely resembles Abraham's in 18:1–5. The similarities indicate that Lot by nature resembles Abraham. His subsequent protection of the men further indicates his righteousness (2 Pet 2:7–8). Lot's wife, unlike Sarah, plays no obvious role in preparing the meal for the strangers.

19:4 from every part of the city ... both young and old. The assault on Lot's house involves all the men of Sodom.

19:5 have sex with them. Their desire to have homosexual relations with the two visitors indicates their depravity (Jude 7); the term "sodomy" derives from this episode. See note on Rom 1:26.

19:6–11 When Lot tries unsuccessfully to placate the men of Sodom, rather than hand over his guests, he offers the mob his unmarried daughters. In this ancient context, a host was obliged to protect his guests from all harm, a cultural imperative that drove him to this extreme suggestion. In 2 Pet 2:7 Lot is called a "righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless"; this statement is difficult to understand apart from this ancient code of honor. Lot's offer also sheds light on the mob itself: These men of Sodom were determined to have sexual relations with Lot's two guests. Their wickedness was pervasive and persistent.

19:12–16 Lot's sons-in-law greet the announcement of Sodom's destruction with ridicule. Even Lot himself is reluctant to leave and has to be physically led out of the city (v. 16).

19:17–23 In spite of being instructed to leave the valley, Lot begs for permission to go to another settlement in the valley appropriately called Zoar, which means "small."

19:1 °Ge 18:22 °Ge 18:1 19:2 PGe 18:4: Lk 7:44 19:3 Ge 18:6 19:5 ' Jdg 19:22; Isa 3:9; Ro 1:24-27 19:6 ^s Jdg 19:23 19:8 t Jdg 19:24 19:9 "Ex 2:14: Ac 7:27 19:11 VDt 28:28-29 2Ki 6:18; Ac 13:11 19:12 "Ge 7:1 19:13 ×1Ch 21:15 19:14 ^yNu 16:21 2Ex 9:21; Lk 17:28 19:15 ^aNu 16:26 ^b Rev 18.4 19:17 ° Jer 48:6 d ver 26

19:24 ° Dt 29:23; Isa 1:9; 13:19 fLk 17:29; 2Pe 2:6; Jude 7 19:25 9Ps 107:34: Eze 16:48 19:26 h ver 17 Lk 17:32 19:27 Ge 18:22 19:28 k Rev 9:2; 18:9 19:29 12Pe 2:7 19:30 m ver 19 19:37 "Dt 2:9 19:38 ° Dt 2:19 20:1 PGe 18:1 q Ge 26:1,6,17 20:2 'ver 12; Ge 12:13; 26:7 SGe 12:15 ²¹He said to him, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²²But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." (That is why the town was called Zoar.")

²³By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah^e — from the LORD out of the heavens.^{f 25}Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities — and also the vegetation in the land.^{g 26}But Lot's wife looked back,^h and she became a pillar of salt.ⁱ

²⁷Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord.^j ²⁸He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.^k

²⁹So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe¹ that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains,^m for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children — as is the custom all over the earth. ³²Let's get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line through our father."

³³That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and slept with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I slept with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him so we can preserve our family line through our father." ³⁵So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab^{*b*}; he is the father of the Moabitesⁿ of today. ³⁸The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi^{*c*}; he is the father of the Ammonites^{*d*} of today.

Abraham and Abimelek

20:1-18Ref - Ge 12:10-20; 26:1-11

20 Now Abraham moved on from there^p into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,^{q 2} and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.^s

^a 22 Zoar means small. ^b 37 Moab sounds like the Hebrew for from father. ^c 38 Ben-Ammi means son of my father's people. ^d 38 Hebrew Bene-Ammon

19:24–25 God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah using burning sulfur that rains down from the sky. The unusual nature of this exceptional event underlines that it is an act of divine punishment. Subsequently, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah become synonymous with human depravity (e.g., Isa 1:9; Lam 4:6; Zeph 2:9; Matt 11:23–24; Rev 11:8). Against this background, Lot's rescue emphasizes God's concern for the righteous in the midst of a world that stands condemned for its sinfulness (2 Pet 2:6–9). **19:26 a pillar of salt**. For disobeying the instruction not to look back (v. 17), Lot's wrife becomes petrified. Her action suggests that she identified with the people of Sodom, of whom she may have been one. Her failure to flee from God's punishment becomes a vivid warning to others (Luke 17:32).

19:27–29 Looking down on the plain, Abraham witnesses what has happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. By linking Lot's rescue to the Lord remembering Abraham (v. 29), the narrator alludes to the recurring motif that through Abraham others will be divinely blessed. This is the second occasion when Abraham has come to the rescue of Lot (14:14–16).

19:30 – 38 Lot and His Daughters. Genesis records one further brief episode in Lot's life, revealing how through incestuous relations with his daughters he becomes the ancestor of the Moabites and Ammonites.
19:30 lived in a cave. Fear causes Lot to abandon Zoar and live in a cave. The ravines and cliffs around the Dead Sea contain numerous

caves; archaeological evidence reveals that these were sometimes used for shelter from danger.

19:31 – 36 Lot's decision to live in the mountains has unexpected consequences. Given their isolated existence, his daughters have no one with which to have children. A childless woman in this time period had an insecure future. Thus, the daughters plot to become pregnant through having intercourse with their father. By getting Lot drunk with wine, they succeed in having sex with him, though he is entirely unaware of what has happened. As in the case of Noah (9:21–24), sexual immorality is associated with alcohol abuse.

19:37–38 Moab ... Ben-Ammi. These names possibly reflect the circumstances by which the boys are conceived (see NIV text notes). In explaining the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites, this episode clearly casts them in a negative light. Later generations of Israelites may well have been suspicious of these nations.

20:1 – 18 Abraham and Abimelek. Sarah's abduction by the king of Gerar threatens to undermine God's promise that she will bear Abraham a son. Building on the earlier account of Sarah being taken by Pharaoh (12:10–20), this episode stresses that Abimelek did not touch Sarah, an inportant consideration in the light of Isaac's subsequent birth (21:1–7). 20:1 This episode opens by describing how Abraham moves to a loca-

³But God came to Abimelek in a dream^t one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman."^u

⁴Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?" ⁵Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother'? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands."

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept^w you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you^x and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die."

⁸Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. ⁹Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done."¹⁰And Abimelek asked Abraham, "What was your reason for doing this?"

¹¹Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God² in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'^{a 12}Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother.""

¹⁴Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham,^b and he returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵And Abimelek said, "My land is before you; live wherever you like."^c

¹⁶To Sarah he said, "I am giving your brother a thousand shekels" of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated."

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God,^d and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, ¹⁸for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah.^e

The Birth of Isaac

21 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah[†] as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.^{g 2}Sarah became pregnant and bore a son^h to Abraham in his old age,ⁱ at the very time God had promised him. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac^{bj} to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him,^k as God commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

^a 16 That is, about 25 pounds or about 12 kilograms ^b 3 Isaac means he laughs.

tion where he and Sarah are unknown. Gerar. Located in the south of what became known as Israel (see map, p. 2865).

20:3-5 God's intervention ensures that no harm comes to Sarah. Abimelek rightly proclaims his innocence. Such details underline that he did not have intercourse with Sarah, excluding the possibility that he could be the father of Isaac.

20:3 in a dream. This is the first occasion in the OT when God communicates in this way (see 28:12; 31:10-11; 37:5-9; 40:5-8; 41:1).
20:7 prophet. Abraham is the first person the OT designates as a prophet. God's comments emphasize how Abraham is able to intercede on behalf of others, which he previously did for the righteous in Sodom (18:16-33).
20:9 With justification Abimelek points to Abraham's deceptive behavior in calling Sarah his sister. guilt. May also be translated "sin." Canaanite texts designate adultery as a "great sin."

20:11 no fear of God in this place. As Abimelek's actions demonstrate, Abraham's expectations regarding the people of Gerar are mistaken.

20:12 Abraham looks to excuse his actions by noting that Sarah is his

half sister. Abraham's use of this half-truth, however, has not prevented others from taking Sarah. But for God's intervention, Abimelek would not have returned Sarah to Abraham.

20:14–16 Although innocent, Abimelek makes restitution in public to Abraham for having taken Sarah. The king demonstrates that others should not attribute guilt to Sarah.

20:17–18 The healing of Abimelek, his wife, and his female slaves highlights God's ability to restore fertility. This anticipates the next episode, in which God restores to Sarah the ability to conceive and have a son. By noting that Abraham prayed for the restoration of Abimelek's household to normality, the narrator draws attention to the motif of others being blessed through Abraham (12:3). This is the first occasion in the Bible when healing is associated with intercessory prayer.

21:1-7 *The Birth of Isaac.* In her old age Sarah gives birth to Isaac in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah. God does what they had considered to be impossible.

21:1–2 God's earlier promises to Abraham and Sarah (17:16,19,21; 18:10,14) are now fulfilled.

21:3–4 Abraham obeys God's instructions by naming his son Isaac (17:19) and circumcising him (17:12).

21:5-7 Sarah's comments about laughter in v. 6 provide a further wordplay on the name Isaac, which means "he laughs" (17:17-19;

20:3 t Job 33:15: Mt 27:19 "Ps 105:14 20:4 °Ge 18:25 20:6 * 1Sa 25:26.34 20:7 × ver 17: 1Sa 7:5: Job 42:8 20:9 yGe 12:18; 26:10; 34:7 20:11 ZGe 42:18; Ps 36:1 a Ge 12:12; 26:7 20:14 b Ge 12:16 20:15 ° Ge 13:9 20:17 d Job 42:9 20:18 ° Ge 12:17 21:1 f1Sa 2:21 gGe 8:1; 17:16,21; Gal 4:23 21:2 h Ge 17:19 Gal 4:22: Heb 11:11 21:3 Ge 17:19 21:4 KGe 17:10, 12; Ac 7:8

^{20:2} Because they are unknown in Gerar, Abraham is able to claim that Sarah is his sister. The narrator provides no explanation as to why Abraham makes this claim, presuming that the reader is already familiar with 12:11–13. Abraham's actions suggest that he lacks faith in God to protect him. **Abinelek.** Means "my father is king"; it was a common royal name (26:1; Ps 34 superscription).

21:6 ¹Ge 17:17; Isa 54:1 21:9 ^mGe 16:15 ⁿ Gal 4:30ⁿ 21:10 ^oGal 4:30ⁿ 21:11 ^oGe 17:18 21:12 ^qRo 9:7^s; Heb 11:18^s 21:13 ^rver 18 21:14 ^sver 31,32 21:17 ^rEx 3:7 21:18 ^wver 13 21:19 ^vWa 22:31 21:20 ^wGe 26:3,24; 28:15; 39:2,21,23 21:21 ^sGe 24:4,38 21:23 ^wver 31: Jos 2:12 ⁶Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter,¹ and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. ⁹But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham^m was mocking,ⁿ ¹⁰and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."⁰

¹¹The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.^p ¹²But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring^{*a*} will be reckoned.^q ¹³I will make the son of the slave into a nation^r also, because he is your offspring."

¹⁴Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.⁸

¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she^b began to sob.

¹⁷God heard the boy crying,¹ and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.^u"

¹⁹Then God opened her eyes^v and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰God was with the boy^w as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him[×] from Egypt.

The Treaty at Beersheba

²²At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. ²³Now swear^y to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you."

^a 12 Or seed ^b 16 Hebrew; Septuagint the child

18:12–15). Laughter of disbelief now becomes laughter of joy as God provides the elderly couple with a son.

21:8–21 *Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away.* The departure of Ishmael from Abraham's household signals that he is no longer Abraham's main heir, something that would have been assumed as he is Abraham's firstborn son.

21:8 weaned. Isaac is possibly two or three years old.

21:9 Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac distresses Sarah. Ishmael, about 16 years old, mocks his younger brother (cf. Gal 4:29). **mocking.** The Hebrew term used probably implies here laughing in jest and is a further wordplay on the name Isaac (see note on vv. 5–7).

21:10 Offended by Ishmael's treatment of Isaac, Sarah demands that Abraham disinherit Ishmael, expelling both him and his mother, Hagar. **21:11 distressed.** Abraham is distraught because he viewed Ishmael as his son (16:15; 17:18).

21:12–13 God intervenes, however, confirming Isaac's special status and reassuring Abraham again that Ishmael will become a nation (17:20). 21:12 offspring will be reckoned. In spite of Ishmael being Abraham's eldest son, God confirms that Abraham's descendants will be traced through Isaac. As in 17:19–21, the outworking of God's plan to bless the nations is linked to Isaac. Other biblical writers note that God chose Isaac over Ishmael. God's promise to establish his covenant with Isaac gives Abraham the confidence to believe that God, if necessary, will raise Isaac to life again (Heb 11:17–19). Paul draws on this verse to show that not all of Abraham's biological children are automatically "children of the promise" (Rom 9:8; see Rom 9:6–13). God is free to choose how he will fulfill his redemptive plan.

21:14–15 In obedience to God, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael off. When they run out of water in the desert region in the south of what became known as Israel, they collapse with exhaustion, anticipating that they will soon die. God, however, intervenes and reassures Hagar that he cares for both her and Ishmael. Although God has special plans for Isaac, he does not abandon Hagar and Ishmael. God previously intervened in Hagar's life and promised that she would be the mother of a great nation (16:10–12).

21:19 well of water. Wells were an important source of water in this region (26:18–22; see note on 21:25–26).

21:21 Desert of Paran. Lies in the northern part of Sinai, between Egypt and Canaan. See map, p. 2868.

21:22–34 *The Treaty at Beersheba.* Abimelek's desire to establish a friendship treaty with Abraham reflects Abraham's status as someone of importance. Abimelek's actions would be pointless if Abraham was merely an insignificant seminomadic herdsman.

21:22 God is with you in everything you do. Abimelek's opening words acknowledge the source of Abraham's power. Abimelek, king of Gerar (20:2), views Abraham as an equal. ²⁴Abraham said, "I swear it."

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek's servants had seized.^z ²⁶But Abimelek said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today."

²⁷So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty.^a ²⁸Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, ²⁹and Abimelek asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?"

³⁰He replied, "Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness^b that I dug this well."

³¹So that place was called Beersheba, *ac* because the two men swore an oath there.

³²After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD,^d the Eternal God.^e ³⁴And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Abraham Tested

22 Some time later God tested^f Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

²Then God said, "Take your son⁹, your only son, whom you love — Isaac — and go to the region of Moriah.^h Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac,ⁱ and he himself

^a 31 Beersheba can mean well of seven and well of the oath.

21:25–26 Since the treaty about to be sealed is designed to ensure harmony between the two men, Abraham seizes the opportunity to resolve a dispute over ownership of a well. Without Abimelek's knowledge, some of his servants took possession of a well Abraham had dug (26:18).

21:30 as a witness. In the process of ratifying the treaty, Abraham gives Abimelek seven lambs to confirm that he was responsible for digging the well.

21:31 Beersheba. The name of the well is associated with the covenant ceremony (see NIV text note). The Genesis narrative implies that in Abraham's time no permanent settlement existed at Beersheba. Later, when a town was established there, it became famous as the southern boundary of Israel (2 Sam 3:10; 17:11).

21:32 Philistines. The name usually denotes people from territories bordering the Aegean Sea who invaded southwest Canaan around 1180 BC. Since Abraham lived much earlier, some argue that this reference to Philistines is anachronistic. If this is so, "Philistines" may replace an older, less-known term so that readers of Genesis would easily understand the geographic detail. Such updating of names occurs elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., "Dan" in 14:14; see note there). It is also possible that even in Abraham's time some of the population in southwest Canaan may have originated from Crete and Cyprus. Aegean pottery from the first half of the second millennium BC has been found in the region of Beersheba. Later writers might well have considered these people to be Philistines, given their links with the Aegean region. See Introduction to the Pentateuch, pp. 12–13.

21:34 The treaty with Abimelek may explain Abraham's prolonged stay in the region of Beersheba.

22:1 – 19 Abraham Tested. God's request that Abraham sacrifice Isaac is highly remarkable, especially given the importance attached to Isaac's birth. This test of Abraham's obedience results, however, in a divine oath that guarantees the fulfillment of the promises God first gave to Abraham in 12:1-3. The events of ch. 22 form a fitting climax to the story of Abraham's relationship with God. While Abraham's faith in God has been evident from the time he left his family in Harran (12:1) and later led to God's crediting it to him as righteousness (15:6), this same faith, shown through obedience, brings to a special fulfillment Abraham's journey with God (Jas 2:21).

22:1 God tested Abraham. Faith in God, to be genuine, must be tested. On this occasion God seeks to determine Abraham's willingness to obey him by placing on him the ultimate challenge: he must kill his own son. This request is highly ironic given the importance placed upon the birth of Isaac in ch. 21 and the expectation that through him God will establish the covenant of circumcision (17:19). While God may test the obedience of people (e.g., Exod 15:25; 16:4), he never tempts anyone to do something wrong (Jas 1:13).

22:2 your son, your only son, whom you love. God's words underscore Abraham's special relationship with his son Isaac, especially given the departure of Ishmael (21:8–21). Moriah. The author of Chronicles places the later construction of the temple by Solomon at Mount Moriah (2 Chr 3:1). Although Gen 22 does not specifically identify the mountain, it is possible that it was located where Solomon constructed the temple. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering. Although God demands that Abraham sacrifice Isaac, the outcome reveals that God never intended Abraham to fulfill this request. Rather, as the narrator highlights in his opening words, God intended to test Abraham's trust in him. God could have placed no greater demand on Abraham.

22:3-4 From Beersheba to the region of Moriah is about 45 miles (72 kilometers), a journey that would have taken several days.

22:5 we will come back to you. In spite of his mission, Abraham is confident that Isaac will return with him. According to the author of Hebrews, Abraham obeyed God, believing that in these circumstances God would restore Isaac to life again (Heb 11:17–19).

21:25 ² Ge 26:15, 18,20-22 **21:27** ^a Ge 26:28,31 **21:30** ^b Ge 31:44,47, 48,50,52 **21:31** ^a Ge 26:33 **21:33** ^a Ge 4:26 ^b D1 33:27 **22:1** ¹ D1 8:2,16; Heb 11:17; Jas 1:12-13 **22:2** ² ver 12,16; Jn 3:16; Heb 11:17; 1Jn 4:9 ^b 2Ch 3:1 **22:6** Jn 19:17

22:7 Lev 1:10 22:9 KHeb 11:17-19; Jas 2:21 22:12 1Sa 15:22: Jas 2:21-22 m ver 2; Jn 3:16 22:13 "Ro 8:32 22:14 º ver 8 22:16 PLk 1:73; Heb 6:13 22:17 9 Heb 6:14* 'Ge 15:5 °Ge 26:24; 32:12 tGe 24:60 22:18 "Ge 12:2.3: Ac 3:25*; Gal 3:8 v ver 10 22:20 WGe 11:29 carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb^j for the burnt offering?"

⁸Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar,^k on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹²"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God,¹ because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.""

¹³Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^{*a*} caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.ⁿ ¹⁴So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.^o"

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶and said, "I swear by myself,^p declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you and make your descendants^q as numerous as the stars in the sky^r and as the sand on the seashore.⁸ Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,^{t 18}and through your offspring^b all nations on earth will be blessed, ^{cu} because you have obeyed me."^v

¹⁹Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Nahor's Sons

²⁰Some time later Abraham was told, "Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor.^{w 21}Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jid-

^{*a*} 13 Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint and Syriac; most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *a ram behind him* ^{*b*} 18 Or seed ^{*c*} 18 Or and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20)

22:8 God himself will provide the lamb. Up to this point, Abraham has apparently not disclosed to Isaac the full details of God's instructions. Abraham's reply to Isaac reflects either a profound trust in God that he will intervene or an attempt to conceal from Isaac the fate that awaits him.

22:11 angel of the LORD. See note on 16:7.

22:12 God intervenes because Abraham has shown through his obedience how much he reverences God. Previously, God reckoned Abraham righteous on the basis of his faith (15:6). That same faith is now made evident by what Abraham does (Jas 2:21–23).

22:13 ram. God not only intervenes to prevent Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, but he also provides an alternative sacrifice. Burnt offerings atone for human wrongdoing and are a reminder that obedience alone is insufficient to restore humanity's broken relationship with God. In this instance, the burnt offering precedes and prepares for a divine oath that confirms Abraham's unique place in God's plan for the redemption of humanity. The provision of the ram as a substitutionary offering in place of Isaac reflects a wider biblical understanding of sacrificial offerings. Animal sacrifice was commonly viewed as being substitutionary, i.e., the animal dies in the place of the worshiper. Jesus Christ is the ultimate, divinely provided substitute (Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Heb 7:27; 10:14; 1 Pet 3:18).

22:14 The Lond Will Provide. Echoing v. 8, this name reflects God's provision of a sacrifice. God later sends his Son to redeem humanity by dying sacrificially near the same location. to this day. Introduces a comment that probably comes from the time of the monarchy when the temple was functioning in Jerusalem. See Introduction to the Pentateuch, pp. 12–13. **the mountain of the Lord.** Alludes to the temple in Jerusalem (Isa 2:3).

22:15–18 The oath God swears links back to the call of Abraham in 12:1–3. The fulfillment of all that God promised Abraham in 12:1–3 was conditional upon the patriarch's obedience. Having passed the ultimate test of submission to God, Abraham now receives a solemn guarantee confirming that God will bring to completion everything that he promised Abraham (Heb 6:13–18). Whereas the first part of the divine oath affirms that Abraham will have many descendants, the final part indicates that through one of Abraham's offspring all nations on earth will be blessed. While some interpret the second half of the oath as referring to all of Abraham descendants, the book of Genesis as a whole associates blessing with a unique lineage that it traces from Abraham via Isaac and Jacob to Joseph. This family line anticipates the coming of a divinely chosen king who will mediate God's blessing to the nations. This divine oath to Abraham finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:16).

22:17 descendants. In the NIV, the final part of v. 17 refers to Abraham's many descendants. But it is possible that the Hebrew word denotes a single individual who will be victorious over his enemies. This singular reading could help explain the apostle Paul's claim that Jesus Christ is the ultimate descendant of Abraham (Gal 3:16).

22:20–24 Nahor's Sons. This short section lists the sons of Abraham's brother Nahor. This information is placed here to separate the main account of Abraham's life (chs. 12–22) from three episodes that bring closure to what has been recorded: reports of the death and burial of Sarah (23:1–20) and of Abraham (25:1–11) frame the lengthy report of how Rebekah becomes Isaac's wife (24:1–67).

laph and Bethuel." ²³Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.[×] Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maakah.

The Death of Sarah

23 Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. ²She died at Kiriath Arba^y (that is, Hebron)^z in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. ³Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.^{*a*} He said, ⁴"I am a foreigner and stranger^a among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶"Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince^b among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

⁷Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar^c on my behalf ⁹so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

¹⁰Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate^d of his city. ¹¹"No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give^{be} you the field, and I give^b you the cave that is in it. I give^b it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

¹²Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³ and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵"Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels^c of silver,^f but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

¹⁶Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver,⁹ according to the weight current among the merchants.

¹⁷So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre^h — both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field — was deeded ¹⁸to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. ¹⁹Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰So the field and the cave in it were deeded¹ to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

^a 3 Or *the descendants of Hetb*; also in verses 5, 7, 10, 16, 18 and 20 ^b 11 Or *sell* ^c 15 That is, about 10 pounds or about 4.6 kilograms

22:23 Rebekah. A granddaughter of Nahor. This reference to her anticipates the events of ch. 24.

23:3 Hittites. Here the term designates the inhabitants of Kiriath Arba (see NIV text note). This name appears to have been used of different people groups, the best known being the Hittites of Anatolia and Syria.

23:4 a foreigner and stranger among you. Abraham recognizes that he has no legitimate claim to any land in Canaan. For 62 years he has adopted a seminomadic lifestyle, refusing to settle in any of the towns of Canaan. He now looks to make a permanent claim to some land by buying property close to Hebron. Heb 11:9–10 attributes Abraham's wandering lifestyle to his theological beliefs: "He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (v. 10).
23:6 Although Abraham plays down his status (v. 4), the Hittites view

him as someone of standing, and they generously offer to let him bury Sarah in one of their own tombs. **mighty prince**. Or "prince of God"; the title is highly fitting in the light of the unique royal lineage that will come from Abraham (17:6; Matt 1:1–17).

23:7 - 9 Careful not to offend the Hittites in view of their generous offer, Abraham tactfully requests that he be permitted to buy a cave from its owner, Ephron. Abraham seeks permission from the Hittite population as a whole, possibly because selling property to a non-Hittite required communal approval. Without their support, Ephron would not have been able to sell the cave to Abraham.

23:10 gate. It was usual for transactions requiring public approval to take place at the entrance to the settlement (Ruth 4:1-11).

23:11–15 In spite of Ephron's willingness to give Abraham the cave and the field attached to it, Abraham insists on buying it for its full value. He wants to ensure that they will formally recognize the property as belonging to him and his descendants in perpetuity.

23:15 four hundred shekels of silver. Abraham readily agrees to what appears to be a substantial price (Jer 32:9). Later in Genesis, Joseph as a slave is valued at 20 shekels (37:28).

23:20 burial site. The cave of Machpelah was the burial site for Abraham (25:9) and Isaac (35:27-29; 49:29-31) and Jacob (49:29-30; 50:13).

22:23 ×Ge 24:15 23:2 y Jos 14:15 z ver 19; Ge 13:18 23:4 a Ge 17:8: 1Ch 29:15; Ps 105:12; Heb 11:9,13 23:6 b Ge 14:14-16; 24:35 23:8 ° Ge 25:9 23:10 d Ge 34:20-24: Ru 4:4 23:11 º 2Sa 24:23 23:15 ^fEze 45:12 23:16 9 Jer 32:9; Zec 11:12 23:17 h Ge 25:9; 49:30-32; 50:13; Ac 7:16 23:20 Jer 32:10

^{23:1 – 20} *The Death of Sarah.* The account of Sarah's death is significant because it results in Abraham buying a plot of land near the town of Hebron. As a burial site, the cave of Machpelah becomes the permanent property of Abraham's descendants, a reminder that their future will be closely tied to the land of Canaan, in fulfillment of God's promises (12:7; 13:14–17; 15:18–21; 17:8).

^{23:2} Kiriath Arba. This town was later renamed Hebron (Josh 14:15; Judg 1:10). Abraham's link with Hebron is first mentioned in 13:18.

24:1 ^j ver 35 24:2 KGe 39:4-6 Ver 9; Ge 47:29 24:3 m Ge 14:19 Ge 28:1; Dt 7:3 º Ge 10:15-19 24:4 P Ge 12:1; 28:2 24:7 9 Gal 3:16* Ge 12:7; 13:15 s Ex 23:20,23 24:9 t ver 2 24:11 "Ex 2:15 ver 13; 1Sa 9:11 24:12 wver 27.42.48: Ge 26:24; Ex 3:6, 15, 16 24:14 × Jdg 6:17,37 24:15 yver 45 2Ge 22:23 ^aGe 22:20 ^bGe 11:29 24:16 ° Ge 26:7 24:18 d ver 14 24:19 e ver 14 24:21 ^fver 12 24:22 9 ver 47

Isaac and Rebekah

24 Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.^{1 2}He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had,^k "Put your hand under my thigh.^{1 3}I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth,^m that you will not get a wife for my sonⁿ from the daughters of the Canaanites,^o among whom I am living, ⁴but will go to my country and my own relatives^p and get a wife for my son Isaac."

⁵The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?"

⁶"Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. ⁷"The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring^{aq} I will give this land'^r— he will send his angel before you^s so that you can get a wife for my son from there. ⁸If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." ⁹So the servant put his hand under the thigh^t of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master's camels loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim^{*b*} and made his way to the town of Nahor. ¹¹He had the camels kneel down near the well^u outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.^v

¹²Then he prayed, "LORD, God of my master Abraham," make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴May it be that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' — let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know^x that you have shown kindness to my master."

¹⁵Before he had finished praying,^y Rebekah^z came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah,^a who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.^b ¹⁶The woman was very beautiful,^c a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

¹⁷The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."

¹⁸"Drink,^d my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

¹⁹After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too,^e until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. ²¹Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.^f

²²When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring⁹ weighing a beka^c and

^a 7 Or seed ^b 10 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia ^c 22 That is, about 1/5 ounce or about 5.7 grams

24:1 – 67 *Isaac and Rebekah.* Reported in exceptional detail, the account of Rebekah becoming Isaac's wife not only underlines how God providentially directs Abraham's servant to her but also portrays Rebekah as following in Abraham's footsteps by leaving her family and country in order to settle permanently in Canaan.

24:1 the Loro had blessed him in every way. This opening statement confirms that God has fulfilled his earlier promise to bless Abraham (12:2).

24:2–8 Genesis usually describes the Canaanites negatively (9:25–27; 13:11–13); the inhabitants of Sodom (13:13) and Gomorrah are prime examples (18:20–32). For this reason, Abraham does not want Isaac to be influenced by a Canaanite wife. Too old to undertake the journey himself, he charges his most senior servant with the task of traveling to Abraham's homeland, Harran in northern Mesopotamia. While Abraham refers to this region as "my country" (v. 4), he prohibits Isaac from going there. Trusting in God's covenantal guarantee (15:18–21), Abraham is convinced that his future descendants will inhabit the land of Canaan. Moreover, he believes that God will enable his servant to successfully find a wife for Isaac.

24:9 put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham. By placing

his hand there, the servant formally commits himself to fulfilling Abraham's instructions. Jacob later uses this ritual to ensure that Joseph will bury him in Canaan (47:29–30).

24:10 camels. See note on 12:16. **Aram Naharaim.** Means "Aram of the rivers"; see NIV text note. Ancient texts from Mari mention a town called Nakhur situated close to Harran (see 11:31). **Nahor.** The name of both Abraham's grandfather and brother (11:25–27; 22:20). It is not unusual for individuals to be called after a place and vice versa. From Hebron to Harran is a journey of over 500 miles (800 kilometers).

24:12–14 Like Abraham, the servant is a man of faith. He asks God to guide him to the woman who will become Isaac's wife. Common sense informs his prayer for divine help. He seeks a woman who will be both hospitable and hardworking; ten camels (v. 10) would require a considerable quantity of water.

24:15–16 The narrator's description of Rebekah creates a sense of expectation; she is both a relative of Abraham and an attractive, unmarried woman. She has also come to the well to collect water.

24:17-21 Rebekah does everything that the servant mentioned in his prayer. two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.^{a ²³Then he asked, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"}

²⁴She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milkah bore to Nahor.^h" ²⁵And she added, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night."

²⁶Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD,¹²⁷saying, "Praise be to the LORD,¹ the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness^k to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey¹ to the house of my master's relatives."^m

²⁸The young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban,ⁿ and he hurried out to the man at the spring. ³⁰As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. ³¹"Come, you who are blessed by the LORD,"^o he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."

³²So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet.^p ³³Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say."

"Then tell us," Laban said.

³⁴So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The LORD has blessed my master abundantly,^q and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.^{r 36}My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age,^s and he has given him everything he owns.^{t 37}And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live,^{u 38}but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'^v

³⁹"Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'^w

⁴⁰"He replied, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked faithfully, will send his angel with you[×] and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. ⁴¹You will be released from my oath if, when you go to my clan, they refuse to give her to you — then you will be released from my oath.'⁹

⁴² "When I came to the spring today, I said, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success² to the journey on which I have come. ⁴³See, I am standing beside this spring.^a If a young woman comes out to draw water and I say to her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar,"^b ⁴⁴and if she says to me, "Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too," let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master's son.'

⁴⁵"Before I finished praying in my heart,^c Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder.^d She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'^e

⁴⁶"She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.'^f So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

⁴⁷"I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'⁹

"She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.'h

"Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms,^{i 48} and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD.^j I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.^{k 49}Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness¹ to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

⁵⁰Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD;^m we can say nothing to you one way or the

^a 22 That is, about 4 ounces or about 115 grams

24:24–27 When she identifies herself as the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, the servant responds by worshiping God. Through divine guidance he has encountered Abraham's relatives.

24:29 After Rebekah rushes off to inform her family, her brother Laban comes to greet Abraham's servant. Laban's involvement (vv. 30–31,33,50,55–60) suggests that his father, Bethuel, is possibly old and frail. Bethuel is mentioned only once as an active participant in the events that unfold (v. 50). In marked contrast, there are several references to the involvement of Rebekah's mother (vv. 28,55,57–58).

24:34–49 The servant's speech rehearses closely the events that occur in vv. 1-27. The repetition underlines God's guidance in bringing the servant into contact with Rebekah. If Rebekah is to leave her family in order to marry lsaac, whom she has never met, she must be persuaded that this is God's will for her.

24:50 This is from the Loro. Rebekah's brother and father readily acknowledge that God intends Rebekah to marry Isaac.

24:24 h ver 15 24:26 'ver 48, 52; Ex 4:31 24:27 Ex 18:10: Ru 4:14; 1Sa 25:32 kver 49; Ge 32:10; Ps 98:3 ver 21 ^mver 12.48 24:29 "ver 4; Ge 29:5, 12,13 24:31 ° Ge 26:29: Ru 3:10; Ps 115:15 24:32 PGe 43:24; Jdg 19:21 24:35 9 ver 1 'Ge 13:2 24:36 °Ge 21:2,10 tGe 25:5 24:37 "ver 3 24:38 v ver 4 24:39 w ver 5 24:40 × ver 7 24:41 ^yver 8 24:42 ^zver 12 24:43 a ver 13 b ver 14 24:45 ° 1Sa 1:13 d ver 15 ever 17 24:46 ^fver 18-19 24:47 g ver 23 h ver 24 Eze 16:11-12 24:48 J ver 26 k ver 27 24:49 Ge 47:29; Jos 2:14 24:50 mPs 118:23

24:50 " Ge 31:7, 24,29,42 24:52 ° ver 26 24:53 Pver 10.22 24:54 9 ver 56.59 24:59 'Ge 35:8 24:60 ° Ge 17:16 tGe 22:17 24:62 " Ge 16:14; 25:11 VGe 20:1 24:63 WPs 1:2; 77:12; 119:15,27,48,97,148 143:5; 145:5 24:67 *Ge 25:20 y Ge 29:18, 20 2 Ge 23:1-2 25:2 a 1Ch 1:32,33 other.^{n 51}Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

⁵²When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD.⁰ ⁵³Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts^p to her brother and to her mother. ⁵⁴Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, "Send me on my way^q to my master."

⁵⁵But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so; then you^{*a*} may go."

⁵⁶But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

⁵⁷Then they said, "Let's call the young woman and ask her about it." ⁵⁸So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

⁵⁹So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse^r and Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands;^s may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies."^t

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶²Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi,^u for he was living in the Negev.^v ⁶³He went out to the field one evening to meditate, ^{*bw*} and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

"He is my master," the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac all he had done.⁶⁷Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah.^x So she became his wife, and he loved her;^y and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.^z

The Death of Abraham

25:1-4pp - 1Ch 1:32-33

25 Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. ²She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.^a ³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Ashurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. ⁴The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanok, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

^{*a*} 55 Or *she* b 63 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

24:53 As a token of the commitment they have made, the servant gives gifts to Rebekah and members of her family. Marriage arrangements usually involved gifts of money to the bride's family.

25:55–58 Rebekah's willingness to go immediately with Abraham's servant reveals a deep faith in God. She is prepared to leave her family and country to marry a man she has never met. Her actions parallel closely those of Abraham (12:1), suggesting that she is indeed a suitable wife for Isaac.

24:60 The blessing resembles God's oath to Abraham in 22:17. **your offspring.** Could refer to an individual or group of people. Everything points to Rebekah being a perfect match for Isaac.

24:65 took her veil and covered herself. Probably a sign that she was betrothed. Having seen Isaac, she indicates her willingness to marry him.

25:1-11 The Death of Abraham. This concludes the account of Abra-

ham's life, which started in 11:27. For completeness, it records additional family details.

25:1 another wife. See note on 16:3. The author provides few details about Abraham's relationship with Keturah and does not view her sons as being on a par with Isaac. Although Abraham provides for these sons during his lifetime, they do not inherit anything when he dies; everything goes to Isaac (vv. 5-6). Given how Abraham treats Keturah's sons, it seems likely that he viewed both Keturah and Hagar as concubines. Certain OT contexts portray such women as married, being "second" wives, but not necessarily of equal status to the "first" wife. Hagar, e.g., continued to be Sarah's maidservant after the birth of Ishmael (16:1-3; 21:10,12; cf. 29:24,29; 30:4,9). While 25:1-6 highlights the identity of various people groups descended from Abraham, it carefully distinguishes these descendants from Isaac. He alone is Abraham's heir.

25:5 b Ge 24:36

⁵Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac.^b ⁶But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines^c and sent them away from his son Isaac^d to the land of the east.

⁷Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age,^e an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.^{f 9}His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him⁹ in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, h 10 the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. ai There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. 11After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi. j

Ishmael's Sons

25:12-16pp - 1Ch 1:29-31

¹²This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar^k the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.¹

¹³These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. ¹⁶These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers^m according to their settlements and camps. ¹⁷Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.^{n 18}His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward^b all the tribes related to them.^o

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old^p when he married Rebekah^q daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram^c and sister of Laban^r the Aramean.

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer,^s and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.^t

²³The LORD said to her.

"Two nations^u are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

^a 10 Or the descendants of Heth ^b 18 Or lived to the east of

25:8 he was gathered to his people. This expression may indicate belief in life after death. It occurs elsewhere in Genesis in conjunction with the deaths of Ishmael (v. 17), Isaac (35:28-29), and Jacob (49:33). Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah (v. 9), which he had bought from Ephron (23:1-20).

25:12-18 Ishmael's Sons. While the main story focuses on Isaac and his sons, Genesis also includes some information about Ishmael's family. 25:12 This is the account of the family line of. A formulaic heading that introduces new sections of material in Genesis (see note on 2:4).

25:18 they lived in hostility toward. Regardless of how this phrase is translated (see NIV text note), it confirms what God predicted in 16:12. 25:19-36:43 The Family of Isaac. This is the next main narrative section in Genesis. It concentrates mainly on Isaac's twin sons, highlighting how the younger brother Jacob takes precedence over his older twin Esau. The entire story is skillfully composed, with the motifs of birthright and blessing being especially significant.

25:19-34 Jacob and Esau. The strained relationship between the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah comes to the fore in chs. 25-36. Even before they are born, the boys struggle with each other (vv. 22-23), anticipating a greater struggle that will eventually result in Jacob fleeing for his life (27:41 - 28:5). At the heart of this struggle is the issue of who will be heir to the promises God gave to Abraham. While the

25:6 ° Ge 22:24 d Ge 21:10,14 25:8 ° Ge 15:15 f ver 17: Ge 35:29; 49:29, 33 25:9 9 Ge 35:29 ^h Ge 50:13 25:10 Ge 23:16 25:11 Ge 16:14 25:12 KGe 16:1 Ge 16:15 25:16 "Ge 17:20 25:17 " ver 8 25:18 ° Ge 16:12 25:20 p ver 26; Ge 26:34 9 Ge 24.67 Ge 24.29 25:21 s1Ch 5:20; 2Ch 33:13: Ezr 8:23: Ps 127:3: Ro 9:10 25:22 t 1Sa 9:9: 10:22 25:23 "Ge 17:4 Ge 27:29, 40; Mal 1:3; Ro 9:11-12*

^c 20 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

birthright belongs to Esau, he dismisses it as unimportant, being willing to sell it to his brother for a bowl of stew (vv. 29-34). Jacob, however, is keen to have the benefits that accompany the status of firstborn.

25:19 This is the account of the family line of. This formula marks the start of a new section in Genesis (25:19-35:29). See note on 2:4. 25:20 Paddan Aram. The roots of Abraham's family go back to this location in Northwest Mesopotamia (see NIV text note); for this reason Abraham is later designated a "wandering Aramean" (Deut 26:5).

25:21 childless. Like Sarah before her (11:30) and Rachel after her (29:31), Rebekah is unable to have children. The motif of childlessness in Genesis draws attention to how God ensures the continuation of the unique family lineage through which the nations of the earth will be blessed.

25:22-23 When Rebekah asks God to explain the struggle that is happening inside her womb, she learns that her twins will produce two nations.

25:23 the older will serve the younger. Contrary to the custom of that time. This prediction provides the first indication that the special family line that Genesis traces will continue through Jacob rather than Esau. The struggle between the unborn babies recalls how throughout Genesis, beginning with Cain and Abel, conflict between brothers is a recurring motif. Such conflict threatens the survival of the unique lineage

25:25 "Ge 27:11 25:26 *Hos 12:3 yGe 27:36 25:27 ZGe 27:3.5 25:28 a Ge 27:19 ^bGe 27:6 25:33 ° Ge 27:36; Heb 12:16 26:1 d Ge 12:10 e Ge 20:1 26:2 fGe 12:7; 17:1; 18:1 9 Ge 12:1 26:3 h Ge 20:1; 28:15 Ge 12:2; 22:16-18 Ge 12:7; 13:15; 15:18 26:4 KGe 15:5; 22:17; Ex 32:13 Ge 12:3; 22:18: Gal 3:8 26:5 m Ge 22:16 26:7 "Ge 12:13; 20:2, 12: Pr 29:25 ²⁴When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment;^w so they named him Esau.^{*a* 26}After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel;^x so he was named Jacob. ^{*by*} Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country,^z while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸Isaac, who had a taste for wild game,^a loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.^b

²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.^c)

³¹Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

³²"Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

³³But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright^c to Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

Isaac and Abimelek

26:1-11Ref — Ge 12:10-20; 20:1-18

26 Now there was a famine in the land^d — besides the previous famine in Abraham's time — and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar.^{e 2}The LORD appeared^f to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.^{g 3}Stay in this land for a while,^h and I will be with you and will bless you.ⁱ For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands^j and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.⁴I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky^k and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring^d all nations on earth will be blessed, ^{ei 5}because Abraham obeyed me^m and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions." ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."

^a 25 Esau may mean bairy. ^b 26 Jacob means be grasps the beel, a Hebrew idiom for be deceives. ^c 30 Edom means red. ^d 4 Or seed ^e 4 Or and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20)

through which the nations will be blessed. The apostle Paul quotes from this verse to show that God is free to act as he pleases in the process of accomplishing his plan of salvation (Rom 9:10–13).

25:25–26 The names of both Jacob and Esau derive from features associated with their births (see NIV text notes). A person who grasps another person by the heel was a way to describe a deceiver. The motif of deception reappears throughout Jacob's life.

25:26 Isaac was sixty years old. If Isaac was this age when the twins were born, then Abraham was still alive. Not all events in Genesis are in strict chronological order; see vv. 7–10, where Abraham's death is recorded.

25:27 – 28 As the two boys grow into manhood, they differ significantly in their interests and character (see note on vv. 29-34). Esau favors outdoor activities, while Jacob prefers a more domesticated lifestyle. Their differing interests not only cause Isaac and Rebekah to favor different sons, but they set the scene for the events in the episodes that follow.

25:29–34 Although Jacob's desire to buy his brother's birthright demonstrates his grasping nature, Esau's attitude comes in for particular criticism. By selling for a bowl of stew the benefits associated with his firstborn status, Esau displays contempt for all that God promised to Abraham and his family line. What Esau despises (v. 34), Jacob desires. Jacob recognizes the value of the birthright, even though his method of attaining it is hardly commendable. This short episode casts a long shadow over the rest of the Jacob-Esau story, building on the earlier prediction in v. 23 that "the older will serve the younger."

26:1 – **33** *Isaac and Abimelek.* The next stage in the story of Jacob and Esau's struggle with each other occurs when their father Isaac is close to death (26:34 – 28:9). Meanwhile, ch. 26 records various incidents involving Isaac. Remarkably, these incidents have much in common with events involving Abraham. Not only do Isaac's actions closely parallel those of his father, but Isaac receives the promises God made to Abraham. **26:1 famine.** Abraham went to Egypt during a famine (12:10–20), but God instructs Isaac to remain in Gerar (v. 2). **Abimelek.** Possibly the king chs. 20-21 mention; more likely, he is a son or grandson of that Abimelek. **Philistines.** See note on 21:32.

26:3-5 God accompanies his instructions to Isaac with assurances that resonate with the promises he gave to Abraham. Through Isaac God will "confirm the oath" (v. 3) that he swore to Abraham (22:16-18). Since Isaac was present when God made that oath, he would easily recall the occasion. By associating this oath with Abraham's obedience and by underlining that Abraham kept God's commands, decrees, and instructions, God encourages Isaac to obey him. Obeying God takes many forms.

26:7 Famine forces Isaac to relocate to a new region (see v. 1). Like Abraham (12:10–20; 20:1–18), Isaac pretends that his wife is his sister in order to safeguard his own life. Isaac's behavior implies that the region was far from peaceful. It also reflects his lack of trust in God.

⁸When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."

¹⁰Then Abimelek said, "What is this you have done to us?⁰ One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."

¹¹So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who harms^p this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

 12 Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him.^q ¹³The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy.^r ¹⁴He had so many flocks and herds and servants^s that the Philistines envied him.^t ¹⁵So all the wells^u that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up,^v filling them with earth.

¹⁶Then Abimelek said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.""

¹⁷So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. ¹⁸Isaac reopened the wells^x that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!"^y So he named the well Esek, ^{*a*} because they disputed with him. ²¹Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. ^{*b*} ²²He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, ^{*c*} saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish² in the land."

²³From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham.^a Do not be afraid,^b for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants^c for the sake of my servant Abraham."^d

²⁵Isaac built an altar^e there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

²⁶Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces.^{f 27}Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?⁹"

²⁸They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you;^h so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us' — between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you ²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the LORD."ⁱ

³⁰Isaac then made a feast^j for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹Early the next morning the men swore an oath^k to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully.

³²That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" ³³He called it Shibah,^d and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.^{el}

^a 20 Esek means dispute. ^b 21 Sitnab means opposition. ^c 22 Reboboth means room. ^d 33 Shibab can mean oath or seven. ^e 33 Beersbeba can mean well of the oath and well of seven.

(presumably to discourage seminomadic herdsmen from settling there), Isaac reopens them (v. 18). Unfortunately, his actions provoke protests (vv. 20-21), which eventually cause him to move further away from Gerar (vv. 22-23).

26:26-31 When Isaac relocates to Beersheba, Abimelek comes to him seeking to make a treaty. This event recalls 21:22-32, which records that Abraham and the king of Gerar made a similar peace treaty in Beersheba.

26:32–33 Digging a new well and discovering water coincides with ratifying the treaty. Isaac calls the well Shibah (see NIV text note), possibly because of circumstances surrounding Abraham's treaty with Abimelek (21:30–31; cf. v. 18).

26:10 ° Ge 20:9 26:11 PPs 105:15 26:12 9 ver 3: Job 42:12 26:13 'Pr 10:22 26:14 °Ge 24:36 tGe 37:11 26:15 "Ge 21:30 Ge 21:25 26:16 "Ex 1:9 26:18 × Ge 21:30 26:20 y Ge 21:25 26:22 ZGe 17:6: Fx 1:7 26:24 a Ge 24:12; Ex 3:6 Ge 15:1 ° ver 4 d Ge 17:7 26:25 º Ge 12:7,8; 13:4, 18; Ps 116:17 26:26 f Ge 21:22 26:27 9 ver 16 26:28 h Ge 21:22 26:29 'Ge 24:31; Ps 115:15 26:30 Ge 19:3 26:31 KGe 21:31 26:33 Ge 21:14

^{26:8–11} When Abimelek discovers Isaac's deception, he acts with integrity, fearful that unknowingly he and his people may become guilty of adultery. Abimelek's reaction contrasts sharply with what Isaac expected. This incident parallels Abraham's earlier ruse (20:1–18; cf. 12:10–20).

^{26:12} the Lorp blessed him. God's favor or blessing is associated with those who belong to the unique lineage Genesis traces. Like Abraham, Isaac prospers materially (v. 13).

^{26:14-16} Isaac's prosperity causes the Philistines to become envious and fearful of Isaac, so Isaac moves away.

^{26:17-23} Isaac's move brings him to a location where earlier Abraham dug wells. Since the Philistines subsequently stopped up these wells

26:34 m Ge 25:20 Ge 28:9; 36:2 26:35 ° Ge 27:46 27:1 ° Ge 48:10: 1Sa 3:2 ^qGe 25:25 27:2 'Ge 47:29 27:3 ° Ge 25:27 27:4 tver 10,25,31; Ge 49:28; Dt 33:1; Heb 11:20 27:6 "Ge 25:28 27:8 v ver 13,43 27:11 "Ge 25:25 27:12 × ver 22 27:13 yMt 27:25 zver 8 27:15 a ver 27 27:19 b ver 4 27:20 ° Ge 24:12 27:21 d ver 12

Jacob Takes Esau's Blessing

³⁴When Esau was forty years old,^m he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite.^{n 35}They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.^o

7 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see,^p he called for Esau his older son^q and said to him, "My son."

"Here I am," he answered.

²Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death.^{r 3}Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow— and go out to the open country^s to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing^t before I die."

⁵Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, ⁶Rebekah said to her son Jacob,^u "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ⁷'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' ⁸Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you:^v ⁹Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. ¹⁰Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."

¹¹Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man^w while I have smooth skin. ¹²What if my father touches me?^x I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing."

¹³His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me.^y Just do what I say;^z go and get them for me."

¹⁴So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. ¹⁵Then Rebekah took the best clothes^a of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. ¹⁷Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

¹⁸He went to his father and said, "My father."

"Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"

¹⁹Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."^b

²⁰Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The LORD your God gave me success, c" he replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you,^d my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."

26:34 - 28:9 Jacob Takes Esau's Blessing. This section gives considerable attention to how Jacob deceives his father Isaac into giving him the blessing due to the firstborn son. This incident, which is full of subtle observations regarding the family members, further develops Jacob's ambition to be heir to the promises God gave to Abraham and Isaac. While Jacob's actions are central to the deception, the narrator highlights the shortcomings of both Isaac and Esau and depicts Rebekah as the deception's prime instigator. In the light of the blessing Isaac gives to Jacob (27:28-29) and Isaac's subsequent reluctance to denounce Jacob (27:37), this fulfills what God predicted in 25:23, for Isaac says to Esau, "You will serve your brother" (27:40). Having previously sold his birthright to Jacob, Esau now witnesses the final stage in the process by which Jacob receives Isaac's deathbed blessing. In the Hebrew text, a striking wordplay links the concepts of blessing (běrākâ) and birthright (běkōrâ). The association of Jacob with blessing recalls what God promised Abraham in 12:1-3 (cf. 27:29).

26:35 a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah. The story gives few details regarding this phrase, but a significant factor may be the Hittite origin of Esau's wives. Unlike his father, Isaac, Esau did not look for a wife from among his own relatives, suggesting that he did not fully embrace the beliefs of his parents. 27:1 – 4 Nearing death, Isaac summons Esau in order to make arrangements to formally bless him as his firstborn son. This blessing would confirm Esau as Isaac's principal heir, making him the one through whom the family line associated with God's redemptive plan would continue. By noting that Isaac was blind (v. 1), the narrator anticipates later developments in the story and may also indicate that Isaac failed to see clearly Esau's true nature. By highlighting Isaac's desire for "tasty food" (v. 4), the narrator possibly implies that selfishness motivated Isaac's decision to bless Esau.

27:5 – 13 As the one who overhears Isaac speaking to Esau, Rebekah both instigates and oversees Jacob's deception of Isaac. When Jacob voices anxiety about Isaac finding him out, Rebekah states that she will bear full responsibility: "My son, let the curse fall on me" (v. 13). While Rebekah's scheming probably reflects her particular love for Jacob (25:28), God's prediction that the older would serve the younger (25:23) and her own assessment of Esau's character may also have influenced her.

27:15–16 Rebekah cunningly disguises Jacob as Esau, even using goatskins to make Jacob appear hairy like Esau (v. 11; 25:25).

27:18–22 Although Isaac is blind, he is initially suspicious when Jacob claims to be Esau. Sensing that the voice is that of Jacob, he touches Jacob in order to be certain.

²²Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau;^e so he proceeded to bless him. ²⁴"Are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"I am," he replied.

²⁵Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing."^f Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. ²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me."

²⁷So he went to him and kissed him⁹. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes,^h he blessed him and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.¹
²⁸ May God give you heaven's dew^j and earth's richness^k an abundance of grain and new wine.¹
²⁹ May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you.^m
Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.ⁿ May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.^o"

³⁰After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. ³¹He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."^p

³²His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"^q

"I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."

³³Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him — and indeed he will be blessed!""

³⁴When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry^s and said to his father, "Bless me — me too, my father!"

³⁵But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully^t and took your blessing."

³⁶Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob^{*a*}?" This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, ^v and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

³⁷Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine.^w So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

^a 36 Jacob means be grasps the heel, a Hebrew idiom for he takes advantage of or he deceives.

27:27 – 29 Immediately prior to blessing Jacob, Isaac smells him in order to be convinced that this is indeed Esau. The outdoor scent of Esau's clothing, which Jacob has put on, reassures Isaac. While Isaac prays that God will bless Jacob materially, his aspirations for his first-born son lead him to request that "nations" and "peoples" (v. 29) serve him, as well as his closest family members. Isaac's prayer is exceptionally ambitious given that he and his family are relative newcomers to the land of Canaan and Isaac himself has previously feared for his own life (26:7). His expectations regarding his firstborn son, however, are grounded in God's promises to Abraham; he assures Jacob that God will bless him, echoing what God said to Abraham (12:2).

27:30-40 Esau is furious when he learns that Jacob deceived Isaac and that Isaac gave Jacob the blessing he intended for Esau. Recalling that the name Jacob means "deceiver" (see NIV text note on v. 36), Esau charges Jacob with having exploited him on two occasions: Jacob has taken Esau's birthright (25:29-34) and his blessing. The patriarchal stories of Genesis give special attention to those who receive the blessing of the firstborn because through them God will fulfill his promise to bless the nations of the earth. When Esau pleads with his father for a blessing, Isaac states that he cannot revoke what he has requested for Jacob (v. 37). As God predicted in 25:23, Esau will serve Jacob. However, by way of consoling Esau, Isaac pronounces that although Esau will serve his brother, eventually he will "throw [off] his yoke" (v. 40). While Isaac's words seem to refer to Esau's own lifetime, in line with other paternal deathbed blessings, they include Esau's descendants. In the light of this, later history reveals that the relationship between Jacob's descendants (the Israelites) and Esau's descendants (the Edomites) was sometimes anything but brotherly (see Obad 1–21).

27:23 º ver 16 27:25 f ver 4 27:27 9 Heb 11:20 SS 4:11 Ps 65:9-13 27:28 j Dt 33:13 k ver 39 Ge 45:18: Nu 18:12: Dt 33:28 27:29 m Isa 45:14,23; 49:7,23 "Ge 9:25; 25:23; 37:7 ° Ge 12:3; Nu 24:9; Zep 2:8 27:31 ^pver 4 27:32 9 ver 18 27:33 'ver 29; Ge 28:3, 4; Ro 11:29 27:34 SHeb 12:17 27:35 t Jer 9:4; 12:6 27:36 "Ge 25:26 ^vGe 25:33 27:37 w ver 28

27:38 * Heb 12:17 27:39 y ver 28 27:40 22Sa 8:14 ^aGe 25:23 ^b2Ki 8:20-22 27:41 ° Ge 37:4 ^dGe 32:11 e Ge 50:4, 10 f Ob 10 27:43 g ver 8 h Ge 24:29 Ge 11:31 27:44 Ge 31:38.41 27:45 k ver 35 27:46 Ge 26:35 28:1 m Ge 24:3 28:2 "Ge 25:20 28:3 °Ge 17:1 °Ge 17:6 28:4 9 Ge 12:2.3 'Ge 17:8 28:5 °Hos 12:12 tGe 24:29 28:6 " ver 1 $^{38}\text{Esau}$ said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.^x

³⁹His father Isaac answered him,

"Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew^y of heaven above. ⁴⁰You will live by the sword and you will serve^z your brother.^a But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.^b"

⁴¹Esau held a grudge^c against Jacob^d because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning^e for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."^f

⁴²When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. ⁴³Now then, my son, do what I say:⁹ Flee at once to my brother Laban^h in Harran.^{1 44}Stay with him for a while¹ until your brother's fury subsides. ⁴⁵When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him,^k I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living."

28 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman.^{m 2}Go at once to Paddan Aram,^{*a*} to the house of your mother's father Bethuel.ⁿ Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. ³May God Almighty^{*bo*} bless you and make you fruitful^p and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. ⁴May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham,^q so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner,^r the land God gave to Abraham." ⁵Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram,^s to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah,^t who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite woman,"^u

^a 2 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verses 5, 6 and 7 ^b 3 Hebrew El-Shaddai

27:41 – 45 Unwilling to forgive his brother, Esau plots to kill Jacob once his father is dead. When Rebekah learns of Esau's intention, she tells Jacob to take refuge with her brother Laban in Harran (24:29).

27:46 Having decided that Jacob should flee to Harran, Rebekah looks to persuade Isaac that this would be best by highlighting the difficulties Esau's Hittite wives created (see 26:34–35). **life will not be worth living.** Rebekah bluntly states how devastated she would be if Jacob also were to marry a native of Canaan.

28:1 – 2 Because he also dislikes Esau's wives (26:35), Isaac instructs Jacob to go to Paddan Aram in order to find a wife. While Abraham had sent a servant to do this on behalf of Isaac (24:2–4), Jacob himself must go.

28:1 Canaanite woman. Whereas Rebekah speaks of "Hittite women" (27:46), Isaac uses the broader designation "Canaanite woman." On the basis of 10:15, Hittites were considered to be a subgroup of Canaanites (see note on 23:3).

28:2 Paddan Aram. See note on 25:20.

28:3-4 The second half of Isaac's speech abounds with expressions that recall God's promises to Abraham, whom Isaac names twice. Strikingly, Isaac stresses the divine promises of numerous descendants and possession of the land of Canaan. These promises take on added significance in the light of Esau's threat to kill his brother and Jacob's departure to Paddan Aram to find a wife. The fulfillment of the promises anticipates Jacob's safe return to the land of Canaan. Throughout the patriarchal stories, the promises of numerous descendants and possession of the land of Canaan connect to 1:28. Through the patriarchs and their descendants, God will eventually fulfill his purpose in creating people to inhabit the earth. By stating that Jacob will become a "community of peoples" (v. 3; see 35:11), Isaac alludes to the covenant involving circumcision, in which God promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations (17:4 – 6). While the creation of Israel as a nation fulfills God's promises to the patriarchs, that is not the sole purpose for which God chose Abraham and his descendants. Through all that occurs, God desires to bless all the families/nations of the earth.

28:6 – 9 In a belated attempt to gain his parent's approval, Esau marries a daughter of "Ishmael son of Abraham" (v. 9; see 16:15). Ironically, Esau's link with the family of Ishmael — Nebaioth (Esau's brother-in-law) is Ishmael's firstborn son (25:13) — further signals that God will not fulfill his promises through Esau, for God passed over Ishmael in favor of Isaac.

⁷and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women^v were to his father Isaac;^{w 9}so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth^x and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.^y

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

¹⁰Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran.^{z 11}When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹²He had a dream^a in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.^{b 13}There above it^{*a*} stood the LORD,^c and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.^d I will give you and your descendants the land^e on which you are lying. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you^f will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.^g All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^{bh 15}I am with youⁱ and will watch over you^j wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you^k until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place!^m This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillarⁿ and poured oil on top of it.^o ¹⁹He called that place Bethel,^c though the city used to be called Luz.^p

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow,^q saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me^r on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹so that I return safely^s to my father's household, then the LORD^{*d*} will be my God^t ²²and^{*e*} this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house,^u and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.^v"

^a 13 Or There beside bim ^b 14 Or will use your name and the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20) ^c 19 Betbel means bouse of God. ^d 20,21 Or Since God... father's bousehold, the LORD ^e 21,22 Or bousehold, and the LORD will be my God, ²²then

28:8 Canaanite women. See note on v. 1.

28:10–22 Jacob's Dream at Bethel. Jacob experiences two encounters with God that occur at significant points in his life: (1) in this nighttime experience when he is about to leave the land of Canaan and (2) when he returns to Canaan (32:22–32). God's speech to Jacob recalls his earlier promises to Abraham and Isaac, and he concludes by promising to protect Jacob. The whole experience transforms Jacob's understanding of God and is part of the process by which God changes him.

28:10 Harran. See note on 11:31.

28:12 stairway. While the Hebrew term *sullām* is often translated "ladder," it probably denotes here a flight of stairs like those constructed on ancient ziggurats. Linking heaven to earth, this stairway vividly reminds Jacob that God intends to reside on the earth, so Jacob calls the location Bethel (see NIV text note on v. 19). See note on John 1:51.

28:13–15 Jacob's father has blessed him, and now God gives Jacob similar assurances that his descendants will take possession of the land of Canaan and that all peoples on earth will be blessed through Jacob and his offspring. This not only echoes how Isaac blessed Jacob prior to his departure for Paddan Aram (vv. 3-4), but the wording closely resembles God's promises to Abraham (12:2–3,7; 13:14–17; 17:7–8; 18:18; 22:17–18) and Isaac (26:3–4). God reassures Jacob that he will accompany him on his journey.

28:13 above it. See NIV text note. When speaking to Jacob, God is standing either (1) in heaven at the top of the stairway or (2) on the earth beside Jacob, looking down on him as he lies on the ground.

28:16–17 For Jacob, his experience is more than a dream. He is filled with a sense of awe as he contemplates the significance of what has happened. His vision convinces him that this location is part of "the house of God" (v. 17), the entrance to heaven itself. This adds considerably to

28:8 'Ge 24:3 "Ge 26:35 28:9 × Ge 25:13 ^yGe 26:34 28:10 ZGe 11:31 28:12 a Ge 20:3 b Jn 1:51 28:13 ° Ge 12:7; 35:7,9; 48.3 d Ge 26.24 eGe 13:15; 35:12 28:14 f Ge 26:4 9 Ge 13.14 h Ge 12.3. 18:18; 22:18; Gal 3:8 28:15 'Ge 26:3; 48:21 Nu 6:24: Ps 121:5.7-8 ^kDt 31:6,8 ^INu 23:19 28:17 m Ex 3:5; Jos 5:15 28:18 "Ge 35:14 °Lev 8:11 28:19 PJdg 1:23,26 28:20 9 Ge 31:13; Jdg 11:30; 2Sa 15:8 ver 15 28:21 ^sJdg 11:31 tDt 26:17 28:22 "Ge 35:7,14 Ge 14:20; Lev 27:30

the significance of the promise of land in v. 13. God promises Jacob and his descendants land that includes "the gate of heaven" (v. 17).

28:18 pillar ... poured oil on top of it. The method Jacob uses to mark his experience. This is apparently a Canaanite practice that Deut 16:22 later prohibits. Interestingly, while Jacob continues the custom during his stay in Paddan Aram (31:45,51–52) and after he returns to Canaan (35:14,20), following his next encounter with God at Peniel (32:22–32) he constructs altars (33:20; 35:1–7), as Abraham (12:7–8; 13:4,18; 22:9) and Isaac (26:25) did, one of these being located at Bethel. The shift to making altars may indicate that Jacob has undergone a deep spiritual experience.

28:19 Bethel ... Luz. Jacob's vision of God probably took place outside the city of Luz (Josh 16:2). Although he names the location Bethel, the nearby city of Luz retained its name until the Israelites settled there after their exodus from Egypt (Josh 18:13; Judg 1:23,26).

28:20–21 If ... then. Jacob's vow possibly suggests that he is still less than fully committed to serving the Lord. He rests his future commitment to God on God's bringing him back safely to his father's household. His words suggest that he lacks a truly personal faith in God. This ambivalence may suggest why Jacob's next encounter with God at Peniel (32:22–32) is especially significant.

28:22 Having named the location Bethel (see NIV text note on v. 19), Jacob appears to suggest that on his return he will use the stone he has consecrated to construct a temple. While Jacob does not build a permanent temple at Bethel, he builds an altar (35:1–7), which he may have viewed as forming part of a temporary sanctuary. I will give you a tenth. The gift of a tithe to God became a regular feature of Israelite worship (Lev 27:30,32; Num 18:26; Deut 14:22–23). Previously, Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek to recognize God's role in helping him rescue Lot (14:20).

29:1 ^w Jdg 6:3,33 29:4 *Ge 28:10 29:9 ^yEx 2:16 29:10 2 Ex 2:17 29:11 a Ge 33:4 29:12 b Ge 13:8; 14:14, 16 ° Ge 24:28 29:13 d Ge 24:29 29:14 ° Ge 2:23: Jdg 9:2: 2Sa 19:12-13 29:18 ^fHos 12:12 29:20 9SS 8:7: Hos 12.12 29:21 h Jdg 15:1 29:22 i Jdg 14:10; .In 2.1-2

Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram

29 Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples.^{w 2}There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. ³When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?"

"We're from Harran,^x" they replied.

⁵He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?"

"Yes, we know him," they answered.

⁶Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?"

"Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep."

⁷"Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture."

⁸"We can't," they replied, "until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep."

⁹While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, ^y for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep.^{z 11}Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud.^{a 12}He had told Rachel that he was a relative^b of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father.^c

¹³As soon as Laban^d heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. ¹⁴Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood."^e

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah had weak^{*a*} eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."^f

¹⁹Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." ²⁰So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.⁹

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.^h"

²²So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.¹²³But when evening came,

a 17 Or delicate

29:1 – 14 Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram. Jacob's meeting with Rachel at a well recalls the earlier account of Abraham's servant meeting Rebekah at a well (24:10–20). On this occasion, the roles are reversed: Jacob waters the flock that Rachel brings to the well. As previously, when Laban hears what has happened, he hurries to meet the new arrival.

29:1 land of the eastern peoples. This is an unusual expression to designate. Northwest Mesopotamia. However, Abraham's family was originally from Ur in southeastern Mesopotamia (see 11:28 and note). Terah and his sons migrated to Harran (11:31). Other families may also have moved in the same direction, settling in the region of Harran. This might explain the designation "eastern peoples."

29:6 sheep. The Hebrew term sö'n means flock. Jacob's family in Paddan Aram keep sheep and goats, like Abraham and Isaac. The family's dependency upon these animals may explain why Laban named his daughter Rachel (meaning "ewe"). Normally men would shepherd the animals. Possibly Laban's sons are still too young to undertake this duty (cf. 30:35; 31:1).
29:10 rolled the stone away ... and watered [the] sheep. Jacob's actions suggest that his presence would be an asset to Laban's family.

29:14 my own flesh and blood. On learning that Jacob is Rebekah's son, Laban embraces him as a close relative.

29:15 – 30 Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel. Having been sent to Paddan Aram to find a wife, Jacob is captivated by Rachel's beauty. He readily works seven years in order to earn the bride-price necessary to marry Rachel. However, in a deception that is highly ironic in the light of how Jacob treated Esau, Laban substitutes his older daughter Leah in place of his younger daughter Rachel. To have Rachel, Jacob must serve Laban for an additional seven years.

29:17 Leah ... Rachel. Although the descriptions of both are exceptionally brief, they sufficiently explain why Jacob is attracted to Rachel rather than Leah (v. 30; but see vv. 31–35).

29:19 Marriage arrangements in the ancient Near East normally required that a prospective husband give a gift of money, technically known as the bride-price, to the father of the bride. Since Jacob has arrived in Paddan Aram with no means of paying the bride-price, he offers to work for Laban without wages for seven years.

29:23 In the darkness of the evening and without artificial lighting,

he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her.²⁴And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me?^j I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?^k"

²⁶Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷Finish this daughter's bridal week;¹ then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work."

²⁸And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹Laban gave his servant Bilhah^m to his daughter Rachel as her attendant.ⁿ ³⁰Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah.^o And he worked for Laban another seven years.^p

Jacob's Children

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved,^q he enabled her to conceive,^r but Rachel remained childless. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,^{*a*} for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery.^s Surely my husband will love me now."

³³She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.^{bt}

³⁴Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me," because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.^{*cv*}

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah.^{*dw*} Then she stopped having children.

30 When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children,^x she became jealous of her sister.^y So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

²Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"^z

³Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my servant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her."^a

^a 32 Reuben sounds like the Hebrew for *be bas seen my misery*; the name means *see, a son.* ^b 33 Simeon probably means *one who bears.* ^c 34 Levi sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *attached.* ^d 35 Judab sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise.*

Jacob does not recognize that his veiled bride is Leah (cf. 24:65). Perhaps after a day's feasting, Jacob is somewhat inebriated.

29:24 Zilpah. She later becomes a surrogate mother for Leah (30:9–13).

29:26 Laban justifies deceiving Jacob on the basis that a firstborn daughter should take precedence in marriage over other daughters. His remark recalls how Jacob deceived his own firstborn brother. Although Laban's actions are wrong, there is an element of poetic justice.

29:27 bridal week. To appease Jacob, Laban offers him Rachel on two conditions: Jacob must finish the wedding celebrations with Leah and commit to serving Laban for another seven years. Accepting these conditions, Jacob marries Rachel immediately after marrying Leah.

29:29 Bilhah. She later becomes a surrogate mother for Rachel (30:3–8).

29:30 his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. This becomes a source of considerable friction between the two women. Many of the stories in Genesis involve tensions between family members, reflecting the consequences of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God. Polygamy adds another dimension to these family disputes (see note on 16:3).

29:31 — 30:24 Jacob's Children. The tension between Leah and Rachel impacts the process by which they bear children for Jacob. Although Jacob loves Leah less than Rachel, God enables Leah to bear four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. While Rachel remains childless, out of jealousy she gives her servant Bilhah to Jacob. Subsequently, Bilhah gives birth to Dan and Naphtali. In response Leah gives her servant Zilpah to Jacob, and she bears Gad and Asher. Afterward Leah has two more sons, Issachar and Zebulun, and a daughter, Dinah. Finally, Rachel conceives and gives birth to Joseph. While Jacob's family increases in size, with so many different women involved, the internal dynamics of the family are far from harmonious. In all this, the women perceive the hand of God at work in giving them children.

29:31 Leah was not loved. While the peculiar circumstances of Jacob's marriage to Leah explain why he does not love her as he does Rachel (v. 30), the way he treats Leah is nevertheless inappropriate. In Genesis the human tendency to favor one person over another frequently causes tension. In such circumstances God often acts on behalf of the underdog.

29:32–35 The Lord's enabling Leah to conceive (v. 31) accounts for how she names her first three sons. Significantly, the motif of Jacob not loving Leah repeats with the births of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (see NIV text notes on vv. 32–34). However, there is no mention of it with Judah's birth (see NIV text note on v. 35). Possibly this implies that by this stage Jacob has started to love Leah on account of the sons that she has borne him. Most appropriately Leah praises God for the birth of Judah, the ancestor of the Messianic lineage (Matt 1:1–16). See note on 49:8–12.

30:1 – 2 Jealous of her sister, Rachel vents her frustration, accusing Jacob of not giving her children. Jacob blames Rachel's childlessness on God. Unlike Isaac in 25:21, the text does not say that Jacob prayed for his barren wife.

30:3-8 Like Sarah (16:1-4), Rachel proposes that her maidservant become a surrogate mother. When Bilhah bears Dan and Naphtali, Rachel

29:25 Ge 12:18 ^kGe 27:36 29:27 Jdg 14:12 29:29 m Ge 30:3 ⁿ Ge 16:1 29:30 ° ver 16 ° Ge 31:41 29:31 9Dt 21:15-17 Ge 11:30; 30:1; Ps 127:3 29:32 °Ge 16:11; 31:42; Ex 4:31: Dt 26:7: Ps 25:18 29:33 tGe 34:25: 49:5 29:34 "Ge 30:20: 1Sa 1:2-4 VGe 49:5-7 29:35 "Ge 49:8; Mt 1:2-3 30:1 ×Ge 29:31; 1Sa 1:5-6 yLev 18:18 30:2 ZGe 16:2: 20.18.29.31 30:3 a Ge 16:2

30:4 ^b ver 9,18 ^cGe 16:3-4 30:6 d Ps 35:24; 43:1; La 3:59 ° Ge 49:16-17 30:8 ^fHos 12:3-4 9 Ge 49:21 30:9 h ver 4 30:11 'Ge 49:19 30:13 Ps 127:3 kPr 31:28: Lk 1:48 Ge 49:20 30:14 mSS 7:13 30:15 "Nu 16:9,13 30:17 º Ge 25:21 30:18 PGe 49:14 30:20 9 Ge 35:23: 49:13: Mt 4:13 30:22 'Ge 8:1; 1Sa 1:19-20 ° Ge 29:31 30:23 tver 6 ulsa 4:1: Lk 1:25 30:24 v Ge 35:24; 37:2; 39:1; 49:22-26 ** Ge 35:17 30:25 × Ge 24:54 30:26 y Ge 29:20, 30; Hos 12:12 30:27 2Ge 26:24; 39:3,5 30:28 a Ge 29:15

⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife.^b Jacob slept with her,^{c 5} and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me,^d he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan.^{*a*e}

⁷Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won."^f So she named him Naphtali.^{bg}

⁹When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.^{h 10}Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"^c So she named him Gad.^{di}

¹²Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me^j happy."^k So she named him Asher.^{*e*1}

¹⁴During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants,^m which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵But she said to her, "Wasn't it enoughⁿ that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?"

"Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

¹⁶So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night.

¹⁷God listened to Leah,^o and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband." So she named him Issachar.^{fp}

¹⁹Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.^{gq}

²¹Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²Then God remembered Rachel;^{*r*} he listened to her and enabled her to conceive. ^s ²³She became pregnant and gave birth to a son¹ and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."^{u 24}She named him Joseph, ^{*b*} w and said, "May the LORD add to me another son."^w

Jacob's Flocks Increase

²⁵After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way^x so I can go back to my own homeland. ²⁶Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you,^y and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."

²⁷But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you."^{z 28}He added, "Name your wages, ^a and I will pay them."

^a 6 Dan here means	he has vindicated. ^b 8	' <i>Naphtali</i> means	s my struggle.	^c 11 (") Or "A troop is coming!"
^d 11 Gad can mean g	good fortune or a troop.	^e 13 Asher me	ans <i>happy</i> .	^f 18 Issa	<i>char</i> sounds like the
Hebrew for <i>reward</i> .	^g 20 Zebulun probably	means honor:	^b 24 Joseph	means ma	ıy be add.

names them, indicating in this particular context that they belong to her. The boys' names reflect Rachel's desire to outdo her sister: God has vindicated her, and she has won (see NIV text notes on vv. 6,8). Rachel's struggle with her sister recalls the struggle between Jacob and Esau.

30:9–13 Responding to Rachel, Leah gives her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob. The births of Gad and Asher bring joy to Leah, as their names indicate (see NIV text notes on vv. 11,13).

30:14–16 Jacob's relationships with Rachel and with Leah are dysfunctional. Their dispute becomes so twisted that Rachel is prepared to sell Leah a night with Jacob for the price of some mandrake plants that Reuben has collected. Rachel's behavior is reminiscent of Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of stew (25:29–34).

30:17–21 Although it appeared that Leah had stopped having children (v. 9), Leah becomes pregnant not once but three more times. She bears two sons, Issachar and Zebulun, once again acknowledging God's role in their births (see NIV text notes on vv. 18,20), and a daughter, Dinah. The brief mention of Dinah's birth prepares for the events in ch. 34.

30:22-24 After her sister Leah has given birth to six sons and a daughter, Rachel's prayer is eventually answered by God, and she gives birth to Joseph. The threefold reference to God in these verses underlines that he is the one who enables the matriarchs to have children. Childlessness in Genesis is an important motif, especially in the light of God's promise in 3:15 that salvation will come through the offspring of Eve. The divine gift of children to those who are barren takes on added significance, which is reflected in the importance of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph in the Genesis storv.

30:25 – 43 *Jacob's Flocks Increase.* After a period of at least 14 years, Jacob makes plans to return to Canaan. However, his father-in-law, Laban, does not want him to go, for Jacob's presence has been a source of blessing. As the patriarchal stories reflect elsewhere, the "firstborn" members of the family lineage mediate God's blessing. Laban yet again acts deceitfully toward Jacob and pays the consequences.

30:27 by divination. Laban discovers that God has blessed him because of Jacob. Later, God bans the practice of divination (Deut 18:10) because it uses inappropriate means (e.g., reading omens) to interpret present events or discern the future. **the Lorp has blessed me**. Laban readily acknowledges Jacob's role in this. The motif of blessing is impor-

²⁹Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you^b and how your livestock has fared under my care.^c ³⁰The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?^d"

³¹"What shall I give you?" he asked.

"Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: ³²Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat.^e They will be my wages. ³³And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen."

³⁴"Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." ³⁵That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons.^{f 36}Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

³⁷Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. ³⁸Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, ³⁹they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. ⁴⁰Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, ⁴²but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. ⁴³In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.⁹

Jacob Flees From Laban

31 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." ²And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back^h to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."ⁱ

⁴So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. ⁵He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.¹ ⁶You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength,^{k 7}yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times.¹ However, God has not allowed him to harm me.^{m 8}If

tant in Genesis, especially in view of how humanity comes under God's disfavor because of their sinfulness. Having received the blessing of the "firstborn," Jacob brings blessing to others. **30:29** °Ge 31:6 °Ge 31:38-40 **30:30** °TH 5:8 **30:30** °TH 5:8 **30:32** °Ge 31:8, 12 **30:35** °Ge 31:1 **30:36** °Ver 30; Ge 12:16; 13:2; 24:35; 26:13-14 **31:3** °Ver 13; Ge 32:9 °Ge 21:22; 26:3; 28:15 **31:5** °Ge 21:22; 26:3 **31:6** °Ge 30:29 **31:7** °Ver 41; Job 19:3 °Ver 52; Ps 37:28; 105:14

in Paddan Aram with little (32:10), he now has abundant possessions, resembling those of Abraham (12:16; 24:35).

31:3 the land of your fathers. God's brief instruction to Jacob highlights that Canaan is the homeland of his fathers. This was not so when God called Abraham (12:1).

^{30:31 – 34} The sheep and goats in Laban's flocks would have been variously colored, with only some being speckled or spotted.

^{30:35} Although Laban agrees to Jacob's proposal, he deliberately removes from his flock all the animals that should have belonged to Jacob, giving them to his own sons. Laban's self-seeking attitude is very much a match to Jacob's, for Jacob deceived his own father through the use of goatskins (27:1–29, especially v. 16).

^{30:38} peeled branches. How these influenced the outcome of the breeding is not immediately apparent.

^{30:39} streaked or speckled or spotted. By manipulating the breeding activity of Laban's flock (vv. 37-39), Jacob succeeds in creating for himself a large flock of animals.

^{30:40-42} By selective breeding Jacob ensures that the strongest animals in Laban's flocks produce streaked or dark-colored animals. Although Laban deliberately attempted to keep Jacob's wages to a minimum, Jacob succeeds in becoming very wealthy. Having arrived

^{31:1 – 21} Jacob Flees From Laban. Tension arises when Laban's sons become jealous of Jacob's prosperity. Against this background, the Lord instructs Jacob to return to Canaan. Speaking privately to his wives, Rachel and Leah, Jacob emphasizes how God has actively enriched him and invites them to join him as he returns to Canaan. Acknowledging that their father has also mistreated them, they willingly agree to flee from their homeland with Jacob.

^{31:7} your father has cheated me. Jacob explains to Rachel and Leah that their father has repeatedly changed his terms of employment. On every occasion, however, God has intervened, preventing Laban from harming Jacob. Consequently, Jacob has received more and more of Laban's livestock. The outcome reflects what Isaac said when he blessed Jacob: those who curse him will be cursed, and those who bless him will be blessed (27:29; cf. 12:3).

31:8 "Ge 30:32 31:9 ° ver 1, 16; Ge 30:42 31:11 P Ge 16:7; 48:16 31:12 9Ex 3:7 31:13 'Ge 28:10-22 sver 3; Ge 32:9 31:15 tGe 29:20 31:18 "Ge 35:27 "Ge 10:19 31:19 w ver 30, 32, 34-35; Ge 35:2; Jdg 17:5; 1Sa 19:13; Hos 3:4 31:20 × Ge 27:36 y ver 27 31:21 ZGe 37:25 31:24 ª Ge 20:3: Job 33:15 b Ge 24:50 31:26 ° Ge 27:36 d 1Sa 30.2-3 31:27 ° Ex 15:20 f Ge 4:21 31:28 9 ver 55 31:29 h ver 7

he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. ⁹So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.^o

¹⁰"In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. ¹¹The angel of God^p said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' ¹²And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.^{q 13}I am the God of Bethel,' where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.^{\$}""

¹⁴Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? ¹⁵Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.^{t 16}Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, ¹⁸and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram,^{*a*} to go to his father Isaac^u in the land of Canaan.^v

¹⁹When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.^{w 20}Moreover,



Household gods similar to those Rachel stole (Gen 31:19). Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Jacob deceived^x Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away.^{y 21}So he fled with all he had, crossed the Euphrates River, and headed for the hill country of Gilead.^z

Laban Pursues Jacob

²²On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled.
²³Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.
²⁴Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him,^a "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."^b

²⁵Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. ²⁶Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me,^c and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war.^{d 27}Why did you run

off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels^e and harps?^{f 28}You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye.^g You have done a foolish thing. ²⁹I have the power to harm you;^h but last night the God of

^a 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

31:14–16 For once Rachel and Leah agree. Their future will be best served by going with Jacob, especially since God has been with him.

31:19–20 Rachel stole ... Jacob deceived. Although it is not immediately obvious from most English translations, these verses describe two thefts. The Hebrew text of v. 20 says, "Jacob stole the heart of Laban"; in Hebrew the idiom "to steal someone's heart" means to deceive or trick a person (see vv. 26–27). While Jacob steals Laban's heart (i.e., deceives him), Rachel steals her father's gods. Later, Laban accuses Jacob of stealing everything that Jacob now possesses (v. 43).

31:19 household gods. The objects Rachel steals may be small figurines that resemble certain gods. Worshipers thought that the gods were present in these images or idols, hence Laban speaks of them as "my gods" (v. 30). Perhaps Rachel steals these household gods because she hopes that possessing them will bring her good fortune and deprive her father of such benefit. If so, she has not fully broken free from her polytheistic upbringing (see 35:2; Josh 24:2). She may also have taken the items for their monetary value if they were made of precious metals.

31:21 Jacob travels south from Paddan Aram toward Canaan. hill country of Gilead. Located southeast of the Sea of Galilee, about 400 miles (645 kilometers) south of Harran.

31:22–55 Laban Pursues Jacob. Distrust and deception run deep within Laban's family. Jacob departs for Canaan when Laban is away. However, Jacob's father-in-law eventually overtakes Jacob and his retinue. After a heated encounter, the two men make a treaty guaranteeing not to harm each other.

31:22–23 Jacob and his family have journeyed for ten days before Laban overtakes them. By pursuing them so far, Laban demonstrates his determination to confront Jacob.

31:26–29 Laban portrays Jacob's actions as deceptive. Laban says that he, on the other hand, would have willingly and joyfully celebrated Jacob's departure for Canaan. In the light of his previous actions, Laban's words sound hollow.

31:29 the God of your father said to me. Laban himself has his own gods (v. 30), for he accuses Jacob of stealing them.

your fatherⁱ said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' ³⁰Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's household. But why did you steal my gods?ⁱⁿ

³¹Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. ³²But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person shall not live.^k In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

³³So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. ³⁴Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched¹ through everything in the tent but found nothing.

³⁵Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence;^m I'm having my period." So he searched but could not find the household gods.

³⁶Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "How have I wronged you that you hunt me down? ³⁷Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relativesⁿ and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.

³⁸"I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. ³⁹I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night.^o ⁴⁰This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters^p and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times.^q ⁴²If the God of my father,^r the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac,^s had not been with me,^t you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands,^u and last night he rebuked you."

⁴³Laban answered Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne? ⁴⁴Come now, let's make a covenant, ^v you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us."^w

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.^{x 46}He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.^{*a*}

⁴⁸Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed. ⁴⁹It was also called Mizpah, ^{by} because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness² between you and me."

^a 47 The Aramaic Jegar Sabadutha and the Hebrew Galeed both mean witness beap. ^b 49 Mizpab means watchtower.

31:32 that person shall not live. Unwittingly, Jacob's response to Laban places Rachel's life in danger. Members of this dysfunctional family act both deceptively and secretly.

31:34 camel's saddle. Rachel prevents Laban from finding his household gods by sitting on them. Rachel's actions suggest that she does not revere these gods.

31:36–42 Jacob turns on Laban, stressing both his innocence and the hardships that he endured in shepherding Laban's flocks.

31:42 the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac. Using two different names to refer to the one deity, Jacob attributes his prosperity to God. Perhaps Jacob designates God as "the Fear of Isaac" in order to subdue Laban. In contrast to Laban, who has lost his own gods, Jacob speaks of the need to respect the God who has guarded him. Jacob possibly alludes to how God's presence with Abraham and Isaac caused others to respect them (21:22–34; 26:26–33; cf. 20:11).

31:43 All you see is mine. Although Laban is reluctant to drop his claim

of ownership, he proposes that the two men "make a covenant" (v. 44), committing them to live in harmony with each other.

31:45 – 49 The report of how they ratify the treaty concentrates on the element of witnesses. In ancient Near Eastern treaties the witnesses were usually deities; Jacob's stone pillar and his relatives' heap of stones probably reflect this practice. Jacob's single stone reflects his monotheistic outlook and contrasts with the polytheistic religion of his relatives (see Josh 24:2).

31:47 Jegar Sahadutha ... Galeed. The names associated with the treaty highlight the motif of witnesses (see NIV text note). The narrator may emphasize this because the two parties to the treaty will live about 400 miles (645 kilometers) apart.

31:49 Mizpah. This later becomes the name of a town in Gilead associated especially with the judge Jephthah (Judg 11:29).

31:29 iver 53 31:30 ^jver 19: Jdg 18:24 31:32 KGe 44:9 31:34 ver 37: Ge 44:12 31:35 m Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3.32 31:37 "ver 23 31:39 ° Ex 22:13 31:41 PGe 29:30 9ver 7 31:42 'ver 5; Ex 3:15; 1Ch 12:17 sver 53: Isa 8:13 tPs 124:1-2 ^uGe 29:32 31:44 Ge 21:27: 26:28 w.Jos 24:27 31:45 × Ge 28:18 31:49 yJdg 11:29; 1Sa 7:5-6 31:50 Z.ler 29:23: 42:5

^{31:44} covenant. The Hebrew word could equally be translated "treaty" (see 21:32).

31:51 ª Ge 28:18 31:52 b Ge 21:30 c ver 7; Ge 26:29 31:53 d Ge 28:13 e Ge 16:5 f Ge 21:23,27 g ver 42 31:55 h ver 28 Ge 18:33; 30:25 32:1 Ge 16:11; 2Ki 6:16-17; Ps 34:7; 91:11; Heb 1:14 32:2 KGe 28:17 2Sa 2:8,29 32:3 m Ge 27:41-42 Ge 25:30: 36:8.9 32:5 ° Ge 12:16; 30:43 ^p Ge 33:8, 10, 15 32:6 9 Ge 33:1 32:7 'ver 11 32:9 °Ge 28:13; 31:42 tGe 31.13 32:10 "Ge 24:27 32:11 YPs 59:2 ^wGe 27:41 32:12 ×Ge 22:17 ^yGe 28:13-15; Hos 1:10; Ro 9:27 ⁵¹Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar^a I have set up between you and me. ⁵²This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness,^b that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me.^{c 53}May the God of Abraham^d and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."^e

So Jacob took an oath[†] in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.^{g 54}He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.

⁵⁵Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters^h and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.^{*ai*}

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

12^b Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God^j met him. ²When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!"^k So he named that place Mahanaim.^{c1}

³Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau^m in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.ⁿ ⁴He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. ⁵I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants.^o Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.^p"

⁶When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."^q

⁷In great fear^r and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups,^{*d*} and the flocks and herds and camels as well. ⁸He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group,^{*e*} the group^{*e*} that is left may escape."

⁹Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac,^s LORD, you who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,'^{t 10}I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness^u you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me,^v and also the mothers with their children.^{w 12}But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand^x of the sea, which cannot be counted.^y"

^a 55 In Hebrew texts this verse (31:55) is numbered 32:1.
 ^b In Hebrew texts 32:1-32 is numbered 32:2-33.
 ^c 2 Mabanaim means two camps.
 ^d 7 Or camps
 ^e 8 Or camp

32:1-21 Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau. Twenty years have passed since Jacob fled from Esau. Having made peace with Laban, he now prays that God will enable him to be reconciled with his estranged brother.

32:1 – 2 Jacob is reassured of God's presence when the angels of God meet him and he sees the camp of God. This encounter recalls his earlier dream at Bethel, when he also saw "the angels of God" (28:12), an expression the OT uses nowhere else. Whereas Bethel, which means the "house of God," suggests a static residence for God, God's "camp" implies something mobile. God accompanies Jacob as he travels to Canaan.

32:2 Mahanaim. Means "two camps" (see NIV text note). Jacob probably alludes to the presence of God's camp alongside his own. Possibly the image of two camps inspires Jacob to divide his own camp into two sections prior to meeting Esau (vv. 7-10).

32:3 messengers. Having witnessed God's angels, Jacob sends messengers to Esau. The two events are connected by a wordplay involving the Hebrew noun *mal'âkîm*, which denotes both angels and messengers: God sends angels from his camp to meet Jacob, and Jacob sends messengers from his camp to meet Esau. Seir. This name resembles the Hebrew word for "hairy," which describes Esau in 25:25. Esau apparently settled in this region. the country of Edom. This expression not only recalls how Esau was known as Edom (25:30) but also echoes 25:27: Esau was "a man of the open country." The Hebrew term translated "open country" in 25:27 is rendered "country" here. Seir and Esau were well matched. Designating

Edom as Esau suggests that Jacob is free to take possession of the land of Canaan.

32:4 my lord ... Your servant. Jacob's message to Esau expresses considerable humility. His language contrasts sharply with God's prediction that the older would serve the younger (25:23) and with lsac's blessing, which speaks of Jacob being lord over his brothers (27:29). Having alienated himself from Esau, Jacob is keen to regain his brother's favor (33:8).

32:6 four hundred men. Jacob becomes exceptionally fearful when he hears that Esau is coming to meet him with a large number of men. With a force of 318 men, Abraham defeated the combined forces of four kings (14:14–16).

32:7 Jacob responds by dividing his camp into "two groups." His action recalls his earlier vision of God's camp (see v. 2 and note), but it implies that he has forgotten God's protective presence with him.

32:9 God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, LORD. Jacob invokes God in prayer using three designations. The first two underline the importance of the family line, for both Abraham and Isaac have known God in a special way. "LORD" translates God's personal name (see 2:4 and note), which Jacob uses here for the first time.

32:10 kindness and faithfulness. By associating these characteristics with the Lord, Jacob's prayer anticipates how God himself declares his nature in Exod 34:6 (see note there). ¹³He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift² for his brother Esau: ¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds."

¹⁷He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'Who do you belong to, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' ¹⁸then you are to say, 'They belong to your servant^a Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.'"

¹⁹He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.'" For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me."^b ²¹So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles With God

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.^c ²³After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a man^d wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip^e so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."f

²⁷The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^{*ag*} because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."^h

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?"ⁱ Then he blessed^j him there.

³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel,^b saying, "It is because I saw God face to face,^k and yet my life was spared."

³¹The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,^c and he was limping because of his hip. ³²Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

^a 28 Israel probably means be struggles with God. ^b 30 Peniel means face of God. ^c 31 Hebrew Penuel, a variant of Peniel

32:13–21 To placate his brother, Jacob generously sends herds of animals to Esau as a gift. To afford such a gift, Jacob must have become exceptionally wealthy during his stay in Paddan Aram.

32:22–32 Jacob Wrestles With God. Jacob's nighttime face-to-face encounter with God at Peniel remarkably transforms Jacob. Jacob previously met God when he left Canaan, and he encounters him again on his return (see note on 28:10–22). The events at Bethel and Peniel are exceptionally important milestones in Jacob's life.

32:22 Jabbok. This river flows into the Jordan Valley from the east. After seeing his family and possessions safely across, Jacob remains alone on the northern bank of the river.

32:24 a man. The unexpected introduction of a mysterious man who wrestles with Jacob during the night creates an element of suspense. Only at the end of the episode does the reader learn that Jacob has wrestled with God (v. 30). The Hebrew narrative displays the author's literary skill through alliteration, involving the words "Jacob" (Hebrew $ya^{c}aq\bar{a}b$), "Jabbok" (Hebrew $yabb\bar{a}q$) and "wrestles" (Hebrew $y\bar{e}^{c}\bar{a}b\bar{e}q$). The renaming of Jacob indicates that this event is an important turning point in his life.

32:25-26 Though his powerful opponent dislocates Jacob's hip, Jacob

persistently continues to struggle with him, determined that the man bless him. Having previously struggled with Esau in order to gain the birthright and paternal blessing, Jacob now wrestles with God in order to gain his blessing.

32:28 Israel. Probably means "he struggles with God" (see NIV text note) but could mean "God struggles." By replacing Jacob's name with Israel, God acknowledges that Jacob has "struggled with God" and "overcome." Jacob begins a new relationship with God. The face-toface struggle with God changes Jacob, "the deceiver," into Israel, the man who wrestles with God and survives, although not without personal injury.

32:30 Peniel. See NIV text note. The name captures the significance of Jacob's encounter with God and recalls Jacob's meeting with God face to face. Jacob has seen God and survived. Jacob's experience is similar to Abraham's in 18:1–15, when God appeared in human form. These encounters with God contrast with Moses' encounter with God at Mount Sinai, which involves seeing God in all his glory (Exod 33:20).

32:32 do not eat. As a memorial to this exceptionally important lifechanging encounter with God, the Israelites adopt the custom of not eating "the tendon attached to the socket of the hip."

32:13 2 Ge 43:11, 15, 25, 26: Pr 18:16 32:18 a Ge 18:3 32:20 b Ge 33:10: Pr 21:14 32:22 ° Dt 2:37; 3:16; Jos 12:2 32:24 d Ge 18:2 32:25 ° ver 32 32:26 ^fHos 12:4 32:28 9 Ge 17:5; 35:10; 1Ki 18:31 32:29 h Jdg 13:17 Jda 13:18 Ge 35:9 32:30 KGe 16:13; Ex 24:11; Nu 12:8; Jdg 6:22; 13:22

33:1 Ge 32:6 33:3 m Ge 18:2; 42:6 33:4 " Ge 45:14-15 33:5 ° Ge 48:9; Ps 127:3; Isa 8:18 33:8 ° Ge 32:14-16 9 Ge 24:9: 32:5 33:10 ' Ge 16:13 ^sGe 32:20 33:11 t1Sa 25:27 "Ge 30:43 33:14 VGe 32:3 33:15 "Ge 34:11; 47:25; Ru 2:13 33:17 × Jos 13:27; Jdg 8:5, 6, 8, 14-16; Ps 60:6 33:18 y Ge 25:20; 28:2 2 Jos 24:1; Jdg 9:1 33:19 ^a Jos 24:32 ^b Jn 4:5

Jacob Meets Esau

33 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men;¹ so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. ²He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. ³He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground^m seven times as he approached his brother.

⁴But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.^{n 5}Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant.^o"

⁶Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. ⁷Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

⁸Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"^p

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord,"^q he said.

⁹But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰"No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God,^r now that you have received me favorably.^{s 11}Please accept the present^t that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me^u and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

¹²Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

¹³But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die.¹⁴So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

¹⁵Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord.""

¹⁶So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. ¹⁷Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth,^x where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.^a

¹⁸After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,^{by} he arrived safely at the city of Shechem^z in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. ¹⁹For a hundred pieces of silver,^c he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem,^a the plot of ground^b where he pitched his tent. ²⁰There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.^d

^a 17 Sukkoth means shelters. ^b 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia ^c 19 Hebrew bundred kesitahs; a kesitah was a unit of money of unknown weight and value. ^d 20 El Elobe Israel can mean El is the God of Israel or mighty is the God of Israel.

33:1 – 20 Jacob Meets Esau. The narrator recounts Jacob's encounter with Esau in the light of his nighttime wrestling with God (32:22–32). Jacob's remark that seeing Esau's face "is like seeing the face of God" (v. 10; see note there) closely connects the two events. To Jacob's surprise, Esau lovingly embraces him.

33:2 Rachel and Joseph in the rear. Jacob arranges his wives and children in order of ascending importance. As the only son the text specifically names, Joseph is set apart from his brothers. Joseph's special standing within Jacob's family becomes an important motif of the rest of Genesis. 33:3 bowed down. When Jacob received the paternal blessing, Isaac said that Jacob's brothers would bow down to him (27:29). Here Jacob bows down seven times to Esau and repeatedly calls Esau "my lord" (vv. 8, 13, 14, 15). After striving to be superior to his brother, Jacob's attitude is now one of humble submission.

33:4 embraced him. Esau's embrace of Jacob signals a remarkable change of heart on the part of Esau; Jacob fled because Esau wanted to kill him (27:41).

33:10 to see your face is like seeing the face of God. Jacob compares his reunion with Esau with his experience at Peniel (32:22–32). Jacob's remark does not mean that Esau's appearance resembled God's. Rather, by embracing Jacob and forgiving him, Esau's actions resemble God's. Esau treats Jacob in a way that Jacob does not deserve.

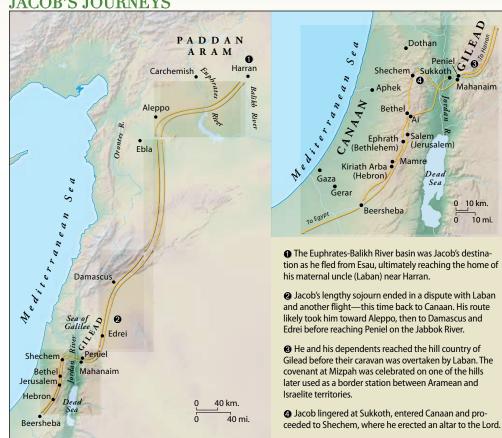
33:11 present. Hebrew běrākâ, which is also the word for "blessing"

(see note on 26:34—28:9). Having deceived Esau out of his blessing, Jacob now looks to make restitution by returning to Esau a "blessing." **33:13–14** Jacob declines Esau's invitation in a way that shows Esau the utmost respect.

33:17 Jacob travels the short distance from Peniel to Sukkoth, following the Jabbok River as it flows down to the Jordan River. Here Jacob rests his flocks and herds. **shelters**. Sukkoth is named after the shelters that Jacob erects for his livestock. The shelters were probably temporary, as was the case when later the Israelites celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles (see Lev 23:33 – 43).

33:18 Shechem. Lies about 20 miles (32 kilometers) to the west of Sukkoth. Possibly, Jacob traveled from Sukkoth to Seir, as he promised Esau (v. 14), before moving on to Shechem. The land of Seir lay to the southeast of Sukkoth. By camping close to Shechem, Jacob followed in Abraham's footsteps (12:6). While Abraham was at Shechem, God promised to give the land to his descendants (12:7).

33:19–20 Jacob buys a plot of ground in Shechem. He also sets up an altar, possibly reconstructing the one that Abraham made there (12:7). Shechem and his father, Hamor, figure prominently in the next episode.
33:20 El Elohe Israel. By naming the altar (see NIV text note), Jacob indicates that he is intimately connected to this God, the God who named him Israel at Peniel (32:28). No longer does Jacob refer to God simply as the God of his fathers.



JACOB'S JOURNEYS

Dinah and the Shechemites

Now Dinah,^c the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. 4²When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her. ³His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife."

⁵When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home.

⁶Then Shechem's father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob.^{d 7}Meanwhile, Jacob's sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in^a Israel^e by sleeping with Jacob's daughter — a thing that should not be done.f

^a 7 Or against

34:1-31 Dinah and the Shechemites. Shechem's treatment of Dinah threatens to undermine Jacob's safe return to Canaan. Shechem's actions toward Dinah are reprehensible. When her brothers find out what was done, they are rightfully enraged. Shechem seeks to make amends by marrying Dinah, but Jacob's sons will not be placated. Deceptively, they persuade the men of Shechem to be circumcised. Before the men of the town have fully recovered, Simeon and Levi kill all the men of Shechem. Jacob condemns his sons' behavior, fearing that it will endanger the future of his family in Canaan. Ironically, circumcision was meant to be a source of blessing by connecting others to Abraham. The punishment (killing the Shechemites) exceeds the crime (Shechem's rape of Dinah).

34:2 ruler of that area. Hamor was an influential person. His standing within the community may well have influenced his son Shechem's behavior and Shechem's subsequent expectation that Hamor could arrange for Shechem to marry Dinah. took her and raped her. Shechem violated Dinah, and one result was that she was now ineligible for a proper marriage. 34:5-7 Jacob and his sons react differently: Jacob is slow to act when

34:1 ° Ge 30:21 34:6 d Jdg 14:2-5 34:7 ° Dt 22:21; Jdg 20:6; 2Sa 13:12 Jos 7:15

⁸But Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. ⁹Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for your-selves. ¹⁰You can settle among us;⁹ the land is open to you.^h Live in it, trade^{*a*} in it,ⁱ and acquire property in it."

¹¹Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. ¹²Make the price for the bride^j and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife."

¹³Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴They said to them, "We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised.^k That would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males.¹ ¹⁶Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you. ¹⁷But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister and go."

¹⁸Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹The young man, who was the most honored of all his father's family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter.^m ²⁰So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their cityⁿ to speak to the men of their city. ²¹"These men are friendly toward us," they said. "Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. ²²But the men will agree to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. ²³Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us agree to their terms, and they will settle among us."

²⁴All the men who went out of the city gate^o agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.

²⁵Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords^p and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.^q ²⁶They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. ²⁷The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where^b their sister had been defiled. ²⁸They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. ²⁹They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.

³⁰Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious" to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land.⁸ We are few in number,^t and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed."

³¹But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

^a 10 Or move about freely; also in verse 21 ^b 27 Or because

he learns Shechem defiled Dinah, but Shechem's actions enrage Dinah's brothers. In the events that follow, Jacob's sons take the initiative, acting both deceitfully and without their father's approval.

34:8–10 Hamor attempts to get permission for Shechem to marry Dinah by offering Jacob's family the opportunity to integrate with the local community and become permanent residents.

34:12 the price for the bride. In line with ancient Near Eastern custom, Shechem offers Jacob and his sons a gift of money. This was a normal part of arranging a marriage. When Jacob was with Laban, he paid a bride-price equivalent to seven years labor. Shechem is obviously determined to have Dinah as his wife.

34:13 deceitfully. The Hebrew term conveys a strong sense of malice; Isaac uses the same word to describe Jacob's taking Esau's blessing (27:35). Unwilling to forgive Shechem, the sons of Jacob "the deceiver" respond "deceitfully."

34:14 not circumcised. In ch. 17 circumcision is the sign of the covenant that God establishes with Abraham. This covenant, which centers on Abraham being the father of many nations, is about Abraham and his descendants mediating God's blessing to others. While Jacob's sons correctly see circumcision as a means by which others may become part of Abraham's family, they have no desire to bring God's blessing to the people of Shechem.

34:21-23 Duped by Jacob's sons, Hamor and Shechem persuade the men of their city to be circumcised.

34:25 Simeon and Levi. Full brothers of Dinah. They slaughter the men of Shechem, who are still recovering after being circumcised. Shechem's crime, while serious, did not warrant such brutal retaliation. This punishment far exceeds Shechem's crime. Consequently, Jacob condemns it (v. 30) and continues to hold it against Simeon and Levi until his death (49:5–7). Although Simeon and Levi do the killing, their brothers join them in looting the city. The whole event is a shameful episode for Abraham's descendants.

34:30 brought trouble on me. As immigrants living in a hostile environment, Jacob fears for the future safety of his whole family.

34:31 The narrator gives the final word to Simeon and Levi, a possible reminder that Jacob's failure to intervene at an earlier stage may have contributed to the outcome.

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel^u and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau."^v

²So Jacob said to his household^w and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods^x you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.^{y 3}Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress² and who has been with me wherever I have gone.^a" ⁴So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.^{b 5}Then they set out, and the terror of God^c fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

⁶Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz^d (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. ⁷There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel,^{*a*} because it was there that God revealed himself to him^e when he was fleeing from his brother.

 $^{8}\rm Now$ Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, $^{\rm f}$ died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth. b

⁹After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram,^c God appeared to him again and blessed him.^{g 10}God said to him, "Your name is Jacob,^d but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.^e"^h So he named him Israel.

¹¹And God said to him, "I am God Almighty^{*J*};¹ be fruitful and increase in number. A nation^{*j*} and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.^{k 12}The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.^b^m ¹³Then God went up from himⁿ at the place where he had talked with him.

¹⁴Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.^{o 15}Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.^{gp}

^{*a*} 7 *El Bethel* means *God of Bethel*. ^{*b*} 8 *Allon Bakuth* means *oak of weeping*. ^{*c*} 9 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verse 26 ^{*d*} 10 Jacob means be grasps the beel, a Hebrew idiom for *be deceives*. ^{*e*} 10 Israel probably means be struggles with God. ^{*f*} 11 Hebrew El-Shaddai ^{*g*} 15 Bethel means house of God.

35:1 – 15 Jacob Returns to Bethel. The events at Shechem possibly prompt God to instruct Jacob to relocate to Bethel. Jacob returns to where God appeared to him when he first fled from Canaan to go to Paddan Aram (28:10–22).

35:1 build an altar there. Jacob previously erected a pillar at Bethel (28:18). God now instructs him to return to Bethel, an event that will confirm God's faithfulness to Jacob's promises (28:20–22).

35:2 – 3 Recognizing that Bethel is the "house of God" (see NIV text note on 28:19), Jacob prepares his family for their encounter with God. At this stage some members of the family appear to be polytheists, worshiping a number of gods. Rachel, e.g., took her father's household gods (31:19). Jacob insists that they must abandon these gods in favor of God, who has faithfully cared for him. Additionally, Jacob demands that his family get rid of any defilement caused by worshiping other deities. After washing to purify themselves, they must change their clothes, further symbolizing their transformation from polytheism to monotheism. **35:3 in the day of my distress**. Not just one particular day, but every occasion when Jacob was in difficulty.

35:4 rings in their ears. Possibly the idols, rather than the people, wore these. By burying these cultic objects, a known second millennium BC practice for disposing of images, Jacob placed them beyond further use. Their burial at Shechem may be symbolically significant, implying that the violent actions of Simeon and Levi reflect the influence of polytheism. Later, also at Shechem, Joshua challenges his fellow Israelites to throw away the gods that their ancestors worshiped (Josh 24:14,23).

35:5 the terror of God. An appropriate fear of God may restrain people's actions. "Fear of God" is a significant motif in Genesis (e.g., 20:8,11); God himself is even known by the title "the Fear of Isaac" (31:42,53).
35:6 Luz (that is, Bethel). See note on 28:19.

35:7 El Bethel. See NIV text note. The name draws attention to how God revealed himself at this location. Altars sometimes mark where God appeared to the patriarchs (12:7). They may also form a temporary sanctuary in the hope that God would make himself known at them (33:20). **35:8 Deborah.** This brief note regarding the burial of Rebekah's nurse (24:59) under the oak called Allon Bakuth (see NIV text note) contrasts sharply with the mention of Jacob burying the foreign gods under the oak of Shechem (v. 4). They mourn for Deborah with weeping but shed no tears for the buried gods at Shechem.

35:9–10 This recalls how God blessed Jacob at Peniel (32:29), changing his name to Israel to signal his transformation (see note on 32:28). God has blessed Jacob like Abraham (24:1) and Isaac (25:11).

35:11-12 God speaks once more to Jacob at Bethel (see 28:13-15), using expressions that recall his previous promises to Abraham and Isaac. 35:11 God Almighty. This is how God revealed himself to Abraham (17:1) before promising numerous descendants, nations, and kings (17:6). Isaac highlighted the same concepts when he blessed Jacob (28:3-4; see 27:29). God now affirms that Jacob is heir to the covenant he initially made with Abraham and later established with Isaac. be fruitful and increase in number. God's plans for the patriarchs involve fulfilling what he originally intended when he created humanity (1:28). Through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God sets in motion a process that will bring to completion his purposes in creating the world. a community of nations will come from you. This reflects God's earlier promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (17:4-5), an idea Isaac echoed when he blessed Jacob (28:3). kings will be among your descendants. This again links to Abraham, whose descendants will be kings (17:6,16). As a whole, the book of Genesis follows a unique family line associated with future royalty. This royal expectation reappears in Joseph's dreams (37:6-10). God's promise of land to Abraham (e.g., 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:18-21) and Isaac (26:3-4) passes on to Jacob.

35:14 stone pillar. See note on 28:18. drink offering. Mentioned only here in Genesis, this may involve wine (see Exod 29:40).

35:1 "Ge 28:19 ^vGe 27:43 35:2 "Ge 18:19; Jos 24:15 × Ge 31:19 ^yEx 19:10, 14 35:3 2 Ge 32:7 ^aGe 28:15, 20-22; 31:3,42 35:4 b Jos 24:25-26 35:5 ° Ex 15:16; 23:27; Jos 2:9 35:6 d Ge 28:19; 48:3 35:7 ° Ge 28:13 35:8 f Ge 24:59 35:9 9 Ge 32:29 35:10 h Ge 17:5 35:11 ¹Ge 17:1; Ex 6:3 ¹Ge 28:3; 48:4 ^kGe 17:6 35:12 Ge 13:15: 28:13 m Ge 12:7; 26:3 35:13 "Ge 17:22 35:14 ° Ge 28:18 35:15 PGe 28:19

35:17 9 Ge 30:24 35:19 'Ge 48:7; Ru 1:1, 19; Mic 5:2; Mt 2:16 35:20 s 1Sa 10:2 35:22 tGe 49:4: 1Ch 5:1 Ge 29:29; Lev 18:8 35:23 VGe 46:8 "Ge 29:35 *Ge 30:20 35:24 y Ge 30:24 z ver 18 35:25 a Ge 30:8 35:26 b Ge 30:11 ° Ge 30:13 35:27 ^d Ge 13:18; 18:1 ^e Jos 14:15 35:28 f Ge 25:7,20 35:29 9 Ge 25:8: 49:33 'Ge 15:15 'Ge 25:9 36:1 ^jGe 25:30 36:2 KGe 28:8-9 Ge 26:34 ^m ver 25

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

35:23-26pp - 1Ch 2:1-2

¹⁶Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. ¹⁷And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, "Don't despair, for you have another son."^{q 18}As she breathed her last— for she was dying— she named her son Ben-Oni.^{*a*} But his father named him Benjamin.^{*b*}

¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem^r). ²⁰Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb.^s

²¹Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. ²²While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine^t Bilhah,^u and Israel heard of it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

²³ The sons of Leah:

Reuben the firstborn^v of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah,^w Issachar and Zebulun.^x

²⁴ The sons of Rachel:

Joseph^y and Benjamin.^z

²⁵ The sons of Rachel's servant Bilhah:

Dan and Naphtali.^a

²⁶ The sons of Leah's servant Zilpah: Gad^b and Asher.^c

Gad[®] and Asher.[®]

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

²⁷Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre,^d near Kiriath Arba^e (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. ²⁸Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years.^{f 29}Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people,^g old and full of years.^h And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.ⁱ

Esau's Descendants

36:10-14pp — 1Ch 1:35-37 36:20-28pp — 1Ch 1:38-42

36 This is the account of the family line of Esau (that is, Edom).^j

²Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan:^k Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite,¹ and Oholibamah daughter of Anah^m and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite — ³also Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

^a 18 Ben-Oni means son of my trouble. ^b 18 Benjamin means son of my right hand.

35:16–29 *The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac.* From Bethel, Jacob moves southward in the direction of Hebron to where Isaac, his father, is living (v. 27). Tragically, Rachel dies when giving birth.

35:16 Ephrath. A name associated with the town of Bethlehem (v. 19; Ruth 1:2; Mic 5:2).

35:18 Ben-Oni. Rachel's name for her son recalls her difficult labor (see NIV text note). Benjamin. Jacob's name for his son (see NIV text note); the name may also mean "son of the south," a suitable name since all of Jacob's other sons were born in the north.

35:20 that pillar marks Rachel's tomb. Rachel's burial place remained known centuries later during the time of Moses and early Israel (1 Sam 10:2).

35:21 Migdal Eder. The precise site is unknown. Since Migdal means "tower" and Eder means "flock/herd," perhaps this location had a tower that shepherds used.

35:22 Reuben ... slept with ... Bilhah. This brief report concerning Reuben has important implications for his standing within Jacob's family. While Reuben may have intentionally slept with Bilhah in order to establish his position as firstborn and principal heir (see 2 Sam 16:20–23), it has the opposite result. Jacob bestows on Joseph the status of firstborn (1 Chr 5:1–2; see note on Gen 49:3–4), and Reuben's later attempt to regain his father's favor fails (see 37:21–22 and note). **concubine.** See note on 25:1. **35:27 Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron).** See 13:18; 23:2 and note. Jacob follows in the footsteps of Abraham and Isaac. As ch. 35 reveals, Jacob is the one through whom God's promises to the patriarchs will move toward fulfillment. Isaac witnesses the return of Jacob to Hebron, having sent him away to Paddan Aram 20 years previously. **35:28–29** This report of Isaac's death and burial (see also 49:29–31) concludes 25:19–35:29.

36:1 – 30 *Esau's Descendants.* Before recounting events associated mainly with Jacob's sons, this passage provides some further information concerning Esau and his descendants. Genesis sometimes gives information about less important figures first (e.g., 4:17–24; 25:12–18).

36:1 This is the account of the family line of. See note on 2:4. Esau (that is, Edom). See 25:30.

36:2-3 The names of Esau's wives differ from those recorded in 26:34; 28:9. A variety of explanations may account for the variations: (1) the same woman may have been known by different names, (2) different women may have shared the same name, and (3) Esau may have had more than three wives.

⁴Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel,^{n 5}and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in Canaan.

⁶Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan,^o and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ⁷Their possessions were too great for them to remain together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock.^{p &}So Esau^q (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.^r

⁹This is the account of the family line of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.

¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons:

Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

11 The sons of Eliphaz:s

Teman,^t Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz.

¹²Esau's son Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna, who bore him Amalek.^u These were grandsons of Esau's wife Adah.^v

¹³The sons of Reuel:

Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, whom she bore to Esau:

Jeush, Jalam and Korah.

¹⁵These were the chiefs^w among Esau's descendants:

The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau:

Chiefs Teman,^x Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah,^{*a*} Gatam and Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah.^y

17 The sons of Esau's son Reuel:2

Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom; they were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁸The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah:

Chiefs Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

¹⁹These were the sons of Esau (that is, Edom),^a and these were their chiefs.

²⁰These were the sons of Seir the Horite, ^b who were living in the region:

Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir in Edom were Horite chiefs.

²² The sons of Lotan:

Hori and Homam.^b Timna was Lotan's sister.

²³The sons of Shobal:

Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

²⁴ The sons of Zibeon:

Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs^c in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

^a 16 Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch (also verse 11 and 1 Chron. 1:36) does not have Korah.

^b 22 Hebrew Hemam, a variant of Homam (see 1 Chron. 1:39) ^c 24 Vulgate; Syriac discovered water; the

meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

36:6 - 8 The reason for Esau's separation from Jacob echoes the earlier account of Abraham and Lot parting company (13:5-6).
36:9 This is the account of. Although this duplicates the heading that introduces ch. 36, this verse underlines in particular Esau's association

with the hill country of Seir, which lay to the east of the Arabah. **36:12 concubine.** See note on 25:1. **Timna.** Also mentioned in v. 22, she was a native of Seir and a sister of various tribal leaders. **36:15 chiefs.** This emphasizes the identity of the tribal leaders descended from Esau. Esau has five sons and ten grandchildren (vv. 9-14), from whom 14 tribes descend (vv. 15-29).

36:20–30 Including details about the original inhabitants of Seir is surprising. There are seven tribal leaders (v. 29), suggesting that Esau's 14 tribes gained ascendancy in the hill country of Seir (see Deut 2:12,22).

36:4 °1Ch 1:35 36:6 ° Ge 12:5 36:7 PGe 13:6; 17:8: 28:4 36:8 ° Dt 2:4 ° Ge 32:3 36:11 sver 15-16; Job 2:11 tAm 1:12; Hab 3:3 36:12 "Ex 17:8, 16; Nu 24:20; 1Sa 15:2 ver 16 36:15 "Ex 15:15 * Job 2:11 36:16 yver 12 36:17 21Ch 1:37 36:19 a Ge 25:30 36:20 b Ge 14:6; Dt 2:12, 22; 1Ch 1:38

36:31 °Ge 17:6; 1Ch 1:43 36:33 °Jer 49:13,22 36:34 °Eze 25:13 36:35 'Ge 19:37; Nu 22:1; Dt 1:5; Ru 1:1,6 37:1 °Ge 17:8 °Ge 10:19 37:2 'Ps 78:71 'Ge 35:25 * Ge 35:26 'ISa 2:24 ²⁵ The children of Anah:

Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

- ²⁶ The sons of Dishon^a: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.
- ²⁷ The sons of Ezer:

Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.

- 28 The sons of Dishan:
 - Uz and Aran.
- ²⁹ These were the Horite chiefs:

Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These were the Horite chiefs, according to their divisions, in the land of Seir.

The Rulers of Edom

36:31-43pp — 1Ch 1:43-54

³¹These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king^c reigned:

- ³² Bela son of Beor became king of Edom. His city was named Dinhabah.
- ³³When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah^d succeeded him as king.
- ³⁴When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites^e succeeded him as king.
- ³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab,[†] succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith.
- ³⁶When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king.
- ³⁷When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king.
- ³⁸When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Akbor succeeded him as king.
- ³⁹When Baal-Hanan son of Akbor died, Hadad^b succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.
 - ⁴⁰These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied.

This is the family line of Esau, the father of the Edomites.

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed,⁹ the land of Canaan.^h

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocksⁱ with his brothers, the sons of Bilhahⁱ and the sons of Zilpah,^k his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report¹ about them.

^a 26 Hebrew Disban, a variant of Disbon ^b 39 Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 1:50); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Hadar*

36:31 – 43 *The Rulers of Edom.* This section begins by listing various kings who reigned in Edom. Since the kings are linked to different towns, this list probably reflects the existence of a series of dynasties associated with towns, which in different periods exercised authority over the region of Seir.

36:31 before any Israelite king reigned. The observation that there were kings in Edom before there were kings in Israel implies that the author of this passage either anticipated or knew of an Israelite monarch. The movement in Edom from tribal leaders or chiefs to kings also occurred later in Israel.

36:40–43 A further list of Edomite chiefs links to Esau. While several of the names overlap with the chiefs in vv. 15–19, new clans probably come into being that are associated with particular locations. This list of chiefs also occurs in 1 Chr 1:51–54.

37:1-50:26 The Family of Jacob. The final narrative section in the

book of Genesis gives special attention to Joseph because the continuation of the promised royal line traces to his son Ephraim. However, future kingship is also linked to the lineage of Judah, anticipating later developments when God rejects the line of Joseph in favor of David from the tribe of Judah (see Ps 78:67–72).

37:1 – 11 Joseph's Dreams. Although he is one of the younger sons of Jacob, special attention is given to Joseph. Favored by his father, he has two dreams in which he sees his brothers bowing down to him. Various indicators within this section suggest that Joseph will be the one through whom the promised line of royalty will continue.

37:1 Attention switches from the hill country of Seir, where Esau's descendants live, to Canaan, where Jacob settles.

37:2 This is the account of. This heading, the last in a long series (see note on 2:4), introduces the final part of Genesis. Joseph. The youngest of Jacob's sons (apart from Benjamin). Israel/Jacob gives Joseph the ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons,^m because he had been born to him in his old age;ⁿ and he made an ornate^{*a*} robe^o for him. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him^p and could not speak a kind word to him.

⁵Joseph had a dream,^q and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."^r

⁸His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?"^s And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

¹⁰When he told his father as well as his brothers,^t his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"^{u 11}His brothers were jealous of him,^v but his father kept the matter in mind.^w

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

¹²Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, ¹³and Israel said to Joseph,

"As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied.

 14 So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.^x

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

¹⁷ "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan."

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.²

¹⁹"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. ²⁰"Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns^a and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."^b

^a 3 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32.

status of firstborn, a special privilege that sets Joseph apart from his brothers (1 Chr 5:1-2). **bad report.** By reporting on his brothers, Joseph alienates himself from them. His action suggests that his attitude toward moral behavior differed from that of his older brothers, something that the subsequent narrative largely confirms.

37:3 Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons. Jacob may have favored Joseph over Joseph's brothers because Joseph was Rachel's older son (see 33:2) and apart from Benjamin, the youngest. ornate robe. This gift signals Joseph's special standing within the family. The precise style of the cloak is unknown; it is not necessarily multicolored (an idea that the earliest Greek translation of this passage introduces). 2 Sam 13:18 associates such distinctive clothing with royalty.

37:4 they hated him. Joseph's privileged position becomes a source of deep hatred within the family. His brothers despise him.

37:5 a dream. While the narrator does not disclose the source of Joseph's dream, throughout Genesis dreams are revelations from God (20:3; 28:12; 31:10–13; 40:5–8; 41:1,15–16).

37:8 reign over us. The image of Joseph's brothers' sheaves bowing down to Joseph's sheaf (v. 7) provokes a hostile reaction from Joseph's brothers. In light of God's promises to Abraham (17:6) and Jacob (35:11) that kings would come from them, as well as the special attention that Genesis gives to tracing a unique family lineage, Joseph's dream suggests that he will be the one through whom royalty will come. Set alongside his father's desire to dress him as a prince (see note on 37:3), the motif of royalty takes on added significance. The idea that Joseph might reign over his brothers fuels their hatred of him. The dream is later fulfilled on several occasions (42:6; 43:26; 44:14; 50:18).

37:9–11 Joseph's second dream reinforces the idea that he will rule over the members of his family. Including his father and mother among those who will bow down to him causes his father to rebuke him.

37:10 your mother. Leah, since Rachel is already dead (35:16-19).

37:11 his father kept the matter in mind. This remark suggests that Jacob did not dismiss the idea entirely. Jacob may well have recalled how his father Isaac had blessed him, promising that his brothers would bow down to him (27:29).

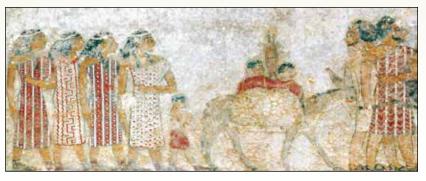
37:12–36 Joseph Sold by His Brothers. Filled with jealousy toward their younger brother, Joseph's brothers seize an opportunity to sell Joseph into slavery. As events develop, Reuben sees the assault on Joseph as providing a way of regaining his father's favor by restoring Joseph to him. In marked contrast Judah sees the possibility of enriching himself and his brothers through trading Joseph as a slave to passing merchants. The callous behavior of the brothers recalls how earlier in Genesis, Cain killed his brother Abel (4:1 – 16).

37:12–17 As shepherds, Jacob's sons take their flocks northward from Hebron to search for better grazing.

37:17 Dothan. About 13 miles (21 kilometers) north of Shechem.

37:18-20 Joseph's brothers conspire to kill him. See note on vv. 12-36.

37:3 m Ge 25:28 Ge 44:20 º2Sa 13:18-19 37:4 PGe 27:41: 49:22-23; Ac 7:9 37:5 9 Ge 20:3; 28:12 37:7 'Ge 42:6,9; 43:26, 28: 44:14: 50:18 37:8 °Ge 49:26 37:10 t ver 5 u ver 7; Ge 27:29 37:11 VAc 7:9 "Lk 2:19.51 37:14 × Ge 13:18: 35:27 37:17 y 2Ki 6:13 37:18 21Sa 19:1; Mk 14:1; Ac 23:12 37:20 a Jer 38:6,9 ^b Ge 50:20



Egyptian (at Beni Hasan) wall painting of western Semites such as Abraham and Joseph traveling to Egypt (nineteenth century BC). Note the ornate robes. Beni-Hasan Necropolis. Tomb of Khnumhotep III. Detail: mural painting depicting an Asiatic caravan. Middle Kingdom/De Agostini Picture

Beni-Hasan Necropolis. Tomb of Knnumnotep III. Detail: mural painting depicting an Asiatic Caravan. Middle Kingdom/De Agostini Picture Library/G. Sioen/Bridgeman Images

37:21 ° Ge 42:22 37:24 d Jer 41:7 37:25 ° Ge 43:11 f ver 28 37:26 9 ver 20: Ge 4:10 37:27 hGe 42:21 37:28 Ge 25:2; Jdg 6:1-3 Ge 45:4-5 Ps 105:17; Ac 7:9 37:29 k ver 34; Ge 44:13; Job 1:20 37:30 1 ver 22; Ge 42:13,36 37:31 m ver 3,23 37:33 " ver 20 º Ge 44:20,28 37:34 Pver 29 92Sa 3:31 r Ge 50:3, 10, 11 37:35 ° Ge 42:38; 44:22.29.31

²¹When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.^c ²²"Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe — the ornate robe he was wearing — 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern.^d The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh,^e and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.^f

²⁶Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?⁹ ²⁷Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother,^h our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

²⁸So when the Midianiteⁱ merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels^{*a*} of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.^j

²⁹When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.^{k 30}He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"¹

³¹Then they got Joseph's robe,^m slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³²They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."

³³He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animalⁿ has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces."^o

³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes,^p put on sackcloth^q and mourned for his son many days.^{r 35}All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.^s" So his father wept for him.

^a 28 That is, about 8 ounces or about 230 grams

37:21 – 22 Reuben's intervention is probably motivated by a desire to regain his father's favor rather than out of compassion for Joseph. Reuben hopes that Jacob will reinstate him as firstborn son (see 35:22 and note).
 Subsequent events, however, prevent him from rescuing Joseph (v. 29).
 37:25 eat their meal. After throwing Joseph into a dry cistern, the

brothers hard-heartedly begin to eat a meal. As they do, they observe a group of traders, whom they take to be Ishmaelites, traveling southward in the direction of Egypt. **camels.** See note on 12:16.

37:26–27 Revealing something of his selfish nature, Judah proposes that they sell Joseph as a slave. He cloaks his greed by suggesting that this will be an act of compassion on the part of the brothers.

37:28 Midianite merchants. When the traders get closer, they are identified more accurately. They may have been a subgroup within the broader category of Ishmaelites (v. 25). twenty shekels of silver. Early second-millennium BC documents indicate that slaves normally sold for 15–30 shekels.

37:29 tore his clothes. Reuben's response indicates his deep frustration at not being able to return Joseph to Jacob.

37:30 Where can I turn now? Reuben's concern is primarily about redeeming himself rather than about Joseph (see note on vv. 21-22).

37:31 Joseph's robe. There is an element of irony in how Jacob's sons deceive Jacob with the robe covered in goat's blood. Previously, Jacob deceived his father by wearing Esau's clothes and goatskins (27:15–16).

37:34 sackcloth. Attire appropriate to convey grief and personal loss. many days. Because of his special love for Joseph, Jacob mourns for a considerable period of time.

37:35 grave. Hebrew še' ol (see note on Ps 6:5).

³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianites^{*a*} sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.^t

Judah and Tamar

38 At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. ²There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua.^u He married her and made love to her; ³she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er.^v ⁴She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. ⁵She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.

⁶Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death.^w

⁸Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brotherin-law to raise up offspring for your brother."^x ⁹But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death also.^y

¹¹Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's household until my son Shelah grows up."² For he thought, "He may die too, just like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's household.

¹²After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah,^a to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adulamite went with him.

¹³When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep," ¹⁴she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah^b had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.

¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law,^c he went over to her by the roadside and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you."

"And what will you give me to sleep with you?" she asked.

¹⁷"I'll send you a young goat^d from my flock," he said.

^a 36 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac (see also verse 28); Masoretic Text Medanites

37:36 Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. Although the exact nature of Potiphar's post is uncertain, he was probably responsible for overseeing the detention of other important officials when Pharaoh imprisoned them (see 40:1 – 3). This probably explains why Potiphar later imprisons Joseph alongside those whom the king of Egypt has detained in prison (39:20).

38:1 – 30 Judah and Tamar. Although ch. 38 abruptly interrupts the story of Joseph in Egypt, it is an essential component within the overall story. It accounts for a remarkable transformation in the character of Judah, anticipating the positive role that he plays when later he and his brothers journey to Egypt in search of food. Additionally, and of equal importance, ch. 38 describes the continuation of Judah's family line, concluding with the birth of twins, when remarkably the "firstborn" — marked by the scarlet thread — is pushed aside by his sibling. Given the significance of similar events in Genesis involving "firstborn" sons, the birth of Perez is noteworthy, all the more so because he is the ancestor of the royal line of David (Ruth 4:18–22).

38:1 – 2 Judah's relocation to Adullam parallels Joseph's departure to Egypt. Judah's subsequent marriage to a Canaanite woman reinforces the impression that he cares little for his own family. The patriarchs discouraged marrying foreigners (24:3; 26:34–35; 28:1).

38:6-7 With minimal detail, the narrator presents Er as "wicked" (v. 7), and God punishes him by death. The twofold reference to him as "firstborn" is noteworthy in a book that is especially interested in tracing the assumed rights of firstborns. 38:8 Since Tamar is a childless widow, Judah arranges for his second-born son, Onan, to marry her, an arrangement known as levirate marriage (see Deut 25:5–10; Ruth 1:11–13; Matt 22:24–25; Luke 20:28).
38:9 he spilled his semen on the ground. The narrator does not fully explain the reason for Onan's action. Perhaps Onan despised his deceased brother and did not want Tamar's child to have Er's share of Judah's inheritance. Not only would this reduce Onan's portion of his father's possessions but, as firstborn heir, "Er's son" would receive a double portion.

38:11 The deaths of Er and Onan make Judah highly protective of Shelah. Out of self-interest, Judah sends Tamar back to her own family, giving little thought to her future well-being.

38:12 The death of Judah's wife sets the stage for an unexpected development.

38:13 – 14 Observing that Judah has not kept his promise regarding Shelah (v. 11), Tamar takes unusual steps to become pregnant by Judah. By hiding her face with a veil, Tamar disguises herself as a "shrine prostitute" (v. 21; see note there). Given Judah's inability to recognize Tamar, the name of the location where she waits for Judah is somewhat ironic: Enaim means "two springs" or "a pair of eyes." Its precise location is unknown.

38:15–18 Taking Tamar to be a prostitute, Judah, now a widower, looks to gratify his sexual desires. This further evidences his self-centered approach to life. Tamar, knowing that Judah is untrustworthy, asks for a guarantee that he will pay her with a young goat from his flock.

37:36 tGe 39:1 38:2 "1Ch 2:3 38:3 v ver 6; Ge 46:12; Nu 26:19 38:7 wver 10: Ge 46:12: 1Ch 2:3 38:8 × Dt 25:5-6: Mt 22:24-28 38:10 y Ge 46:12; Dt 25:7-10 38:11 ^zRu 1:13 38:12 a ver 14; Jos 15:10,57 38:14 ^b ver 11 38:16 °Lev 18:15; 20:12 38:17 d Eze 16:33

38:17 º ver 20 38:18 ^f ver 25 38:19 9 ver 14 38:21 h Lev 19:29: Hos 4:14 38:24 Lev 21:9: Dt 22:21.22 38:25 ^j ver 18 38:26 k 1Sa 24:17 ver 11 38:27 m Ge 25:24 38:29 " Ge 46:12; Nu 26:20, 21; Ru 4:12 18; 1Ch 2:4; Mt 1:3 38:30 º 1Ch 2:4 39:1 PGe 37:36 ^q Ge 37:25; Ps 105:17 39:2 'Ge 21:20,22; Ac 7:9 39:3 °Ge 21:22; 26:28 tPs 1:3 39:4 "ver 8,22; Ge 24:2 "Will you give me something as a pledge^e until you send it?" she asked.

¹⁸He said, "What pledge should I give you?"

"Your seal^f and its cord, and the staff in your hand," she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. ¹⁹After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes⁹ again.

²⁰Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. ²¹He asked the men who lived there, "Where is the shrine prostitute^h who was beside the road at Enaim?"

"There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here," they said.

²²So he went back to Judah and said, "I didn't find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, 'There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here.'"

²³Then Judah said, "Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn't find her."

²⁴About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant."

Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"i

²⁵As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are."

²⁶Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I,^k since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah.^b" And he did not sleep with her again.

²⁷When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.^{m 28}As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." ²⁹But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named Perez.^{an 30}Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah.^{bo}

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

39 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard,^p bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.^q ²The LORD was with Joseph' so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³When his master saw that the LORD was with him^s and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did,^{t 4}Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his

household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.^u ⁵From the time he put him in charge ^a 29 Perez means breaking out. ^b 30 Zerab can mean scarlet or brightness.

38:18 seal and its cord. This may have been a necklace that consisted of a small cylinder seal that produced an impression unique to the owner.

38:20 his friend the Adullamite. Hirah (v. 12).

38:21 shrine prostitute. Occurs infrequently in the OT (Deut 23:17; Hos 4:14). Fertility rituals were an accepted part of Canaanite religious practices but played no part in orthodox Israelite worship.

38:24 have her burned to death! Judah's condemnation of Tamar is exceptionally hypocritical and shows little compassion for his daughter-in-law.

38:25–26 Judah acknowledges his own guilt in keeping Shelah from marrying Tamar. Not only does this justify Tamar's unconventional conduct, but it marks a turning point in Judah's life. From this point onward in the narrative, his behavior is very different. Without knowledge of this event, it would be difficult to explain why Judah, having sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt, is later prepared to sacrifice his own freedom in order to take the place of Benjamin as a slave.

38:27 – 30 To identify the firstborn son, the midwife ties a scarlet thread on the wrist of Zerah (see NIV text note on v. 30). Yet before Zerah is born, Perez breaks out in front of him (see NIV text note on v. 29). Genesis has recorded a series of incidents in which younger brothers usurp firstborn sons. Centuries later, in the time of Samuel, the lineage of Perez will replace the firstborn lineage of Joseph/Ephraim, leading to the creation of the Davidic dynasty (see Ps 78:67–72). The events of ch. 38 take on great significance when viewed in the light of God's plan to redeem humanity through an offspring descended from Eve through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ultimately, this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1–16).

39:1 – 23 Joseph and Potiphar's Wife. God is with Joseph, in spite of his enslavement in Egypt. Joseph's loyalty to God, reflected in his personal integrity, results in blessing for Potiphar. This continues a pattern of God's mediating his blessing to others through the line of patriarchs, beginning with Abraham. However, Joseph's integrity results in Potiphar's wife falsely accusing him. Joseph is once more the victim of injustice.

39:1 By echoing 37:36, this verse resumes the story of the Midianites selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt. **one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.** See note on 37:36.

39:2-5 The frequent references to the "LORD" underscore that Joseph's success comes from God. The "LORD" prospers both Joseph and those whom he serves. In light of God's earlier promises to bless others (12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), this presents Joseph as the "firstborn" heir to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph.^v The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,^{w 7} and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"^x

⁸But he refused.^y "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹No one is greater in this house than I am.^z My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"^{a 10}And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

¹¹One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹²She caught him by his cloak^b and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

¹³When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed.^{c 15}When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

¹⁶She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷Then she told him this story:^d "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

¹⁹When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger.^{e 20}Joseph's master took him and put him in prison,[†] the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.^g ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.^h ²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.ⁱ

The Cupbearer and the Baker

40 Some time later, the cupbearer^j and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ²Pharaoh was angry^k with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard,¹ in the same

39:6 – 10 Potiphar's wife is attracted to Joseph because he is handsome and successfully manages her husband's household. However, Joseph's loyalty to his master, Potiphar, prevents him from yielding to the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. His faith in God clearly influences his moral stance; to commit adultery would involve sinning "against God" (v. 9). Joseph does not exploit the trust Potiphar placed in him, nor does he succumb to the temptation of sexual gratification. He recognizes that all wrongdoing offends God (Ps 51:4).

39:11 – 18 This is the second time (see 37:31 – 33) in this short story of Joseph's life that someone uses one of Joseph's cloaks to deceive others. Potiphar's wife exploits the situation to the maximum. She emphasizes Joseph's foreign status by describing him as a "Hebrew" (vv. 14,17; see note on 14:13). She presents Joseph's assault on her as an assault on the entire household, persuading her servants to support her cause. The vehemence with which Potiphar's wife condemns Joseph is a chilling reminder of how vengeful human nature can be.

39:17 you brought. Subtly she places part of the blame on her husband because he was responsible for bringing Joseph into their household (see also "your slave" in v. 19). **make sport of.** The Hebrew word elsewhere describes Ishmael "mocking" his younger brother Isaac (21:9) and Isaac "caressing" his wife Rebekah (26:8).

39:19-20 Accepting his wife's accusation, Potiphar puts Joseph in

39:5 Ge 26:24: 30:27 39:6 w 1Sa 16:12 39:7 *2Sa 13:11; Pr 7:15-18 39:8 yPr 6:23-24 39:9 2 Ge 41:33.40 aGe 20:6; 42:18; 2Sa 12:13 39:12 b Pr 7:13 39:14 ° Dt 22:24.27 39:17 d Ex 23:1,7; Ps 101:5 39:19 ° Pr 6:34 39:20 f Ge 40:3: Ps 105:18 39:21 9 Fx 3:21 39:22 h ver 4 39:23 ver 3 40:1 Ne 1:11 40:2 kPr 16:14,15 40:3 Ge 39:20

prison. As captain of the guard (v. 1), Potiphar is well-placed to ensure Joseph's swift imprisonment (see note on 37:36).

39:20 where the king's prisoners were confined. This anticipates later developments in the story.

39:21 – 23 As in Potiphar's house, the Lord is with Joseph (vv. 2–5), so the warden entrusts Joseph with responsibility for all that happens within the prison.

40:1 – 23 The Cupbearer and the Baker. Through being imprisoned, Joseph comes into contact with two former members of the Egyptian royal household. As both officials await their fate in prison, Joseph's ability to interpret their dreams paves the way for later developments in his life.

40:1 cupbearer ... baker. Important positions within the royal household. Both men had regular access to the king. Their duties were not those of lowly domestic servants. offended their master, the king of Egypt. The reason they now find themselves imprisoned alongside Joseph. All three men share the same experience, although the outcome for one of them will be very different.

40:2 officials. The same Hebrew term denotes Potiphar (37:36; 39:1), who was a man of some wealth, having both slaves and fields.

40:3 captain of the guard. Potiphar held this position (37:36; 39:1), and he may have assigned Joseph to attend both officials.

40:4 m Ge 39:4 40:5 "Ge 41:11 40:7 °Ne 2:2 40:8 PGe 41:8.15 9 Ge 41:16: Da 2:22,28,47 40:12 'Ge 41:12, 15, 25; Da 2:36; 4:19 40:14 sLk 23:42 t Jos 2:12; 1Sa 20:14, 42; 1Ki 2:7 40:15 " Ge 37:26-28 40:18 ver 12 40:19 w ver 13 40:20 × Mt 14:6-10 ^yMk 6:21 40:21 ^z ver 13 40:22 a ver 19 ^bPs 105.19 40:23 ° Job 19:14: Ecc 9:15 41:1 d Ge 20:3 41:2 ° ver 26 f Isa 19:6

prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph,^m and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, ⁵each of the two men — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison — had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.ⁿ

⁶When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"⁰

 $^{8}\mbox{``We both had dreams,'' they answered, ``but there is no one to interpret them.''^p$

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God?^q Tell me your dreams."

⁹So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, ¹⁰and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."

¹²"This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. ¹³Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴But when all goes well with you, remember me^s and show me kindness;¹ mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews,^a and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.^{*a*} ¹⁷In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

¹⁸"This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days." ¹⁹Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head^w and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh."

²⁰Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday,^x and he gave a feast for all his officials.^y He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: ²¹He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand^z — ²²but he impaled the chief baker,^a just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.^b

²³The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.^c

Pharaoh's Dreams

41 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream:^d He was standing by the Nile, ²when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, ^e and they grazed among the reeds.^f ³After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on

^a 16 Or three wicker baskets

40:5 Like Joseph as a teenager (37:5–11), the two men have intriguing dreams. However, because they are imprisoned, they cannot ask priests and wise men to interpret their dreams (cf. 41:8).

40:8 interpretations belong to God. This may not have surprised the two men since Egyptians consulted their temple priests for interpretations (see note on 41:8). However, by offering to explain their dreams, Joseph indicates that he has a special God-given ability.

40:9-11 The cupbearer's dream reflects something of what his normal duties entailed.

40:13 will lift up your head. This same motif comes later in v. 19, where it applies to the baker. However, although Pharaoh will lift up the heads of both men (v. 20), the results are very different.

40:14 remember me. In spite of Joseph's request, the cupbearer quickly forgets about him (v. 23).

40:15 dungeon. The Hebrew term is translated "cistern" in 37:24. In both Canaan and Egypt, Joseph finds himself unjustly imprisoned. While he declares his innocence, the cupbearer quickly forgets his plea.

40:16-17 The chief baker recounts his dream, hopeful of a positive interpretation.

40:19 will lift off your head. Whereas Pharaoh's lifting up the cupbearer's head reinstates him, the same idiom describes an ominous outcome for the chief baker. The idiom may not necessarily describe his decapitation, but Pharaoh impales the baker's body outdoors, permitting birds of carrion to gorge on it.

40:20-22 Joseph's interpretations of their dreams come to fruition.

40:20 Pharaoh's birthday. The anniversary of either his birth or his ascension to the throne of Egypt. **lifted up.** The heads of both men are raised (see note on v. 13) with very different consequences for them (see note on v. 19).

40:23 he forgot him. Joseph had asked the chief cupbearer to mention him to Pharaoh (v. 14).

41:1 – 40 Pharaoh's Dreams. After two years, the cupbearer recalls Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and tells Pharaoh about Joseph. When Joseph subsequently explains Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh dramatically exalts him from a prisoner to second-in-command to Pharaoh himself. This unexpected transformation prepares for later developments in the story involving Joseph's brothers. Joseph consistently credits God as both the source and interpreter of Pharaoh's dreams (vv. 16,25,28,32), and Pharaoh perceives that Joseph is unique (v. 38). 41:1 – 7 Pharaoh's dreams are the last of three pairs that the Joseph story records. Both of Pharaoh's dreams share common elements: seven fat heads of grain and seven thin inems consume the seven fat cows and seven thin ones; the seven thin items consume the seven fat coms.

the riverbank. ⁴And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted — thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

⁸In the morning his mind was troubled,⁹ so he sent for all the magicians^h and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

⁹Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰Pharaoh was once angry with his servants,ⁱ and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.^j ¹¹Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.^k ¹²Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.^l ¹³And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.^m"

¹⁴So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon.ⁿ When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

¹⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."^o

¹⁶"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."^p

¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹After them, seven other cows came up — scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

²²"In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. ²³After them, seven other heads sprouted — withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me.^q"

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do." ²⁶The seven good cows⁸ are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.^t

²⁸"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹Seven years of great abundance^u are coming throughout the land of Egypt, ³⁰but seven years of famine^v will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land.^{w 31}The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³²The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided^x by God, and God will do it soon.

³³"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man^y and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth^z of the harvest of Egypt during

cupbearer's release and Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph has remained in prison during this period.	Egyptians tended to be smooth-shaven in contrast to some other ethnic groups (cf. 2 Sam 10:4).
	o i i i
41:8 The repetition of the common pattern in his dreams fills Phar-	41:16 Joseph emphatically identifies God as the one who interprets
aoh with unease; he realizes that these are no ordinary dreams, so he	dreams. He downplays his own ability in order to give God his rightful
seeks an interpretation. magicians. Priests linked to Egyptians temples.	place.
Among their various duties, Egyptian priests interpreted omens and	41:24 magicians. See note on v. 8.
signs. Pharaoh may have expected these sorcerer-priests, along with	41:25-32 Joseph explains Pharaoh's dreams, underlining that they
the wise men, to explain his dreams.	reveal what God is "about to do" (v. 25).
41:12 Hebrew. See note on 14:13. Joseph's ethnic origin distinguished	41:33-36 Joseph goes beyond interpreting Pharaoh's dreams to offer-
him from others (see note on 39:11–18).	ing a plan of action for addressing the forthcoming situation.
41:14 dungeon. May refer to a "pit" (see note on 40:15). shaved.	41:34 a fifth of the harvest. This probably takes into account loss due

41:8 9Da 2:1.3: 4:5.19 Ex 7:11,22; Da 1:20; 2:2.27: 4:7 41:10 'Ge 40:2 Ge 39:20 41:11 KGe 40:5 41:12 Ge 40:12 41:13 m Ge 40:22 41:14 "Ps 105:20; Da 2.25 41:15 ° Da 5:16 41:16 P Ge 40:8; Da 2:30; Ac 3:12; 2Co 3:5 41:24 9 ver 8 41:25 'Da 2:45 41:26 sver 2 41:27 tGe 12:10; 2Ki 8:1 41:29 uver 47 41:30 v ver 54; Ge 47:13 ver 56 41:32 *Nu 23:19; Isa 46:10-11 41:33 yver 39 41:34 21Sa 8:15

41:34 a ver 48 41:35 b ver 48 41:36 ° ver 56 41:37 d Ge 45:16 41:38 °Nu 27:18; Job 32:8; Da 4:8-9, 18; 5.11 14 41:40 ^fPs 105:21-22; Ac 7:10 41:41 9 Ge 42:6; Da 6:3 41:42 h Est 3:10 Da 5:7, 16,29 41:43 jEst 6:9 41:44 kPs 105:22 41:45 | ver 50: Ge 46:20.27 41:46 m Ge 37:2 "1Sa 16:21; Da 1:19 41:50 ° Ge 46:20: 48:5 41:51 PGe 48:14, 18, 20 41:52 Ge 48:1,5; 50:23 Ge 17:6; 28:3; 49:22 41:54 s ver 30; Ps 105:11; Ac 7:11 41:55 tDt 32:24 ver 41 41:56 'Ge 12:10 41:57 "Ge 42:5; 47:15

the seven years of abundance.^{a 35}They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food.^{b 36}This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt,^c so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

³⁷The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.^{d 38}So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God^{*a*}?"^e

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders.^f Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

Joseph in Charge of Egypt

⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."^{g 42}Then Pharaoh took his signet ring^h from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.^{i 43}He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command,^b and people shouted before him, "Make way^c!"^j Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

⁴⁴Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."^{k 45}Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,^d to be his wife.¹ And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶Joseph was thirty years old^m when he entered the serviceⁿ of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.^{o 51}Joseph named his firstborn^o Manasseh^{*e*} and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵²The second son he named Ephraim^{*f*q} and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful^{*i*} in the land of my suffering,"

⁵³The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began, ^s just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵When all Egypt began to feel the famine, ^t the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."^u

⁵⁶When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine^v was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph,^w because the famine was severe everywhere.

 a^{a} 38 Or of the gods b^{b} 43 Or in the chariot of bis second-in-command; or in bis second chariot c^{c} 43 Or Bow down d^{d} 45 That is, Heliopolis; also in verse 50 e^{c} 51 Manasseb sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for forget. f 52 Ephraim sounds like the Hebrew for twice fruitful.

to their storing harvested grain "in reserve for the country" (v. 36) over a longer period of time.

41:38 Joseph deeply impresses Pharaoh. **in whom is the spirit of God.** See NIV text note. This does not necessarily refer to the Holy Spirit, although God's Spirit may well have enabled Joseph to interpret dreams. Pharaoh's remark may be of a more general nature, recognizing Joseph's God-orientated nature. Readers of Genesis, however, may have interpreted Pharaoh's remark as consistent with how God empowered particular individuals by his Spirit to undertake special duties on his behalf, especially those in positions of leadership (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam 16:13).

41:41–57 Joseph in Charge of Egypt. This short passage covers seven years, from Joseph's appointment as Pharaoh's deputy to the start of the famine in Egypt.

41:42–43 Pharaoh dresses and honors Joseph as befits Joseph's new status as Pharaoh's "second-in-command" (v. 43).

41:45 Zaphenath-Paneah. The process of integrating Joseph, a

Hebrew, into the mainstream of Egyptian life involves renaming him. His marriage to the daughter of a prominent priest would also have assisted Joseph's integration. The text does not indicate, however, that Joseph's marriage involved any religious compromise on his part. Toward the end of his life, he clearly identifies with the spiritual aspirations of Abraham and his descendants (50:24-25).

41:46 thirty years old. Joseph has been in Egypt for 12 or 13 years (see 37:2).

41:50-52 The birth of Joseph's sons coincides with the fruitful years.

41:51 Manasseh. Conveys the idea of "forget" (see NIV text note). Joseph wants to forget past events involving his affliction and the betrayal of his own brothers.

41:52 Ephraim. Means "twice fruitful" (see NIV text note); Joseph sees the birth of two sons as a sign of fruitfulness, an important motif in Genesis (e.g., 1:28; 17:6; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27).

41:53–57 Repeated references to Joseph underscore his role in providing food as famine grips Egypt and surrounding countries.

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt,^x he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" ²He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."^y

³Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.^{2 5}So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain,^a for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.^b

⁶Now Joseph was the governor of the land,^c the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.^{d 7}As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them.^e "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.⁶ ⁹Then he remembered his dreams⁹ about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

¹⁰"No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

¹²"No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

¹³But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."^h

¹⁴Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! ¹⁵And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives,ⁱ you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth.^j If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" ¹⁷And he put them all in custody^k for three days.

¹⁸On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God.^{1 19}If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother to me,^m so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

²¹They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother.ⁿ We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress^o has come on us."

²²Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?⁹ But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting^q for his blood."^{*r* 23}They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

²⁴He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.⁸

42:1 – 38 Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt. The impact of the famine causes Jacob to send his sons to Egypt. Having sold Joseph into slavery 20 years previously, the brothers have no reason to imagine that Joseph now oversees the government of Egypt. By accusing his brothers of spying, Joseph sets up a series of events that eventually result in dramatically reuniting Jacob's family, but not before Joseph discovers how much the guilt troubles his brothers.

42:1 – 5 The famine is widespread, causing food shortages in Canaan. **42:6 they bowed down to him.** This recalls the dreams Joseph had 20 years previously as a teenager (37:5–11). His brothers unknowingly fulfill those dreams.

42:7 – 12 Joseph disguises his true identity from his brothers by using an interpreter (v. 23). Over 20 years have passed since the brothers were last together; at that time Joseph was only 17 years old. Now almost 40 years old, Joseph is dressed as a wealthy Egyptian administrator. Not surprisingly, his brothers do not recognize him. In order to discern something of their character, he charges them with being spies sent to determine the strength of Egyptian defenses.

42:13 one is no more. The brothers' short response ends ironically by alluding to Joseph.

42:17 custody for three days. Joseph places them under arrest. Maintaining his accusation that they are spies, Joseph demands that his brothers prove their honesty.

42:18–20 When Joseph addresses his brothers after three days, he reverses his prior decision to retain all the brothers in Egypt, apart from one. Joseph keeps one of them hostage, and he permits the other brothers to go to Canaan to bring Benjamin back to prove their honesty. By allowing most of the brothers to return to Canaan, they will be able to take grain back for their starving households. Joseph justifies this change of heart on the basis that he fears God (v. 18).

42:21 – 23 The brothers view their "misfortune" as God's punishment for treating Joseph callously. They are unaware that Joseph understands what they are saying, and he is moved to tears but hides them from his brothers.

42:1 ×Ac 7:12 42:2 ^yGe 43:8 42:4 ^zver 38 42:5 a Ge 41:57 ^bGe 12:10: Ac 7:11 42:6 ° Ge 41:41 d Ge 37.7-10 42:7 e ver 30 42:8 f Ge 37:2 42:9 9 Ge 37:7 42:13 h Ge 37:30, 33; 44:20 42:15 1Sa 17:55 42:16 j ver 11 42:17 KGe 40:4 42:18 Ge 20:11; Lev 25:43 42:20 m ver 15, 34; Ge 43:5; 44:23 42:21 "Ge 37:26-28 °Hos 5:15 42:22 PGe 37:21-22 Ge 9:5 1Ki 2:32: 2Ch 24:22; Ps 9:12 42:24 sver 13; Ge 43:14, 23: 45:14-15

42:25 tGe 43:2 Ge 44:1, 8 "Ro 12:17, 20-21 42:27 * Ge 43:21-22 42:28 × Ge 43:23 42:30 y ver 7 42:31 z ver 11 42:33 a ver 19,20 42:34 b Ge 34:10 42:35 ° Ge 43:12, 15, 18 42:36 d Ge 43:14 42:38 ° Ge 37:33 f ver 4 9 Ge 37:35 h Ge 44:29.34 43:1 'Ge 12:10; 41:56-57 43:3 Ge 42:15; 44:23 43:5 KGe 42:15; 2Sa 3:13 43:7 Ver 27 MGe 42:13 43:8 " Ge 42:2: Ps 33:18-19

²⁵Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain,^t to put each man's silver back in his sack,^u and to give them provisions for their journey.^v After this was done for them, ²⁶they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

²⁷At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.^{w 28} "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack."

Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?" $\!\!\!\!\!^{xx}$

²⁹When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, ³⁰"The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us^y and treated us as though we were spying on the land. ³¹But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.^z ³²We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

³³"Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.^a ³⁴But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade^{*a*} in the land.^b"

³⁵As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.^{c 36}Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin.^d Everything is against me!"

³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."

³⁸But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead^e and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him⁴ on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave⁹ in sorrow.^h"

The Second Journey to Egypt

43 Now the famine was still severe in the land.¹²So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

³But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'^{j 4}If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. ⁵But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.^k"

⁶Israel asked, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?" ⁷They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?"¹ he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?"^m We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here??"

⁸Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.ⁿ ⁹I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold

^a 34 Or move about freely

42:25–28 Unexpectedly discovering in a sack one of the payments they brought for the grain fills the men with apprehension. Trembling, they attribute this to divine providence, sensing that this may bring them additional trouble. Even after 20 years, their treatment of Joseph troubles their consciences.

42:35 Discovering the money pouches dismays Jacob and his sons. It appears that the brothers have not paid for the Egyptian grain.

42:36–37 The unfolding sequence of events appears ominous. Reuben's willingness to put to death his own sons fails to reassure Jacob. Benjamin is unlikely to be safe in the care of someone who would even consider killing his own sons. Unjustly, the punishment for Reuben's failure would fall more heavily on his sons than on Reuben himself.

42:38 Jacob emphatically rejects Reuben's offer. **grave.** See note on 37:35.

43:1 – **34** *The Second Journey to Egypt*. The pressing threat of starvation causes Jacob's sons to return to Egypt to buy more grain. Joseph unexpectedly invites them to eat at his house, causing the brothers to suspect that some terrible fate awaits them.

43:3 – 10 Unlike Reuben, who failed to persuade his father (42:37–38), Judah successfully convinces Jacob to entrust Benjamin into his care. In his speech, Judah emphasizes that he personally will bear the blame should anything happen to Benjamin. Judah displays qualities of leadership that are later reflected in his descendants, which include the royal lineaae of David. See note on 49:8–12.

43:9 °Ge 42:37: 44:32:

me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.º 10As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."

¹¹Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift^p — a little balm^q and a little honey, some spices' and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds, ¹²Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks.^s Perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. ¹⁴And may God Almighty^{at} grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you." As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved."v

¹⁵So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried^w down to Egypt and presented themselves^x to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ^y "Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal;^z they are to eat with me at noon."

¹⁷The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house. ¹⁸Now the men were frightened^a when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys."

¹⁹So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. ²⁰"We beg your pardon, our lord," they said, "we came down here the first time to buy food.^{b 21}But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver — the exact weight — in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. c ²²We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

²³"It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks;^d I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them.^e

²⁴The steward took the men into Joseph's house, ^f gave them water to wash their feet^g and provided fodder for their donkeys. ²⁵They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

²⁶When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts^h they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground.¹²⁷He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?"

²⁸They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him.k

²⁹As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your voungest brother, the one vou told me about?"¹ And he said, "God be gracious to vou,^m my son." ³⁰Deeply movedⁿ at the sight of his brother. Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept^o there.

³¹After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, ^p said, "Serve the food."

³²They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews,^q for that is detestable to Egyptians.^{r 33}The

a 14 Hebrew El-Shaddai

43:11-14 Without knowing Joseph's true identity, Jacob sends gifts	intervention, probably knowing that Joseph was responsible for this
to honor him.	(42:25).
43:14 may God Almighty grant you mercy. Conscious of the potential	43:26 they bowed down. For a second time (see 42:6), Joseph's broth-
danger awaiting his sons in Egypt, Jacob prays that God will be merciful	ers fulfill his dreams (37:5-11) by prostrating themselves before him.
to them. God subsequently answers his prayer when Joseph forgives	43:30 Seeing Benjamin after 20 years apart, Joseph struggles to control
his brothers.	his feelings.

43:15-18 The unanticipated invitation to Joseph's house alarms his brothers. Ironically, they fear that Joseph, the one they sold into slavery, will enslave them

43:19-22 Describing how they discovered the silver in their sacks, the brothers are openly honest with Joseph's steward.

43:23 The steward's reply attributes the silver in the sacks to divine

43:32 - 34 For cultural reasons Egyptians and Hebrews did not eat together. However, Joseph ensures that his younger brother Benjamin is especially privileged. Joseph may have done this to see how his brothers would react toward Benjamin. Would they be jealous of Beniamin as they had been lealous of him when their father had favored him (37:4)?

Phm 1:18-19 43:11 PGe 32:20; Pr 18:16 9 Ge 37:25: Jer 8:22 ' 1Ki 10:2 43:12 °Ge 42:25 43:14 tGe 17:1; 28:3; 35:11 "Ge 42:24 VEst 4:16 43:15 "Ge 45:9,13 *Ge 47:2.7 43:16 y Ge 44:1,4,12 2ver 31; Lk 15:23 43:18 a Ge 42:35 43:20 b Ge 42:3 43:21 ° ver 15: Ge 42:27.35 43:23 d Ge 42:28 e Ge 42:24 43:24 f ver 16 g Ge 18:4; 24:32 43:26 h Mt 2:11 Ge 37:7,10 43:27 ^jver 7 43:28 KGe 37:7 43:29 Ge 42:13 ^mNu 6:25; Ps 67:1 43:30 " Jn 11:33, 38 ºGe 42:24; 45:2, 14, 15; 46.29 43:31 PGe 45:1 43:32 9 Gal 2:12 Ge 46:34: Ex 8:26

43:34 ° Ge 37:3; 45:22 44:1 ° Ge 42:25 44:4 ° Fe 35:12 44:5 ° Ge 30:27; Dt 18:10-14 44:8 ° Ge 42:25; 43:21 44:9 ° Ge 31:32 44:12 ° Ver 2 90:114:6; 28a 1:11 44:14 ° Ge 37:29; Nu 14:6; 28a 1:11 44:15 ° Ver 5; Ge 30:27 44:16 ° Ver 9; Ge 43:02 44:16 ° Ver 9; Ge

men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's.⁸ So they feasted and drank freely with him.

A Silver Cup in a Sack

44 Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack.^{t 2}Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said.

³As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil?^{u 5}Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination?" This is a wicked thing you have done.'"

⁶When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷But they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! ⁸We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks.^w So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die;^x and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

¹⁰"Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."

¹¹Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹²Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.^y ¹³At this, they tore their clothes.² Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

¹⁴Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him.^{a 15}Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?^b"

¹⁶"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves^c — we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.^d"

¹⁷But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."

44:1 – 34 A Silver Cup in a Sack. Joseph instigates a plan to determine how his older brothers view their youngest brother, Benjamin. Will they treat him as callously as they had Joseph? How will they react when Benjamin is accused of misappropriating Joseph's silver cup? Remarkably, Judah not only pleads at length for Benjamin's release but willingly offers to become Joseph's slave so that Benjamin may return home safely to Canaan. Judah's intervention contrasts sharply with his earlier willingness to sell Joseph into slavery (37:26–27).

44:1 – 2 steward. This unnamed individual held a position of considerable importance within Joseph's house and was worthy of respect (see vv. 7-10). Joseph issues similar instructions to those that he gave when his brothers previously left Egypt (42:25). In addition, he commands that his own silver cup be placed in Benjamin's sack.

44:4–5 As part of the ruse by which Joseph intends to discern the attitude of his brothers, he sends his steward after them.

44:5 for divination. Possibly with a sense of irony, Joseph describes his cup as one used for gaining knowledge by supernatural means. It seems unlikely that Joseph practiced divination, something God later prohibited (Deut 18:10; see 2 Kgs 17:17; Jer 14:14; see note on 30:27). However, he obviously wished to make his brothers believe that he could discern things supernaturally (v. 15). Ironically, the cup becomes the means by which he gains an insight into the present inner nature of his brothers. 44:9–10 Joseph's steward imposes a less demanding punishment than the brothers suggest. He, unlike them, is fully aware of the ruse. Their proposal that the guilty party be put to death is their way of claiming

that they, being innocent, have nothing to fear from the charge made against them.

44:13 tore their clothes. A visible demonstration of their grief as they contemplate Benjamin's fate.

44:14 Judah and his brothers. The narrator anticipates the special role that Judah will play in mediating Benjamin's release. they threw themselves to the ground before him. Joseph's brothers fulfill his dreams a third time (see note on 43:26).

44:15 find things out by divination. Joseph's steward described the silver cup as what Joseph "uses for divination" (v. 5). However, having orchestrated all that occurred, Joseph did not need to rely on divination to discover what happened. This reference to divination is another part of the ruse. By emphasizing his own ability to know things that are hidden, Joseph puts his brothers under pressure to speak the truth.

44:16 God has uncovered your servants' guilt. Judah's response is striking, probably alluding to how they earlier treated Joseph. What they did in the past places them under divine judgment. Because they sold their brother into slavery, their punishment is to be enslaved also. Remarkably, in light of Joseph's earlier dreams (37:5–11), Judah declares that he and his brothers are "now my lord's slaves."

44:17 In spite of how his brothers treated him, Joseph does not seek vengeance. Rather, he will let his older brothers return to Canaan, keeping only Benjamin as a slave. No doubt Joseph is especially keen to see how Judah and his brother will respond to this proposal. Will they place their own well-being above Benjamin's? ¹⁸Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry[®] with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?'¹ ²⁰And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age.⁹ His brother is dead,^h and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'ⁱ

²¹"Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.'^j²²And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.'^k ²³But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'¹ ²⁴When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

²⁵"Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.'^{m 26}But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'

²⁷ "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons.ⁿ ²⁸One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces."⁰ And I have not seen him since. ²⁹If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.[°]

³⁰"So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life,^{q 31}sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. ³²Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'^r

³³"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave^s in place of the boy,^t and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."^u

Joseph Makes Himself Known

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself^v before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept^w so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.^x

³Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?"^y But his brothers were not able to answer him,^z because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!^{a 5}And now, do not be distressed^b and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here,^c because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.^{d 6}For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant^e on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.^{af}

^a 7 Or save you as a great band of survivors

44:18–34 Judah's speech to Joseph is lengthy; most human speeches in Genesis are short. Humbly acknowledging Joseph's special status as "equal to Pharaoh" (v. 18), Judah pleads passionately for the release of Benjamin, outlining in some detail how the loss of Benjamin would severely affect his father. Having guaranteed the safe return of Benjamin, Judah offers himself as a slave in his place. More than anything else, Judah wants to prevent his father from suffering further grief. Judah's impassioned appeal to Joseph sharply contrasts with his previous proposal to sell Joseph into slavery (37:26–27). Now Judah himself is prepared to suffer loss of freedom and great hardship in order that Benjamin not be enslaved in Egypt.

45:1 – 28 Joseph Makes Himself Known. Although Joseph has successfully concealed his identity from his brothers, Judah's speech changes everything. Joseph can no longer hold back his feelings. With tears, he discloses his true identity to his brothers. In doing so, he refrains from condemning them, pointing rather to the providential nature of all that has occurred. In spite of all that he has suffered, Joseph can see 6od

44:18 ° Ge 18:30; Ex 32:22 44:19 f Ge 43:7 44:20 9 Ge 37:3 h Ge 37:33 Ge 42:13 44:21 Ge 42:15 44:22 KGe 37:35 44:23 Ge 43:5 44:25 m Ge 43:2 44:27 "Ge 46:19 44:28 ° Ge 37:33 44:29 PGe 42:38 44:30 91Sa 18:1 44:32 'Ge 43:9 44:33 °Ge 43:18 ^tJn 15:13 44:34 "Est 8:6 45:1 VGe 43:31 45:2 "Ge 29:11 *ver 16: Ge 46:29 45:3 yAc 7:13 zver 15 45:4 a Ge 37:28 45:5 b Ge 42:21 ^cGe 42:22 ^dver 7-8; Ge 50:20; Ps 105:17 45:7 °2Ki 19:4,30,31; Isa 10:20, 21; Mic 4:7; Zep 2:7 fEx 15:2: Est 4:14: Isa 25:9

at work in everything that has happened. Building on this, he urges his brothers to return to Canaan in order that Jacob's whole family may migrate to Egypt to avoid the five years of famine that remain.

45:1 – **3** While Joseph dismisses his Egyptian attendants, they cannot but overhear their distraught and emotional master as he reveals his identity to his brothers. With good reason, Joseph's brothers are both speechless and fearful.

45:4 – 8 Joseph does his utmost to calm his fearful brothers. While he could have with justification pointed to their cruelty and deceit, he concentrates rather on how God transformed his tragic personal circumstances into an opportunity to help others. Twice in these verses Joseph refers to the concept of saving the lives of others. While this has a physical dimension, Joseph's actions foreshadow the greater salvation that will come through Jesus Christ, the one in whom is fulfilled every-thing associated with the divine promises linked to a royal descendant of Abraham.

45:8 gJdg 17:10 ^hGe 41:41 45:9 'Ge 43:10 45:10 Ge 46:28.34: 47:1 45:11 KGe 47:12 45:13 Ac 7.14 45:15 "Lk 15:20 ver 3 45:16 °Ac 7:13 45:18 ° Ge 27:28; 46:34; 47:6, 11, 27; Nu 18:12, 29 9Ps 37:19 45:19 Ge 46:5 45:21 SGe 42:25 45:22 tGe 37:3; 43:34 45:24 "Ge 42.21-22 45:26 'Ge 44:28 45:27 w ver 19

⁸"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father⁹ to Pharaoh. lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.^{h 9}Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.1 10You shall live in the region of Goshen^j and be near me-you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there,^k because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to vou will become destitute.'

¹² "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.¹⁹

REGION OF GOSHEN Mediterranean Sea petta Region Tell ed-Dab'a (Avaris) GOSHEN Wadi Tumilat Pithom On (Heliopolis) Memphis 0 40 km. 0 40 km. 0 40 mi.

¹⁴Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵And he kissed^m all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.ⁿ

¹⁶When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come,^o Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt^p and you can enjoy the fat of the land.'^q

¹⁹"You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts^r from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. ²⁰Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"

²¹So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey.^{s 22}To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels^{*a*} of silver and five sets of clothes.^{t 23}And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey.²⁴Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!"^u

²⁵So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.^v ²⁷But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts^w Joseph had

^a 22 That is, about 7 1/2 pounds or about 3.5 kilograms

45:8 father to Pharaoh. Joseph's description of himself recalls how God previously covenanted with Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations" (17:4-5). Since Jacob gave Joseph the status of "firstborn" in place of Reuben (see 1 Chr 5:1-2), Joseph is heir to the special covenant God established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

45:9–13 Joseph gives instructions for the rest of his family to move to Egypt so that they may avoid the hardship of the famine that will last for five more years.

45:10 Goshen. Although its exact location is uncertain, it possibly lay in the eastern delta region of the Nile River, close to the city of Rowaty, which later became known as Avaris and then Pi-Rameses (see 47:11). **45:16–20** Pharaoh's reaction to the news that Joseph's brothers had come reflects Joseph's good standing with him.

45:21-23 Having arrived in Egypt as a slave, Joseph has become exceptionally wealthy.

45:22 three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. Whereas he was sold as a slave for 20 shekels (37:28), Joseph generously gives his younger brother Benjamin gifts of considerable value.

45:25 – 28 Jacob responds with incredulity, since his sons had deceived him 20 years earlier by telling him that Joseph was dead (37:31-35).

sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob Goes to Egypt

46 So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba,^x he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.^y

²And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night^z and said, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"Here I am," a he replied.

³"I am God, the God of your father,"^b he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation^c there.^{d 4}I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.^e And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.^f"

⁵Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts⁹ that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. ⁶So Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt,^h taking with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan. ⁷Jacob brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters — all his offspring.¹

⁸These are the names of the sons of Israel^j (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt:

Reuben the firstborn of Jacob.

⁹The sons of Reuben:^k

Hanok, Pallu, Hezron and Karmi.

10 The sons of Simeon:1

Jemuel,^m Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

11 The sons of Levi:n

Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

¹²The sons of Judah:⁰

Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan).

The sons of Perez:p

Hezron and Hamul.

13 The sons of Issachar:9

Tola, Puah,^{ar} Jashub^b and Shimron.

14 The sons of Zebulun:s

Sered, Elon and Jahleel.

^{*a*} 13 Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *Puvab* ^{*b*} 13 Samaritan Pentateuch and some Septuagint manuscripts (see also Num. 26:24 and 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *lob*

46:1—**47:12** Jacob Goes to Egypt. The account of Jacob's journey to Egypt has four parts: (1) At Beersheba God permits Jacob to relocate to Egypt (vv. 1–7). (2) A list of the names of those who went to Egypt (vv. 8–27). (3) Jacob encounters Joseph (vv. 28–30). (4) Joseph prepares the way for his father to meet Pharaoh, conscious of the Egyptians' strong antipathy toward shepherds (46:31—47:12).

46:1 Possibly leaving from Hebron (see 37:14), Jacob travels southward. **Beersheba.** Where previously both Abraham and Isaac settled for some time (21:22–34; 26:23–33).

46:2 – **4** Through a nighttime vision, God authorizes Jacob to go to Egypt. This contrasts with a previous occasion when God prohibited Jacob's father, Isaac, from going to Egypt during a famine (26:1 – 5). Remarkably, it will be in Egypt that God transforms Abraham's descendants into a great nation, fulfilling his promise to Abraham (12:2). Later, in the book of Exodus, the remarkable growth of the Israelites eventually leads to their expulsion from Egypt and return to the land of Canaan. Through this entire process, God promises to be with Jacob.

46:4 I will surely bring you back again. The "you" is singular and refers to Jacob. While Jacob subsequently dies in Egypt (49:33), Joseph arranges to bury Jacob in Canaan alongside Abraham and Isaac (50:4–13). Burying the patriarchs at Hebron reflects God's commitment to give the land of Canaan to their descendants. Although the fulfill-

ment of God's promises lies well beyond their lifetime, the patriarchs anticipated an ongoing relationship with God even after death (Heb 11:12-16,39). In the future they would share in the results of God's redemptive work in the world.

46:5-7 Jacob's entire family, with all their possessions, relocates to Egypt, a journey of about 150 miles (240 kilometers). They leave no living family member in Canaan.

46:8–27 A list of Jacob's family interrupts the report of Jacob's journey. It is arranged on the basis of his two wives and their two maidservants: Leah's children (vv. 8-15), Zilpah's children (vv. 16-18), Rachel's children (vv. 19-22), and Bilhah's children (vv. 23-25). A concluding summary follows the lists of names (vv. 26-27). This register includes all of Jacob's offspring, not just those who accompanied him down to Egypt (e.g., Er and Onan [v. 12] died in Canaan, and Joseph and his sons [v. 20] were already in Egypt).

46:8 – 15 Those associated with Leah comprise six sons, one daughter, 25 grandchildren, and two great-grandsons, for a total of 34 (but see v. 15 and note).

46:8 Reuben the firstborn of Jacob. Placed at the start of the list, reflecting that he was the first son born to Jacob (29:32). However, due to Reuben's inappropriate relationship with Bilhah (35:22), Jacob gave the privileged status of firstborn to Joseph (1 Chr 5:1-2).

46:1 ×Ge 21:14: 28:10 yGe 26:24; 28:13; 31:42 46:2 ^z Ge 15:1; Job 33:14-15 ^a Ge 22:1; 31:11 46:3 b Ge 28:13 ° Ge 12:2; Dt 26:5 ^dEx 1:7 46:4 °Ge 28:15; 48:21; Ex 3:8 fGe 50:1,24 46:5 9 Ge 45:19 46:6 h Dt 26:5; Jos 24:4; Ps 105:23; Isa 52:4; Ac 7:15 46:7 Ge 45:10 46:8 j Ex 1:1; Nu 26:4 46:9 k1Ch 5:3 46:10 Ge 29:33: Nu 26:14 m Ex 6:15 46:11 "Ge 29:34; Nu 3.17 46:12 ° Ge 29:35 p1Ch 2:5; Mt 1:3 46:13 9 Ge 30:18 1Ch 7:1 46:14 °Ge 30:20

46:16 tGe 30:11
^u Nu 26:15
46:17 ° Ge 30:13; 1Ch 7:30-31
46:18 "Ge 30:10 *Ge 29:24
46:19 ^y Ge 44:27
46:20 ^z Ge 41:51 ^a Ge 41:52
46:21 ^b Nu 26:38-41; 1Ch 7:6-12; 8:1
46:25 ° Ge 30:8 d Ge 29:29
16:26 ° ver 5-7; Ex 1:5; Dt 10:22
46:27 fAc 7:14
46:28 9 Ge 45:10
46:29 h Ge 45:14-15;

¹⁵These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram,^{*a*} besides his daughter Dinah. These sons and daughters of his were thirty-three in all.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad:^t

Zephon,^{bu} Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli.

¹⁷ The sons of Asher:^v

Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah.

- Their sister was Serah.
- The sons of Beriah:

Heber and Malkiel.

¹⁸These were the children born to Jacob by Zilpah,^w whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah^x—sixteen in all.

¹⁹The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel:

Joseph and Benjamin.^{y 20}In Egypt, Manasseh^z and Ephraim^a were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.^c

²¹ The sons of Benjamin:^b

Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard.

²²These were the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob — fourteen in all.

²³ The son of Dan:

Hushim.

²⁴ The sons of Naphtali:

Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.

²⁵These were the sons born to Jacob by Bilhah,^c whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel^d—seven in all.

²⁶All those who went to Egypt with Jacob— those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives— numbered sixty-six persons.^e ²⁷With the two sons^d who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy^e in all.^f

²⁸Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.⁹ When they arrived in the region of Goshen, ²⁹Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father^f and wept for a long time.^h

^{*a*} 15 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia ^{*b*} 16 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Num. 26:15); Masoretic Text *Zipbion* ^{*c*} 20 That is, Heliopolis ^{*d*} 27 Hebrew; Septuagint *the nine children* ^{*e*} 27 Hebrew (see also Exodus 1:5 and note); Septuagint (see also Acts 7:14) seventy-five ^{*f*} 29 Hebrew around bim

46:15 thirty-three. The list names 34 people, not 33 (see note on v. 8-15). This somewhat obvious discrepancy is not easy to explain. Ohad (v. 10) is missing from similar lists in Num 26:12–13; 1 Chr 4:24. Consequently, some scholars suggest that his name should be deleted here. Another possible explanation is that Dinah (v. 15), as the only woman listed, should be excluded from the total. Yet, v. 15 specifically refers to "sons and daughters." To complicate the picture further, Er and Onan (v. 12) died in Canaan (38:2–10) and should not be counted among those who migrate to Egypt. Additionally, Perez's two sons, Hezron and Hamul (v. 12), were probably born in Egypt.

46:18 Zilpah. Leah's maidservant (29:24); she became a surrogate mother when Leah appeared unable to have more children (30:9-12; 35:26).

46:19 Joseph. He is included in the list even though he and his family were already in Egypt (see note on vv. 8–27).

46:26–27 This summary concludes the list of names in vv. 8–25. **46:26 sixty-six**. This total, which excludes Jacob's sons' wives, who were not "his direct descendants," does not tally exactly with the totals in vv. 8–25 (i.e., 33+16+14+7=70). Nothing obvious explains how this was calculated to give the total 66. The second total of "seventy" (v. 27) is probably based on 66 plus Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. To add to the complexity of these figures, the earliest Greek translation of Genesis records the number of Joseph's sons as nine (see first NIV text note on v. 27), giving a total of 75 (see second NIV text note on v. 27), sealso Acts 7:14) rather than 70. In the process of copying manuscripts, mistakes occasionally can arise with numbers. Something like this may have occurred at an early stage in the transmission of the text of Genesis.

46:28 Joseph had already advised Jacob that the region of Goshen would be the most suitable location for Jacob's family (45:10), so Jacob entrusts Judah with getting directions from Joseph. In the later part of his life, Judah stands apart from his brothers as a trustworthy son. The exceptional blessing that Jacob later gives Judah reflects his faith in Judah (49:8 – 12).

^{46:22} Rachel. Although she was Jacob's favorite wife (29:18–20,30–31), she was initially unable to have children and was jealous of her sister Leah (30:1).

^{46:25} Bilhah. Rachel's maidservant (29:29); she became a surrogate mother when Rachel was unable to have children (30:3–8).

³⁰Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."

³¹Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me.¹ ³²The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' ³³When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen,^k for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.^b"

47 Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen."^{m 2}He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.

³Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"ⁿ

"Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were." ⁴They also said to him, "We have come to live here for a while,^o because the famine is severe in Canaan^p and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen."^q

⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, ⁶and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land.⁷ Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability,⁸ put them in charge of my own livestock."

⁷Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed^{*a*} Pharaoh, ¹⁸Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?"

⁹And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty.⁴ My years have been few and difficult,⁴ and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.⁴⁰" ¹⁰Then Jacob blessed^b Pharaoh^x and went out from his presence.

¹¹So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses,^y as Pharaoh directed. ¹²Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.^z

Joseph and the Famine

¹³There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine.^{a 14}Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in

^a 7 Or greeted ^b 10 Or said farewell to

46:32 – 34 In spite of knowing how the Egyptians detest shepherds (see note on v. 34), Joseph instructs his brothers to declare before Pharaoh that their occupation is tending flocks and herds. This will ensure that they will be located in the region of Goshen. By retaining their traditional way of life, the Israelites will remain apart from mainstream Egyptian society.

46:34 all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians. The precise reason for this dislike is not clear. Differing religious practices may have motivated it (see Exod 8:26). The refusal of Egyptians to share a meal with Hebrews possibly reflects it (43:32).

47:1 – 6 Through tactful diplomacy Joseph gains permission from Pharaoh for his family to settle in Goshen. Pharaoh's willingness to entrust his own livestock to Joseph's brothers shows Joseph's good standing in the Egyptian court.

47:7-10 This brief scene begins and ends with Jacob blessing Pharaoh. Although these blessings may be merely part of the formalities of meeting and parting, they take on a greater significance when set against the background of the blessing Isaac bestowed on Jacob (27:29), which in turn echoes God's promise to Abraham in 12:3. The developing Genesis narrative closely ties God's blessing to the unique family line that descends from Abraham. Jacob blesses Pharaoh for showing respect to Abraham's descendants.

47:9 My years have been few and difficult. According to the chronological information in Genesis, Jacob is now 130 years old. While this is exceptional by modern standards, Abraham and Isaac lived to be 175 and 180 years old, respectively. They viewed such lengthy years as a sign of God's blessing. Jacob, however, alludes to the difficulties that have marked his life (e.g., his forced exile to Paddan Aram; his loss of Joseph as a much loved son). **the pilgrimage of my fathers.** Jacob refers to the seminomadic lifestyle of Abraham and Isaac, which meant that they had no permanent residence. The patriarchs deliberately adopted this lifestyle because they anticipated a city God designed and built (Heb 11:9–16). Jacob identifies with his immediate forefathers by speaking of his own pilgrimage.

47:11 district of Rameses. Probably a prime location within the larger region of Goshen (v. 6). While the name Rameses may have been in use in Joseph's time, it is more often associated with the famous Egyptian king Rameses II, who lived in the thirteenth century BC. Rameses was possibly the name of this region in the time of the author.

47:13–31 Joseph and the Famine. This section emphasizes Joseph's role in keeping the Egyptians alive during the years of famine. After exhausting all other options to pay for their food, the Egyptians sell their land to Pharaoh. Subsequently, Pharaoh receives from the people one-fifth of their produce. A similar pattern exists when the Israelites settle in

46:31 Ge 47:1 46:33 ^jGe 47:3 46:34 KGe 45:10 Ge 43:32: Ex 8:26 47:1 "Ge 46:31 47:3 "Ge 46:33 47:4 °Ge 15:13; Dt 26:5 ^pGe 43:1 ^qGe 46:34 47:6 Ge 45:18 ^sEx 18:21,25 47:7 tver 10; 2Sa 14:22 47:9 "Ge 25:7 ^vHeb 11:9, 13 ^wGe 35:28 47:10 × ver 7 47:11 yEx 1:11; 12:37 47:12 ZGe 45:11 47:13 a Ge 41:30; Ac 7:11

47:14 b Ge 41:56 47:15 ° ver 19; Ex 16:3 47:17 d Fx 14.9 47:22 ° Dt 14:28-29: Ezr 7:24 47:24 fGe 41:34 47:25 9 Ge 32:5 47:26 h ver 22 47:27 'Ge 17:6; 46:3; Ex 1:7 47:28 Ps 105:23 47:29 kDt 31.14 Ge 24:2 ^m Ge 24:49 47:30 " Ge 49:29-32; 50:5, 13; Ac 7:15-16 47:31 ° Ge 21:23 P Ge 24:3 9 Heb 11:21 fn; 1Ki 1:47

Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace.^b ¹⁵When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes?^c Our money is all gone."

¹⁶"Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." ¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses,^d their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

¹⁸When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. ¹⁹Why should we perish before your eyes — we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, ²¹and Joseph reduced the people to servitude,^{*a*} from one end of Egypt to the other. ²²However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment^e Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

²³Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. ²⁴But when the crop comes in, give a fifth[†] of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."

²⁵"You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord;⁹ we will be in bondage to Pharaoh."

 26 So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt — still in force today — that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.^h

 $^{27}\mbox{Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.^i$

²⁸Jacob lived in Egypt¹ seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. ²⁹When the time drew near for Israel to die,^k he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh¹ and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness.^m Do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried."ⁿ

"I will do as you say," he said.

 $^{31} ``Swear to me, ``o he said. Then Joseph swore to him, ``p and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. <math display="inline">^{bq}$

^{*a*} 21 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Vulgate); Masoretic Text *and be moved the people into the cities* b 31 Or *Israel bowed down at the bead of his bed*

the land of Canaan. There, however, they must give God only one-tenth		
of their harvest to recognize that he owns the land.		

47:15–17 Joseph plays a central role in keeping the population of Egypt alive. His administrative skills are God-given (41:38).

47:18–26 Although the Egyptians are prepared to sell themselves into slavery in order to survive the famine, Joseph introduces a scheme whereby the people remain largely independent and self-sufficient. While they must give one-fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh, they readily acknowledge that Joseph has saved their lives (v. 25). This portrays Joseph as a fair and just administrator who does not exploit a tragic situation for his own benefit.

47:27 were fruitful and increased greatly in number. The numerical growth of the Israelites in Egypt echoes a motif that runs throughout Genesis, first introduced when God blesses humanity (1:28). Associating population growth with divine blessing is common (e.g., 9:1,7; 17:20;

28:3; 35:11; 48:4). The motif of being fruitful and multiplying plays an important role at the start of the book of Exodus (Exod 1:7); the large population of Israelites prompts a new pharaoh to oppress the Israelites (Exod 1:8-10).

47:28–30 As he nears death, Jacob's desire to be buried in Canaan recalls God's promises to Abraham and Isaac that their descendants will eventually possess the land of Canaan. Joseph later fulfills his commitment to Jacob (49:29–50:14).

47:29 put your hand under my thigh. A formal means of swearing an oath (see also 24:9 and note).

47:31 worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. Either Israel bowed down out of respect for Joseph, a motif that would be in keeping with Joseph's earlier dream (37:9-10), or Israel worshiped God in thankfulness for Joseph's response to his request to be buried in Canaan.

Manasseh and Ephraim

48 Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim^r along with him. ²When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.

³Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty^{*a*} appeared to me at Luz^s in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me^{t 4} and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers.^{*u*} I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'

⁵"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt^v before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine,^w just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. ⁷As I was returning from Paddan,^b to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).^x

⁸When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

⁹"They are the sons God has given me here,"^y Joseph said to his father.

Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless^z them."

¹⁰Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see.^a So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them^b and embraced them.

¹¹Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too."^c

¹²Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. ¹³And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand,^d and brought them close to him. ¹⁴But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.^e

¹⁵Then he blessed^f Joseph and said,

"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd^g all my life to this day,

^a 3 Hebrew El-Shaddai ^b 7 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

48:1–22 Manasseh and Ephraim. Nearing death, Jacob blesses all of his sons. He begins with Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, before proceeding to bless his own children (49:1–28). Although these deathbed blessings all occur at the same time, Joseph's sons are distinguished from everyone else. They are the only grandchildren Jacob blesses, and Jacob bestows on Ephraim, not Manasseh, the blessing of the firstborn. The unique lineage that runs throughout Genesis continues through Ephraim and his descendants. This line later includes Joshua (1 Chr 7:20,27), who leads the Israelites into the promised land. Only in the time of David does God reject the Ephraimite line due to its sinfuness and replace it with one linked to the tribe of Judah (see Ps 78:67–71).

48:3-7 Although Jacob's speech centers on Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob begins by recalling how God appeared to him at Luz (see 28:13–15 and note on 28:19). Jacob highlights the divine promises he received. Involving both numerous descendants and land, these promises are a common motif throughout Genesis (e.g., 12:7; 13:14–17; 15:5,18–21).

48:5 will be reckoned as mine. This unusual claim subsequently means that Ephraim and Manasseh are listed alongside Jacob's other sons as ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. This also means that Joseph, who is not usually listed as one of the 12 tribes, receives through his two sons twice as much territory in the land of Canaan as his brothers. (Because of their special connection with the tabernacle, the tribe of Levi does not receive territory like the other tribes.) This is in keeping with the idea that Jacob gives Joseph the status of firstborn in place of Reuben (1 Chr 5:1–2). Moreover, by reversing the order of the names, Ephraim coming before Manasseh (see the expected order in v. 1), Jacob appears to have already decided that he will bless the younger son, Ephraim, as firstborn in place of Manasseh, Ephraim's older brother (see vv. 13–19). As if to justify his special treatment of Joseph's sons, Jacob recalls how Rachel, Joseph's mother, died after their return to Canaan (35:16–20). **48:7 Paddan**. Short for Paddan Aram (see note on 25:20). **Ephrath.** Earlier name for Bethlehem; later, David is known as an Ephrathite (1 Sam 17:12).

48:8–10 Jacob, like his father Isaac (27:1), had poor eyesight in old age. **48:13–20** Manasseh was the older of the two brothers (41:51–52). However, Jacob deliberately crosses over his hands in order to give Ephraim the firstborn blessing. Previously, Jacob received the firstborn blessing in place of his older brother Esau (27:1–29). In spite of Joseph's objection, Jacob persists in giving Ephraim this blessing. As the story of Israel's descendants continues, the tribe of Ephraim enjoys particular prominence with Joshua, an Ephraimite (Num 13:8,16), leading the Israelites into the land of Canaan after their time of slavery in Egypt.

48:1 'Ge 41:52 48:3 °Ge 28:19 tGe 28:13; 35:9-12 48:4 "Ge 17:6 48:5 ° Ge 41:50-52: 46:20 w1Ch 5:1; Jos 14:4 48:7 × Ge 35:19 48:9 y Ge 33:5 z Ge 27:4 48:10 ª Ge 27:1 ^b Ge 27:27 48:11 ° Ge 50:23; Ps 128:6 48:13 d Ps 110:1 48:14 ° Ge 41:51 48:15 ^fGe 17·1 ^gGe 49:24

48:16 h Heb 11:21 Ge 28:13 48:17 ^j ver 14 48:19 KGe 17:20 Ge 25:23 48:20 "Nu 2:18 ⁿNu 2:20; Ru 4:11 48:21 ° Ge 26:3; 46:4 P Ge 28:13; 50:24 48:22 9 Jos 24:32: Jn 4:5 Ge 37:8 49:1 SNu 24:14; Jer 23:20 49:2 tPs 34:11 49:3 "Ge 29:32 vDt 21:17; Ps 78:51 49:4 w Isa 57:20 *Ge 35:22; Dt 27:20 49:5 y Ge 34:25; Pr 4:17 ¹⁶ the Angel who has delivered me from all harm
— may he bless these boys.^h
May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,ⁱ
and may they increase greatly
on the earth."

¹⁷When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head¹ he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

¹⁹But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great.^k Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he,¹ and his descendants will become a group of nations." ²⁰He blessed them that day and said,

"In your" name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim^m and Manasseh.""

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

²¹Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you^{bo} and take you^b back to the land of your^b fathers.^p ²²And to you I give one more ridge of land^{cq} than to your brothers,^r the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

Jacob Blesses His Sons

49:1-28Ref — Dt 33:1-29

9 Then Jacob called for his sons and said: "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.^s

² "Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel.^t

³ "Reuben, you are my firstborn,^u

my might, the first sign of my strength,^v

excelling in honor, excelling in power.

⁴ Turbulent as the waters,^w you will no longer excel,

for you went up onto your father's bed,

onto my couch and defiled it.x

⁵ "Simeon and Levi are brothers their swords^{*d*} are weapons of violence.^y

^{*a*} 20 The Hebrew is singular. ^{*b*} 21 The Hebrew is plural. ^{*c*} 22 The Hebrew for *ridge of land* is identical with the place name Shechem. ^{*d*} 5 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

48:21 – 22 Jacob expresses confidence that God will bring his descendants back to the land God promised to his fathers, Abraham and Isaac.
48:22 one more ridge of land. Jacob uses the Hebrew term šēkem (see NIV text note). Later, Joseph's bones are buried at Shechem (Josh 24:32), where Jacob lived for a period of time (33:19 — 34:31).

49:1 – 28 Jacob Blesses His Sons. After blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob blesses his 12 sons in order of their birth, apart from placing Zebulun before Issachar. These blessings are more than simply predictions of what will happen in the future. They assess each son's character based on what they have done in the past. These judgments in turn influence what will happen in the future. Consequently, Jacob anticipates that Judah and Joseph will be preeminent among his sons; their blessings are the longest and most positive. Due to the poetic nature of the blessings and the use of wordplays, Jacob's statements may in places be interpreted in different ways. However, it undoubtedly makes sense to understand these blessings in line with how the unified story that runs through the books of Genesis through Kings presents the history of each tribe.

49:1 in days to come. Jacob does more than merely predict the future. His blessings have the power to shape what will happen to his descendants. For this reason, Jacob himself was prepared to deceive his own father in order to get the blessing of the firstborn (27:1-29).

49:3–**4** As firstborn, Reuben ought to have enjoyed preeminence over his brothers. However, due to his inappropriate relationship with Bilhah (v. 4; see 35:22 and note), Jacob gave Reuben's status as firstborn to Joseph (1 Chr 5:1–2).

49:5–7 Jacob addresses Simeon and Levi together, reflecting their violent, joint action against the Shechemites after Shechem raped their sister Dinah (ch. 34). Denouncing their violent disposition, Jacob predicts that they will be scattered among the other tribes in order to dissipate their anger-fueled, warlike behavior (v. 7). After the Israelites settle in the land of Canaan, the Levites dwell mainly in 48 cities located throughout all of the tribal areas (Num 18:23–24; 35:1–8; Josh 21:1–45). God places the Simeonites within the territory of the more powerful tribe of Judah (Josh 19:1–9). This prevents the tribes of Simeon and Levi from jointly dominating others.

⁶ Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly,^z
for they have killed men in their anger^a and hamstrung oxen as they pleased.
⁷ Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel!
I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.^b

⁸ "Judah,^a your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.^c ⁹ You are a lion's^d cub, Judah;^e

you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah,^f

nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,^b until he to whom it belongs^c shall come

and the obedience of the nations shall be his.^g

¹¹He will tether his donkey to a vine,

- his colt to the choicest branch;
- he will wash his garments in wine,

his robes in the blood of grapes.

- ¹²His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.^d
- ¹³ "Zebulun^h will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon.

¹⁴ "Issacharⁱ is a rawboned^e donkey lying down among the sheep pens.^f

^{*a*} 8 Judah sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for praise. ^{*b*} 10 Or from bis descendants ^{*c*} 10 Or to whom tribute belongs; the meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain. ^{*d*} 12 Or will be dull from wine, / bis teeth white from milk ^{*e*} 14 Or strong ^{*f*} 14 Or the campfires; or the saddlebags

49:8–12 Jacob's positive blessing of Judah reflects the special standing that Judah enjoyed with Jacob's family after his transforming encounter with Tamar (ch. 38; see note on 38:25-26). Judah will receive the praise of his brothers (see NIV text note on v. 8) because his own personal qualities of leadership will permeate his future descendants. In the light of Joseph's associations with royalty, it is unexpected that Jacob links kingship to Judah's future descendants (see notes on vv. 8–10).

49:6 ²Pr 1:15; Eph 5:11 ^aGe 34:26 **49:7** ^b Jos 19:1,9; 21:1-42 **49:8** ^cDt 33:7; 1Ch 5:2 **49:9** ^dNu 24:9; Eze 19:5; Mic 5:8 ^aRev 5:5 **49:10** ^fNu 24:7; 19; PS 60:7 ^aPS 2:9; Isa 42:1,4 **49:13** ^bGe 30:20; Dt 33:18-19;

Jos 19:10-11 49:14 [|]Ge 30:18

possibility is "until Shiloh comes." The mention of Shiloh could foreshadow the time of Samuel when the Israelites take the ark of the covenant from Shiloh (1 Sam 4:3–4) and later when the newly enthroned David transports the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). These events associated with Shiloh mark the beginning of the process by which Israel's leadership moves from the tribe of Ephraim to the tribe of Judah (see Ps 78:59–72).

49:11 tether his donkey to a vine. This is the first of several lines that point forward to a time when the grape harvest will be exceptionally fruitful. This introduces the expectation that the reign of this king from the tribe of Judah will bring about the transformation of the natural environment, reversing the negative effects on creation that result from humanity's disobedience of God (cf. Ps 72:16; Amos 9:11–15).

49:13 Zebulun. Mentioning him before Issachar (v. 14–15) is unusual since Zebulun was born after Issachar (30:17–20). Jacob's blessing appears to anticipate a future time when Zebulun's territory will border the Mediterranean Sea. While the tribal district of Zebulun lay close to the sea, the border did not always extend to the coast.

49:14–15 Jacob likens the tribe of Issachar to a donkey that works hard because it is well-treated and enjoys good provisions.

^{49:8 – 10} your father's sons will bow down to you ... the obedience of the nations shall be his. Recalls how Isaac blessed Jacob (27:29).
49:9 lion. This imagery enhances the royal image. Elsewhere the NT designates Jesus Christ as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5), clearly alluding to this verse.

^{49:10} scepter ... ruler's staff. A further indication that Jacob anticipates a time when one of Judah's descendants will assume royal office and exercise universal authority. In later history, the Davidic dynasty comes from the tribe of Judah. Matthew's Gospel gives particular attention to how Jesus Christ becomes the heir to the Davidic throne (Matt 1:1-16; see Heb 7:14). until he to whom it belongs shall come. This translation is one of several suggestions (see NIV text note). Another

49:16 Ge 30:6; Dt 33:22; Jdg 18:26-27 49:17 k Jdg 18:27 49:18 Ps 119:166.174 49:19 m Ge 30:11: Dt 33:20; 1Ch 5:18 49:20 " Ge 30:13; Dt 33:24 49:21 °Ge 30:8; Dt 33:23 49:22 P Ge 30:24; Dt 33:13-17 49:23 9 Ge 37:24 49:24 'Ps 18:34 ^sPs 132:2,5; lsa 1:24; 41:10 tlsa 28:16 49:25 "Ge 28:13 Ge 27:28

¹⁵ When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.
 ¹⁶ "Dan^{<i>aj</i>} will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁷ Dan^k will be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward.
¹⁸ "I look for your deliverance, Lord."
¹⁹ "Gad ^{bm} will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.
²⁰ "Asher's ⁿ food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king.
²¹ "Naphtali ⁰ is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. ^{<i>c</i>}
 ²² "Joseph^p is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall.^d ²³ With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility.^q ²⁴ But his bow remained steady, his strong arms' stayed^e limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob,^s because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,^t ²⁵ because of your father's God,^u who helps you, because of the Almighty;^f who blesses you with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below,^v
 ²⁶ Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than^g the bounty of the age-old hills.
. 0

^a 16 Dan here means be provides justice. ^b 19 Gad sounds like the Hebrew for attack and also for band of raiders. ^c 21 Or free; / be utters beautiful words ^d 22 Or Joseph is a wild colt, / a wild colt near a spring, / a wild donkey on a terraced bill ^e 23,24 Or archers will attack ... will sboot ... will remain ... will stay ^f 25 Hebrew Sbaddai ^g 26 Or of my progenitors, / as great as

49:16 – 17 Jacob associates the tribe of Dan with justice, reflecting a wordplay on its name (see NIV text note on v. 16). While providing justice appears to be a positive attribute, describing Dan as a roadside "snake" (v. 17) suggests unexpected danger. Evidence of such behavior comes in the unprovoked assault that the tribe of Dan carried out in order to oust the residents of the city of Laish (Judg 18).

49:18 Jacob briefly petitions God, possibly due to the negative characteristics he has attributed to his descendants. Only through divine intervention can there be hope for the future.

49:19 Gad. Jacob's remarks concerning Gad's descendants involve wordplays on his name (see NIV text note). The tribal territory of Gad, in the region of Gilead to the east of the Jordan River, made them susceptible to attacks from raiders. Jacob anticipates that the Gadites will skillfully defend themselves.

49:20 By settling along the coastal plain of Akko (Josh 19:24–31), the tribe of Asher will prosper through both agriculture and maritime trade. **49:21 Naphtali.** Jacob's brief remarks about Naphtali suggest that the tribe will flourish. They later settle in the fertile region of Upper Galilee. **49:22–26** Jacob's blessing of Joseph contrasts sharply with those immediately preceding it. While similar in length to the blessing given to Judah (vv. 8–12), Joseph's blessing is marked by a series of references to God, all affirming how God has protected and blessed Joseph abundantly. The frequent mention of blessing underlines the privileged position that Joseph has among Jacob's sons. Jacob's remarks suggest that Joseph's descendants will enjoy blessings that go beyond what his ancestors Abraham and Isaac experienced.

49:26 the prince among his brothers. The Hebrew word translated "prince" is *nāzî*, a term associated with the concept of Nazirite (one

Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among^{*a*} his brothers.^w

²⁷ "Benjamin^x is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder."

²⁸All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.

The Death of Jacob

²⁹Then he gave them these instructions:⁹ "I am about to be gathered to my people.² Bury me with my fathers^a in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰the cave in the field of Machpelah,^b near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field^c as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. ³¹There Abraham^d and his wife Sarah^e were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah^f were buried, and there I buried Leah. ³²The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.^b"

³³When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.⁹

50 Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him.^{h 2}Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him,ⁱ ³taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.^j

⁴When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, ⁵'My father made me swear an oath^k and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself¹ in the land of Canaan."^m Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'"

⁶Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do."

⁷So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him — the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt — ⁸besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. ⁹Chariots and horsemen^{*c*} also went up with him. It was a very large company.

¹⁰When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly;ⁿ and there Joseph observed a seven-day period^o of mourning for his father. ¹¹When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "The Egyptians

^a 26 Or of the one separated from ^b 32 Or the descendants of Heth ^c 9 Or charioteers

set apart from others; see second NIV text note; see also Num 6:1–21). The use of *nāzîr* in conjunction with Joseph may shed light on Matthew's remark concerning Jesus being a Nazarene (Matt 2:23).

49:27 Benjamin. The tribe, like a "ravenous wolf," will be known for its aggressive power (1 Chr 8:1,40; 12:2).

49:28 Jacob intends his blessings to be appropriate to the nature of each son. He clearly associates the tribes descended from Judah and Joseph with leadership within the nation of Israel. This reflects not only how chs. 37–50 portray Joseph and Judah, but it also anticipates how the tribes of Judah and Ephraim later take responsibility for leading the nation of Israel. While leadership is initially linked to Ephraim, eventually the tribe of Judah, through the Davidic dynasty, takes on prime responsibility for kingship within Israel (see Ps 78:67–72).

49:29—**50:14** *The Death of Jacob.* With the death of Jacob, the book of Genesis moves toward a conclusion. Although Jacob dies in Egypt, he is confident that the future of his descendants lies in Canaan. For this reason, he requests that he be buried there.

49:29–32 cave in the field of Ephron ... bought from the Hittites. Abraham purchased this cave near Hebron (ch. 23), and both he and Isaac were buried there (v. 31; 25:8–10; 35:27–29). Jacob requests that he too be buried in the same tomb, having previously laid Leah to rest there (recorded only here in Genesis). Burying the patriarchs in Canaan underlines their claim to the land. Jacob's desire to be placed alongside his relatives reflects his belief that God will be true to his promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants.

49:33 gathered to his people. Often describes an individual's death (e.g., 25:8,17; 35:29; Num 27:13). It possibly indicates belief in an afterlife when family members will be reunited.

50:2 embalm. Perhaps to delay the process of decomposition. Since this was not the normal custom of the Israelites, Egyptian physicians undertake the task. Joseph probably employs physicians, rather than priests, because of his father's commitment to worship only the Lord God.

50:3 seventy days. Typical of Egyptian practices; Israelites usually mourned between seven and thirty days.

50:7 Joseph's high standing in Egypt explains why court officials and other dignitaries accompany him.

50:10 the threshing floor of Atad. Location unknown, although the text places it "near the Jordan."

50:11 Abel Mizraim. The location is aptly named (see NIV text note) due to the unusual sight of Egyptians holding a seven-day mourning ritual in Canaan.

49:26 "Dt 33:15-16 49:27 *Ge 35:18; Jdg 20:12-13 49:29 y Ge 50:16 2Ge 25:8 a Ge 15:15; 47:30; 50:13 49:30 ^b Ge 23:9 c Ge 23:20 49:31 d Ge 25:9 e Ge 23:19 f Ge 35:29 49:33 9 ver 29; Ge 25:8; Ac 7:15 50:1 h Ge 46:4 50:2 'ver 26: 2Ch 16:14 50:3 Ge 37:34; Nu 20:29; Dt 34:8 50:5 KGe 47:31 2Ch 16:14; Isa 22:16 ^mGe 47:31 50:10 "2Sa 1:17; Ac 8:2 01Sa 31.13. Job 2.13

50:13 PGe 23:20: Ac 7:16 50:15 °Ge 37:28; 42:21-22 50:18 'Ge 37:7 s Ge 43:18 50:19 tRo 12:19: Heb 10:30 50:20 "Ge 37:20 ^v Mic 4:11-12 ^w Ro 8:28 ×Ge 45:5 50:21 y Ge 45:11; 47:12 50:22 2 Ge 25:7; .los 24.29 50:23 a Job 42:16 ^bNu 32:39,40 50:24 ° Ge 48.21 d Ex 3:16-17 e Ge 15:14 fGe 12:7; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12 50:25 9 Ge 47:29-30: Ex 13:19; Jos 24:32; Heb 11:22 50:26 h ver 2

are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning." That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim. a

¹²So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: ¹³They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field^p as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"^q ¹⁶So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him.^r "We are your slaves,"^s they said. ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?^{t 20}You intended to harm me,^u

but God intended^v it for good^w to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.^{x 21}So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.^y" And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

 22 Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years² 23 and saw the third generation^a of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir^b son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees.^b

²⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die.^c But God will surely come to your aid^d and take you up out of this land to the land^e he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."^{f 25}And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."^g

²⁶So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him,^h he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

^a 11 Abel Mizraim means mourning of the Egyptians. ^b 23 That is, were counted as his

50:15–21 Joseph Reassures His Brothers. After the death of their father, Joseph's brothers are deeply concerned that Joseph will take revenge for their earlier mistreatment of him. Joseph swiftly reassures them that he has forgiven their treachery.

50:15 Joseph's brothers are still troubled by their past actions and fear that Joseph will repay them for what they did in selling him into slavery (37:23–36).

50:16–17 Their guilt prevents the brothers from addressing Joseph directly; instead, they send a message seeking forgiveness for their past actions. Their confession moves Joseph deeply.

50:18-21 Joseph's reaction opens the way for his brothers to come to him.

50:18 threw themselves down before him. For a fourth time (see 42:6; 43:26; 44:14), Joseph's brothers fulfill his dreams as a teenager (37:5–11) by bowing down before him. We are your slaves. Sharply contrasts with how they previously sold Joseph into slavery (37:23–28). 50:19–21 Appreciating how God has guided his circumstances, Joseph boldly affirms that what has happened has resulted in "the saving of many lives" (v. 20; see 45:5–8). Joseph's sensitivity to God's providential activity enables him graciously to forgive his brothers. Joseph's

experience demonstrates how God can overturn evil actions and through them bring salvation to people. The ultimate example of this is the crucifixion of Jesus (Act 2:22-24; 3:13-26).

50:22–26 The Death of Joseph. After the death and burial of Jacob, the narrative jumps forward about 60 years to the death of Joseph. While the report of Joseph's death is clearly important, preparing for the continuation of the story in the book of Exodus, the narrator lessens the sense of loss by looking optimistically to the future. Apart from mentioning the birth of great-grandchildren, Joseph anticipates with confidence that the Israelites will eventually leave Egypt to return to Canaan. This expectation rests in his belief that God will fulfill his promises to the patriarchs.

50:22-23 Joseph outlives his father Jacob by 60 years, surviving long enough to see his great-grandchildren.

50:24 – 26 Although Joseph does not ask to be buried at Machpelah, like his father Jacob, he does request that his descendants take his remains from Egypt to Canaan when God brings the Israelites back into the land he promised to the patriarchs. To facilitate this, Joseph's body is embalmed (see note on v. 2) and placed in a coffin. When the Israelites later leave Egypt, Moses ensures that they fulfill Joseph's wish (Exod 13:19). After the Israelites settle in Canaan, Joseph's remains are buried at Shechem (Josh 24:32; see Gen 48:21–22 and note on 48:22).

^{50:13} Abraham had bought. See ch. 23.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS AND REVELATION

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 REVELATION



THE LETTERS AND REVELATION

Douglas J. Moo

Letters occupy an important place in the NT. Of the 27 books of the NT, 21 are letters — 35 percent of the NT. By contrast, no OT book is in the form of a letter, though letters are preserved within those books.

There are many reasons that letters loom so large in the NT, but three deserve mention. First, letters were a very popular method of communication in the NT world (see The Letters: New Testament Letters in Their Ancient Context). Second, the early Christian movement was scattered across a wide area, and letters afforded a natural way for believers to keep in touch with each other. Apostles, who are responsible for at least 19 of the 21 NT letters, traveled widely and used letters as a means of "pastoring" churches from a distance. Third, and related to this second factor, the letter was considered a means of establishing one's personal presence at a distance. When the apostles were unable to assert their authority in person, they used letters as a "stand-in" for their presence (1 Cor 5:4; Col 2:5).

NT letter writers, as we would expect, focus on issues relevant to their audiences. Spread across the eastern Mediterranean world, from modern Turkey to Rome. Christians are thanked for sending gifts (Phil), warned about false teachers (2 Pet, Jude), encouraged in the midst of persecution (1 Pet), and rebuked for dallying with idol worship (1 Cor). Yet these first-century issues are addressed in light of God's revelation of his Son. They have been preserved in our Bibles as enduring witnesses to the truth of the gospel and to the way that truth is to form the lives of God's people.

Classifying the New Testament Letters

The 21 NT letters were written by six different early Christian leaders: 13

letters are attributed to the apostle Paul; two to the apostle Peter; one to James; and one to Jude, "a brother of James" (Jude 1). No specific name is associated with the four remaining letters. The author of Hebrews cannot be identified. The author of 2 and 3 John is identified as "the elder" (2 John 1; 3 John 1), and the similarities in style and content with 1 John make it likely that the same author is responsible for all three. As the titles in our Bibles suggest, John the son of Zebedee, one of the 12 apostles and the author of the fourth Gospel, is probably the writer of these three letters. (These titles indicate the way these letters were viewed in the early church, but the titles were not part of the original NT text.)

Hebrews and the General Letters

Paul wrote 13 of the NT letters. The remaining eight letters defy simple classification. Many Christians in the first centuries of the church thought that Paul wrote Hebrews, so it was included among the Pauline letters. The other seven letters (James, 1-2 Pet, 1-3 John, Jude) were then categorized as "catholic" (in the sense of "universal") or "general" letters because it was thought that they were written to the church as a whole (see Eusebius, Ecclesiastical *History*, 2:23-25). The titles given to these books reflect this way of looking at them: rather than being named according to their destinations or audiences, as in the case of all the Pauline letters and Hebrews, they are named according to their authors.

This traditional way of categorizing the letters does not stand up to scrutiny. Hebrews was almost certainly not written by Paul (see Introduction to Hebrews: Author). Nor is it likely that the remaining seven letters were written to the church "universal." To be sure, none of them is explicitly addressed to a single local church (or group of house churches). But they do have specific audiences in view. The letters of 2-3 John explicitly address, respectively, a local church (taking "the lady chosen by God" in this sense [2 John 1]) and a Christian leader (Gaius [3 John 1]). First Peter addresses Christians living in five Roman provinces in northern Asia Minor. Three of the letters, to be sure, have very general addressees. James writes to "the twelve tribes" (Jas 1:1), a reference to the people of God in the era of fulfillment; Peter writes in his second letter to "those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Pet 1:1); and Jude writes to "those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (Jude 1). But the content of these letters shows that the authors are dealing with specific problems that are probably confined to a particular church or group of churches. The same is true of 1 John (which lacks any addressee).

Paul's Letters

Paul, for his part, addresses nine of his letters to particular local churches, three to co-workers in ministry (1-2 Tim, Titus), and one primarily to a co-worker and secondarily to two other prominent believers and the church that met in his house (Phlm). Paul's letters have usually been divided into four main groups:

1. Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Galatians have been labeled the "chief letters" because of their length and theological content.

2. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are called the "prison letters" because Paul claims to be "in chains" in each of them.



Crypt of Santa Maria in via Lata in Rome. This area was built in the first century, but radically restructured in the third century. It is a possible location for Paul's house arrest. © Lorenzo Pio Massimo Martino

3. 1-2 Timothy and Titus are called the "pastoral letters" because of their common themes and the fact that they are addressed to Paul's co-workers.

4. 1-2 Thessalonians comprise the fourth group.

This traditional scheme corresponds generally to the historical circumstances in which the letters were written - with two exceptions. First, while Galatians shares many themes with Romans, it may not come from the same period of time as the other three "chief letters." Second, Philippians stands apart from the other prison letters. The common themes and specific historical references common to Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon are absent from Philippians. Whether Paul wrote Philippians at a different time during the same imprisonment as the others or during an entirely different imprisonment is not clear.

New Testament Letters in Their Ancient Context

Though letters were used as a means of communication for centuries (e.g., 2 Sam 11:14–15; Ezra 4–5), in the Greco-Roman world letters became an established and popular method of communication. The NT, as we have

seen, reflects this situation. In addition to the 21 canonical letters, the NT refers to at least nine other letters written by and to believers (Acts 15:23; 18:27; 1 Cor 5:9; 7:1; 16:3; 2 Cor 2:3–4; Col 4:16 [two different letters are mentioned]; 2 Thess 2:2; note also the seven letters to the churches in Rev 2–3).

Introduction and Conclusion

NT letters follow the general pattern of the Greco-Roman letter, although

a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" [Jas 1:1]) and of the recipients (e.g., "To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ" [Col 1:2]). In Romans, Paul spends six verses introducing himself. On the other hand, some NT letters (Hebrews, 1 John) have no letter opening at all.

In place of the usual "greeting" found in Greco-Roman letters, NT letters often include a "grace wish" (it is found in all the Pauline letters, 1-2 Pet, and 2 John). The NT letter writers may be indulging in a bit of wordplay: Greek "greetings" is chairein, whereas Greek "grace" is charis. Ancient letters also often opened with a "health wish" (see 3 John 2); perhaps the NT penchant for putting a thanksgiving (all the Pauline letters except 2 Cor, Gal, 1 Tim, and Titus) or blessing (2 Cor, Eph, 1 Pet) at the beginning of letters reflects this practice.

The concluding elements in the ancient letter varied considerably, although they typically included a request to greet other people. NT letter closings often include such requests for greetings and in addition, often mention travel plans, the movements and work of other ministry workers,

What is true concerning Paul's teaching about the law in Galatians is true for many, if not most, of the issues discussed in the NT letters.

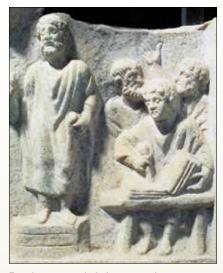
there are differences. The typical Greco-Roman letter was composed of an address and greeting, a body, and a conclusion.

The address and greeting were usually very short, typically taking the form "A to B, greetings." NT letters tend to expand this formula, adding characterizations of the sender (e.g., "James, requests for prayer, and benedictions and doxologies.

Body

The formal introduction and conclusion framed the letter body. Naturally, the letter body differed considerably in length and substance, depending on the purpose and audience of the letter. Some ancient letters were very brief personal notes requesting information or asking someone to perform a specific task. None of the NT letters is this kind of private note. Even the letters written to individuals (1-2 Tim,Titus, 3 John) deal with practical and theological issues affecting other Christians. At the other end of the spectrum, some ancient letters were written for a very general audience and intended for wide distribution (somewhat comparable to our "letter to the editor"). Especially relevant for the NT are letters sent by philosophers to communicate their teachings to a wider audience. Some NT letters tend toward this type (Rom, Eph, 1 John). Yet even these more generally focused letters are written for specific audiences.

While using the popular letter form of their time, the writers adopt the form for their own uses. For instance, many of the NT letters stand out from their contemporary secular models in length. Private letters in the ancient world averaged 87 words in length. Public letters were longer. Two of the most prolific letter writers in the ancient world



Fourth-century relief of an orator dictating to a scribe. An amanuensis was often used to produce letters in NT times, including those written by Paul (Rom 16:22).

Relief depicting orator dictating to scribe, from Temple of Hercules at Ostia Antica/De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images

were the Romans Cicero and Seneca. The former's letters average 295 words; Seneca's, 995. By contrast, the shortest NT letter (2 John) is 219 words, the longest (Romans) is 7,111 words, and they average 2,141 words.

Writing, Sending, and Receiving New Testament Letters

Communicating by letter writing in the ancient world was a cooperative enterprise. The first-person singular verbs scattered through all the NT letters make clear that one particular individual is largely responsible for each of them. However, Paul frequently includes co-workers when he introduces the writers of his letters: Timothy in Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon; Timothy and Silas in 1-2 Thessalonians: and "all the brothers and sisters with me" in Galatians (1:2). Paul usually mentioned these co-workers because they were with him as he wrote and had significant contact with the believers being addressed. Mentioning other believers (as in the broader group in Gal) may also strengthen Paul's appeal in the letter by remind-

ing the recipients that he was speaking for a wider group of believers.

Producing letters was also a cooperative venture. The parchment on which the words of letters were physically recorded was expensive, and most ancient letter writers dictated their letters to a scribe, or "amanuensis," who was skilled at fitting a lot of words into a very small space. We have one definite reference to such an amanuensis in the NT: "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord" (Rom 16:22). Tertius recorded the words of Romans as Paul dictated them to him (many interpreters think that

1 Pet 5:12 may also single out Silas as the amanuensis of that letter). The actual "author" of the letter would sometimes add a final, authenticating greeting in his own hand (Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19). Most of the NT letters were probably produced in this way. Authors who knew and trusted their amanuenses would often entrust that amanuensis with the precise wording of a letter. This may explain some of the variety in style among NT letters with the same author (Paul and Peter). We can assume that NT authors took ownership of their letters by checking them over to make sure that the amanuensis had accurately communicated the author's intentions.

If the writing of a letter was a collective enterprise, so was its delivery. Mail service was basically nonexistent in the ancient world. The only way to get a letter to its destination was to entrust it to a friend or associate who was traveling to the destination of the letter. While never mentioned explicitly in the NT, letter carriers can be identified by language such as we find in Eph 6:21: "Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing." Col 4:7 is similar; see also Phoebe in Rom 16:1-2, Epaphroditus in Phil 2:25-30, and Silas in 1 Pet 5:12 (if he is not the amanuensis; see preceding paragraph). These letter carriers probably also played a significant role in the dissemination of the letter once it reached its destination. They would often be the ones to read the letter to the assembled congregation, adding information and perhaps clarification along the way (see Eph 6:21, quoted above, and also Col 4:7-9).

The Authenticity of New Testament Letters

Many books in the ancient world were written by an anonymous person in the name of a more famous person. A Jewish apocalyptic work from the first century AD, for instance, is attributed to the ancient Israelite scribe Ezra. Many modern scholars identify this phenomenon, called "pseudepigraphy," in the NT letters. It is typical, for instance, to claim that the apostle Paul himself actually wrote only seven of the thirteen letters attributed to him (Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, and Phlm) and that Paul's followers wrote the other six letters in his name. Similar doubt is cast on the authorship of James and 1-2 Peter. According to one form of this theory, the authors who wrote in the names of the apostles were not being deceptive but simply using a standard literary device of the time to communicate Christian truth. However, while pseudepigraphy in general was widespread in the ancient world, the writing of letters in someone else's name did not often take place. And when it did, the practice was frowned upon. The church fathers are very clear on this point: they viewed writing a letter in someone else's name as inherently deceptive, and they roundly rejected any letter suspected of being pseudepigraphical. In light of this attitude, we should take the claims about authorship of NT letters at face value.

Interpreting New Testament Letters

Occasion

NT letters are "occasional," i.e., they are written to a particular first-century

SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

	LETTER	AUTHOR	RECIPIENTS	PLACE OF WRITING	DATE
	James	James, brother of the Lord	Jewish believers living outside of Israel	Jerusalem	AD 45-48 (or 60s)
First Missionary Journey of Paul	Galatians	Paul	Believers in the Roman province of Galatia or believers in the ethnic region of Galatia	Antioch or Ephesus (?)	48 (or 51–52 or 54–55)
Second	1 Thessalonians	Paul	Believers in Thessalonica	Corinth	50-51
Missionary Journey of Paul	2 Thessalonians	Paul	Believers in Thessalonica	Corinth	50-51
Third Missionary	1 Corinthians	Paul	Believers in Corinth	Ephesus	54
Journey of Paul	2 Corinthians	Paul	Believers in Corinth	Macedonia	55-56
	Romans	Paul	Believers in Rome	Corinth	57
	Ephesians	Paul	Believers in Ephesus (and in nearby cities)	Rome	60-61
	Colossians	Paul	Believers in Colossae	Rome	60-61
	Philemon	Paul	Philemon, a ministry co-worker in Colossae, and the church that met in his home	Rome	60-62
	Philippians	Paul	Believers in Philippi	Rome (or Ephesus?)	60-62 (or 54-55)
	1 Timothy	Paul	Timothy, a ministry associate working in Ephesus	Macedonia (?)	ca. 60–63
	Titus	Paul	Titus, a ministry associate working in Crete	Unknown	62-63
	2 Timothy	Paul	Timothy, a ministry associate	Rome	64-65 (or 67)
	Hebrews	Unknown	Believers in Rome (?)	Unknown	60s
	1 Peter	The apostle Peter	Believers in northern Asia Minor	Rome (?)	ca. 60–63
	2 Peter	The apostle Peter	Believers in northern Asia Minor	Unknown	63-65
	Jude	Jude, a brother of James	Unknown	Unknown	Late 50s to late 60s
	1 John	The apostle John	Believers in Ephesus and surrounding regions (?)	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s
	2 John	The apostle John	A church in the region of Ephesus	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s
	3 John	The apostle John	Gaius, a ministry co-worker	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s

audience and therefore naturally deal with issues relevant to that audience. Because the NT letter writers are engaged in helping their recipients understand the significance of Christ's coming and putting into practice the implications of his lordship, the issues the NT deals with are often the same issues Christians face today. But even when those issues are the same, faithfully interpreting the NT letters demands that we take into account the occasional nature of those letters.

Paul's teaching on the significance of the law of Moses in Galatians provides a good example. His teaching on this issue is clearly of enduring relevance, and what he says on this matter must figure importantly in our attempt to understand the place of the law of Moses in the history of salvation and in the life of the church. But we must also recognize that Paul writes to the Galatians about the law of Moses with a particular purpose: to convince them not to follow false teachers who have taken a wrong view about the law. Because Paul is refuting a particular viewpoint, his teaching is inevitably slanted to one side of the issue.

What is true concerning Paul's teaching about the law in Galatians is true for many, if not most, of the issues discussed in the NT letters. Many of these letters were written directly to counter some kind of false teaching, and what the NT letter writers say is tailored to that situation. To read and interpret these letters rightly, then, requires that we understand the situations in which they were written; this information is provided in this study Bible's separate book introductions. At the same time, we must always compare Scripture with Scripture before drawing broad conclusions about what the NT or the Bible says about any particular topic.

Social and Cultural Context

The occasional nature of the NT letters provides another interpretive challenge: recognizing how the firstcentury social and cultural context might affect our reading. Both the writers and readers of the NT letters often simply assumed this context, but it is sometimes utterly foreign to modern readers. For example, just what were the women in Corinth doing that upset Paul (1 Cor 11:2-16)? Were they refusing to wear a veil over their heads? Were they refusing to put their hair up on their heads? And in either case, why would Paul have a problem with it? Only by understanding the culture of

that day can we hope to accurately understand what Paul is teaching in this passage. Faithfully reading the NT letters will often, then, require the believer to learn something about the first-century world — an inquiry that the notes on particular passages in this study Bible should assist with.

General Principles

Whatever the particular issue a NT letter deals with, the way in which the author responds to it has much to teach us. We learn not only from the specific instructions the letter writers give but also from the general principles they constantly bring to bear on each issue they confront. Again and again the NT letter writers remind us of the all-encompassing importance of the lordship of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer's every thought and action must be subjected to Christ, who as Lord wants to reign over every facet of the believer's life. And it is the Holy Spirit who both empowers and guides this radically Christcentered new life. When the NT letter writers call on believers to think and act in accord with the person of Christ, they expect believers to respond because God has sent his Spirit into the hearts of his people, producing

from within the attitudes and perspectives that will enable them to obey. As "occasional" letters, we must read each NT letter against the background of its particular setting, asking: when was it written? for whom? why? in what circumstances? But at the same time, God himself speaks to us in and through these occasional letters. As canonical Scripture, these letters ultimately address the church of every age and of every place.



Statue of woman wearing a chiton and himation, first century AD. It is important to understand the cultural context of Paul's comments on covering the head in worship (1 Cor 11).

Kim Walton, taken at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens



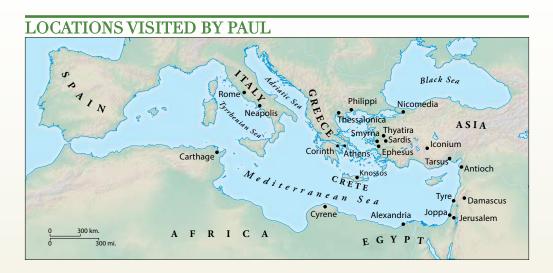
$\underset{ROMANS}{^{\mathrm{INTRODUCTION}\, \mathrm{to}}}$

AUTHOR

The letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul (1:1). No co-author is mentioned, although Tertius was the man who served as Paul's scribe, or amanuensis, writing down Paul's words as he dictated them (16:22).

OCCASION, DATE, AND PLACE OF WRITING

Paul gives us considerable information about his situation in 15:14-33. He suggests that he has reached an important turning point in his ministry. He speaks of having "fully proclaimed" the gospel "from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum" (15:19) — the territory where he planted vibrant churches during his first three missionary journeys. The next focus of his missionary effort is all the way at the other end of the Mediterranean basin: Spain (15:24). Before going to Spain, however, he has two important stops to make. His immediate plans are to travel to Jerusalem in order to deliver to the Jewish Christians there some money from many of the Gentile churches he planted (15:25-27). After Jerusalem, Paul hopes to pass through Rome to visit this important center of Christianity and to enlist their support for his new missionary venture (15:23-24). When we add to this information to Paul's reference to a woman from Cenchreae (16:1), a city very close to Corinth, the setting of Romans becomes pretty certain: he was writing from Corinth during his three-month stay there toward the end of his third missionary journey



(Acts 20:3-4). The date of this stay was probably AD 57. Romans, then, was the third letter Paul wrote on this missionary journey (after 1 Cor in perhaps AD 54 and 2 Cor in AD 55-56).

RECIPIENTS

Paul writes to all the believers in the city of Rome (1:7). The NT tells us nothing about how Christianity first came to Rome, but a plausible scenario is that Jewish believers who were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10 says that "visitors from Rome" were there) brought their new faith back to their home city. The early Christian given the name Ambrosiaster (late fourth century), then, was probably right in claiming in his commentary on Paul's letters that the Romans "embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles."

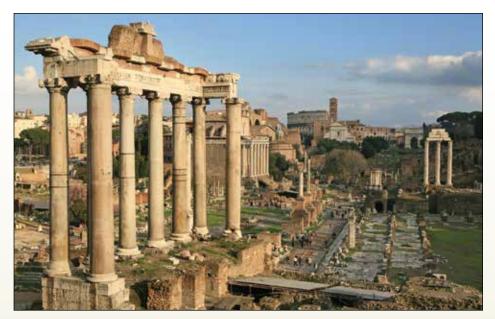
Several passages in Romans suggest, however, that most of the Roman Christians were Gentiles when Paul wrote (1:6-7,13; 15:15-16). Some Gentiles were probably attracted to the faith from the beginning, having heard about the message of Jesus as "God-fearers" (Gentiles who attended the synagogue without converting to Judaism). The Gentile element in the Roman church received a significant boost in AD 49 when Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome (see Acts 18:2). Jewish Christians would have been included in this eviction order, so the Christian movement would have become almost entirely Gentile overnight. By the time Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome, however, Jews had been allowed back into the city. Thus, Paul's audience included Jewish Christians such as Priscilla and Aquila (16:3-5; cf. Acts 18:2).

PURPOSE

Paul has several purposes in writing to the Romans.

1. Paul hopes to enlist the support of the Roman Christians for his new ministry in Spain (15:24). Spain is a long way from his original "sending" church in Antioch, and he needs a ministry base closer to Spain to provide monetary and logistical support. Paul writes Romans, then, partly to introduce himself to a church that he did not found and has never visited (1:13; 15:22).

2. While Romans is justly famous for its deep theology, Paul is also concerned, as he is in all his letters, to address the situation of his readers. Of course, we must avoid the mistake of thinking that very deep theology might not be of very fundamental practical importance! But 14:1—15:13 reveals that Paul does have an eye on a particular issue in Rome. The believers are divided into two factions, which Paul labels the "weak" in faith and the "strong" in faith



The Forum: the economic, social, religious, and cultural center of ancient Rome. © ROMAOSLO/www.istock.com

(15:1). These factions were quarreling over whether Christians must continue to observe certain Jewish practices derived from the law of Moses. Paul hopes to heal this unfortunate division.

3. The conflict between the "weak" and "strong" in Rome was a microcosm of the major theological issue in Paul's day. As the Christian movement became increasingly Gentile over the decades, the relationship between Christianity and its OT and Jewish roots became more and more controversial. Some, mainly Jewish Christians, were arguing for a great deal of continuity: Christians were a Jewish Messianic sect that should continue to observe the law of Moses (this was the view of the "agitators" whom Paul combats in Galatia [Gal 5:12]). Others, mainly Gentile Christians, wondered why they should have anything to do with the OT or the law at all. As Paul writes to the Romans about the division there between these two general positions, he develops a theology of universal significance that seeks a middle position between these views.

MAJOR THEMES

Romans is one of the most important theological documents of all time. Its influence on the course of Christian history and the development of Christian theology is inestimable. It offers several themes:

- fundamental insights into the nature of the human predicament (1:18-3:20);
- God's response to that predicament in the new standing with God offered to all humans through the work of Christ, the utterly gracious character of God's provision, and the consequent requirement of faith as the only way to experience that provision (3:21—4:25);
- security for this life and the future day of judgment that Christians enjoy (5:1-8:39);
- the mysterious and wonderful plan of God to include both Jews and Gentiles in his people (9:1-11:36); and
- the transformed thinking and living that God expects of his redeemed people (12:1-15:13).

Perhaps the single overarching theme of Romans is the gospel, which the letter prominently mentions in both its opening and closing (1:1,2,9,15; 15:16,19) and which is the lead term in Paul's statement of the letter's theme (1:16). The gospel, or Good News, is that God has intervened in our history in order to reestablish his lordship over a created world that has rebelled against him. Paul especially emphasizes that God has offered the opportunity to all human beings, through simple faith in Christ, to be placed in a right standing before God.

Because the division between Jew and Gentile is so important an issue in both Rome and in the broader Christian world, Paul focuses often on the way the gospel includes both groups. On the one hand, the gospel provides for the fulfillment of all God's OT promises to Israel (1:2; 9:1—11:36). On the other hand, the gospel opens the door to Gentiles so that they can become equal participants with faithful Jews in God's new covenant people.

OUTLINE

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ROMANS

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle^a and set apart^b for the gospel of God^c — ²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures^d ³regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life^{*a*e} was a descendant of David, ⁴and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power^{*b*} by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles^{*f*} to the obedience that comes from *c* faith^{*g*} for his name's sake. ⁶And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.^h

1:1 ^a1C0 1:1 ^bAC 9:15 ^c2C0 11:7 1:2 ^dGal 3:8 1:3 ^eJn 1:14 1:5 ^fAC 9:15 ^eAC 6:7 1:6 ^bRev 17:14 1:7 ⁱR0 8:39 ^j1C0 1:3

⁷To all in Rome who are loved by Godⁱ and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.^j

^a 3 Or who according to the flesh ^b 4 Or was declared with power to be the Son of God ^c 5 Or that is

1:1–17 The Letter Opening. The first section (1:1-17) and last section of Romans (15:14 - 16:27) provide the literary framework for the letter. The opening includes a salutation (vv. 1–7), a thanksgiving (vv. 8–15), and a statement of the letter's theme (vv. 16–17).

1:1-7 Prescript. Ancient letters typically began by briefly identifying the sender and recipients, followed by a greeting (see Acts 15:23: "The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings"). Paul elaborates on this simple formula in all his letters but nowhere more so than in Romans—perhaps because he is writing to a church that he has never visited.

1:1 servant. Could also be translated "slave." It stresses that Paul owes allegiance to Christ as his Lord, and it also alludes to the OT "servant of the LORD," a description of important leaders of Israel: Moses (Deut 34:5; Josh 14:7; 2 Kgs 18:12), Joshua (Josh 24:29), Elijah (2 Kgs 10:10) and, especially often, David (e.g., Ps 18 title; see 2 Sam 7:8). set apart. Either from the womb of his mother (Gal 1:15; cf. Jer 1:5) or at the time God called him to be an apostle (1 Cor 1:1). gospel. "Good News," a key theme in Romans. The language is prominent in the letter's opening (here; vv. 9,15,16) and closing (15:16,19,20; 16:25; see 2:16; 10:15; 11:28). The OT uses "good news" to depict God's intervention on behalf of his people in the last days (Isa 40:9; 52:7 [cited in Rom 10:15]; 61:1; Nah 1:15). But it was also used in Paul's day to refer to the benefits the Roman emperors won for their subjects. Paul's apostolic ministry involves proclaiming that Jesus fulfills OT prophecies of restoration and that Jesus, not the Roman emperor, is the source of our hope and the one who claims our ultimate allegiance.

1:2 through his prophets. An important focus of Romans is the connection between the OT (especially its promises) and the gospel of Christ (3:21; 9:4–6; 11:28; 15:8–12). This verse and 16:26—"made known through the prophetic writings"—bracket the letter as a whole. **1:3 regarding his Son.** The Good News is a person: God's Son. **as to his earthly life.** Could also be translated "according to the flesh." Paul uses "flesh" (Greek *sarx*) to denote the state of being human, emphasizing

the weakness and susceptibility to sin that typifies what it means to be human after the fall. The word sometimes has the sense of human existence apart from or even in contrast to God (e.g., 8:4–13), but at other times, as here, it refers simply to being human. **descendant of David**. Alludes to Jesus' fulfilling the OT expectation of a "son of David," a king or Messiah, who would liberate and rule God's people (e.g., 2 Sam 7:13–16; Ps 2).

1:4 appointed the Son of God in power. Jesus is eternally God's Son, but his resurrection from the dead enabled him to enter a new phase of existence in which his work on the cross empowers him to save all who believe (see v. 16).

1:5 call all the Gentiles. While committed to preach the gospel to all kinds of people, Paul was called to preach especially to the Gentiles (11:13–14; cf. Gal 2:7). obedience that comes from faith. This phrase, also used in 16:26, is another phrase that brackets the argument of Romans (see note on v. 2). Paul may mean that faith is the form that obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience takes in the results asys that not all the Israelites "accepted" [translating the same Greek word for "obeyed"] the gospel). But he probably means that faith in Christ naturally leads to a life of dedicated faithfulness to Christ, of obedience to Christ. For Paul, "faith" and "obedience," while always to be distinguished, are inseparable, two sides of the same coin. One cannot have faith in Christ Jesus without acknowledging him as Lord, with all the consequences that follow from that basic commitment.

1:6 called. That is, not "invited," but actually brought into relationship with God by his own sovereign act (what is labeled in theology "the effectual call"; see 8:28).

1:7 his holy people. Greek hagioi, meaning "holy ones" or "saints." holy. The OT uses this term to describe the Israelites, who were "set apart" to be God's own people (e.g., Lev 20:24,26). The NT often uses this word and related words to denote, not people who are particularly holy in their lifestyle (this is why "saints" can be a misleading English translation), but 1:8 *1Co 1:4 'Ro 16:19 1:9 "2Ti 1:3 "Php 1:8 1:10 "Ro 15:32 1:11 "Po 15:33 1:13 "Ro 15:22,23 1:14 '1Co 9:16 1:15 "Ro 15:20 1:16 '2Ti 1:8 "Lo 1:18 "Ac 3:26 "Ro 2:9,10 1:17 *Ro 3:21 'Hab 2:4; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38 1:18 'Eph 5:6; Col 3:6

Paul's Longing to Visit Rome

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you,^k because your faith is being reported all over the world.¹⁹God, whom I serve^m in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witnessⁿ how constantly I remember you ¹⁰in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.^o

¹¹I long to see you^p so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—¹²that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,^{*a*} that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now)^q in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴I am obligated' both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.^s

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel,^t because it is the power of God^u that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew,^v then to the Gentile.^{w 17}For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed^x — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,^b just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."^{cy}

God's Wrath Against Sinful Humanity

¹⁸The wrath of God² is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to

a 13 The Greek word for *brothers and sisters (adelphoi)* refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 7:1, 4; 8:12, 29; 10:1; 11:25; 12:1; 15:14, 30; 16:14, 17. *b 17* Or *is from faith to faith c faith c 17* Hab. 2:4

all those people whom God has called to belong to him (v. 6). Status, not behavior, is in view (see "Holiness," p. 2676).

1:8–17 *Paul's Longing to Visit Rome.* As he usually does in his letters, Paul gives thanks for his readers (vv. 8-15) before announcing the theme of the letter (vv. 16-17).

1:8 thank. Paul's letters usually feature a thanksgiving in the opening section. all over the world. That is, across the Roman Empire of Paul's day.

1:11 spiritual gift. Either a particular one that Paul hopes to bestow on the Roman believers (12:6–8) or a spiritual benefit that Paul's ministry in Rome will convey.

1:12 mutually. Writing to a church that he did not establish and has never visited, Paul is appropriately humble.

1:13 prevented. Probably by pressing ministry needs in the eastern Mediterranean, where Paul has been preaching the gospel for over a decade (see 15:19).

1:14 Greeks. The cultured people in Paul's world who often spoke Greek and followed Greek ways of life. **non-Greeks**. Barbarians (Greek *barbaros*).

1:16 salvation. Not only conversion but also ultimate deliverance from sin, death, and judgment (5:9-10; 13:11). **everyone who believes.** Salvation is offered to all people on the same grounds. An important theme in Romans is including Gentiles as equal participants with Jews in God's new covenant (3:23-24,29-30; 4:9-12,16-17; 9:24-26,30-31; 10:4,11-13; 15:8-12). **first to the Jew.** Paul insists that Jews still have a prominent place in God's plan of salvation. God directed his word to them first (3:2) and made irrevocable promises to them (9:4-5; 11:28).

1:17 righteousness of God. A key concept in Romans (3:5,21,22,25,26; 10:3 [twice]; cf. Matt 6:33; 2 Cor 5:21; Jas 1:20). Paul takes this language from the OT, where "righteousness of God" denotes God doing what is right or acting to put things right (e.g., 1 Sam 12:7; Pss 7:9; 145:17; Jer 9:24; 11:20; Mic 6:5; see note on Rom 3:21). In dependence on some key prophetic texts (see especially Isa 46:13; 51:5-8), Paul uses the phrase in the latter sense here. In the OT God promised that he would put right, or vindicate, his people Israel (Deut 32:35,43; Pss 79:10; 135:14; Jer 51:36); now, Paul announces, anyone who believes (v. 16) can experience God's vindication. This vindication is a forensic, or judicial, act that confers on believers the status of "righteousness." While God acts in the gospel of Christ to put people in the right, they experience the benefits of God's activity only when they respond in faith. **by faith from first to last.** Another (less likely) translation would be "from the faith (or faithfulness) of Christ to the faith of believers" (see note on 3:22). **The righteous will live by faith.** Or "the one who is *righteous by faith* will live." See Hab 2:4. Paul develops the idea of being "righteous by faith" in 3:21—4:25 and the idea of "life" in chs. 5-8.

1:18—4:25 The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith. The gospel proclaims that human beings, while locked up under sin, can enter into a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

1:18—**3:20** The Universal Reign of Sin. Before elaborating on "the righteousness of God ... given through faith" (3:21–22) in 3:21–4:25, Paul explains why God has taken the extraordinary step of sending his own Son in human form (1:3) to bring good news to the world (1:2,16): human beings are locked up under sin (3:9). Both Gentiles (1:18–32) and Jews (2:1–3:8) have failed to respond to God's gracious revelation and thus are subject to God's wrath.

1:18–32 God's Wrath Against Sinful Humanity. Paul paints a dismal picture of the situation of all human beings (particularly Gentiles) who refuse to worship the true God in order to worship gods of their own making. God reacts (note the threefold "God gave them over" in vv. 24,26,28) by consigning people to the sins they have chosen — an expression of his wrath (v. 18).

1:18 wrath. The inevitable reaction of a holy God against sin in any form. The OT describes outbreaks of God's wrath within history (e.g., Exod 32:10–12; Num 11:1; Jer 21:3–7) and predicts a final outpouring of wrath at the end of history (e.g., Isa 63:1–6; Mic 5:10–15). **is being revealed.** The ultimate manifestation of God's wrath often features in Paul's teaching (2:5), but this refers to the present condition of human beings, who turn away from God's revelation: they stand condemned because of their "godlessness and wickedness."

1:19–23 God has provided in the world he created evidence of his "eternal power and divine nature" (v. 20). This "natural revelation" is available them, because God has made it plain to them.^{a 20}For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made,^b so that people are without excuse.

²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.^c ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools^d ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images^e made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over^f in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.⁹ ²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie,^h and worshiped and served created thingsⁱ rather than the Creator — who is forever praised.^j Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over^k to shameful lusts.¹ Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.^{m 27}In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.ⁿ

²⁸Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over^o to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,^p ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;^q ³¹they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, ^r no mercy. ³²Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death,^s they not only continue to do these very things but also approve^t of those who practice them.

God's Righteous Judgment

2 You, therefore, have no excuse,^u you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.^{v 2}Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³So

to all human beings, but because of sin, people turn away from this evidence of God's existence. Like the people of Israel when they fashioned the golden calf to worship (Exod 32; cf. Jer 2:11), human beings have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and rettiles" (v. 23). The threefold division of animals alludes to the creation account (Gen 1:28). In the OT idols sometimes took the form of animals, but an idol is anything that a human puts in place of God, and idols take an infinite variety of forms. **1:24,26,28 God gave them over**. In response to humans' deciding to put idols in the place of the only God, God hands people over to the consequences of their sin. Following the OT and the pattern of Jewish condemnations of the Gentile world (in the Apocrypha see The Wisdom of Solormon 13–15), Paul singles out sexual sins as particularly clear evidence of this turning away from God.

1:25 worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. Succinctly describes the fundamental human sin of idolatry.

1:26 Paul again follows OT and Jewish tradition in singling out homosexual relations as an especially clear indication of human sinfulness (see especially Gen 19:1–28; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 23:17–18; in the Apocrypha, see The Wisdom of Solomon 14:24–31; in the OT pseudepigrapha, see Sibylline Oracles 3.594–600). **unnatural ones.** Could also be translated "those that are against nature," where "nature" refers to the created world as God intends it to be (see also "abandoned natural relations" in v. 27). In making humans beings male and female (Gen 1:27; 5:2; cf. Gen 2:24), God manifests his intention for human sexual relations. **1:27 due penalty for their error.** When human beings turn from God's intention for them, they appropriately become subject to God's judgment. This judgment can take many different forms, but the ultimate consequence of all sin is "death" (v. 32) or the "wrath of God" (v. 18).

1:28 think it worthwhile ... depraved. Paul uses a play on words to emphasize the equivalence between human sin and God's response:

1:19 ªAc 14:17 1:20 b Ps 19:1-6 1:21 ° Jer 2:5; Eph 4:17.18 1:22 d 1Co 1:20.27 1:23 °Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11; Ac 17:29 1:24 fEph 4:19 91Pe 4:3 1:25 h Isa 44:20 Jer 10:14 Ro 9:5 1:26 k ver 24, 28 11Th 4:5 m Lev 18:22,23 1:27 "Lev 18:22; 20:13 1:28 ° ver 24.26 1:29 P2Co 12:20 1:30 92Ti 3.2 1:31 '2Ti 3:3 1:32 SR0 6:23 PS 50:18; Lk 11:48; Ac 8:1; 22:20 2:1 "Ro 1:20 2Sa 12:5-7; Mt 7:1,2

people chose not to "approve" of God, so he condemned them to an "unapproved" mind — that is, a "worthless" way of thinking that does not conform to God's own purposes and values. The many forms of human sin, which Paul illustrates in vv. 28b–31, are rooted in sinful minds. Fundamental to the new life, therefore, is renewing those very minds (12:2). **1:32 they know God's righteous decree.** In addition to knowing that God exists and that he is the powerful Creator (v. 20), people also have an inbuilt moral sense that tells them that certain acts deserve God's judgment. **approve.** Approving of sins to which one is not especially prone is in some ways worse than committing the sin itself. Paul may again be reflecting OT ideas and popular Jewish teaching; cf. in the OT pseudepigrapha, Testament of Asher 6:2: "The two-faced are doubly punished because they both practice evil and approve of others who practice it; they imitate the spirits of error and join in the struggle against mankind."

2:1—3:8 Jews Are Accountable to God for Sin. Having indicted Gentiles for sinfully rejecting God's revelation, Paul shows that Jews have also turned from the even clearer revelation that God gave them.

2:1-16 God's Righteous Judgment. Jews, who typically stand in judgment over Gentiles, are in reality doing "the same things" (vv. 1,3) and are therefore also subject to God's wrath. It is this "doing," or "works," that will be the criterion of judgment for both Jew and Gentile.

2:1 You. Singular in Greek. Paul uses an ancient literary style called the diatribe, in which writers use a fictional dialogue between themselves and the proponent of another viewpoint to instruct and persuade their audience. Paul may be referring to any self-righteous person but is probably referring to Jews who assumed that God's covenant with them meant automatic protection from judgment. the same things. Also in v. 3; in addition to the sins in 1:28b–31, perhaps this includes the Jews' idolatrous tendency to prize the law so highly (2:17–24; Phil 3:3–10).
2:2-4 Both the OT (e.g., Jer 7:1–29) and NT (e.g., Matt 3:7–10)

2:4 "Ro 9:23; Eph 1:7, 18; 2:7 × Ro 11:22 y Ro 3:25 2 Ex 34:6 ^a2Pe 3:9 2:5 ^b Jude 6 2:6 °Ps 62:12; Mt 16:27 2:7 d ver 10 e1Co 15:53,54 2:8 f2Th 2:12 2:9 91Pe 4:17 2:10 h ver 9 2:11 Ac 10:34 2:12 Ro 3:19: 1Co 9:20.21 2:13 k Jas 1:22,23,25 2:14 Ac 10:35 2:16 m Ecc 12:14 "Ac 10:42 ° Ro 16:25 2:17 Pver 23; Mic 3:11; Ro 9:4

when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴Or do you show contempt for the riches^w of his kindness,^x forbearance^y and patience,^z not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?^a

⁵But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment^b will be revealed. ⁶God "will repay each person according to what they have done."^{*ac* 7}To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor^d and immortality,[®] he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil,^f there will be wrath and anger. ⁹There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;⁹ ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.^h ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.ⁱ

¹²All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law^j will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey^k the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law,¹ they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) ¹⁶This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets^m through Jesus Christ, ⁿ as my gospel^o declares.

The Jews and the Law

¹⁷Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God;^p ¹⁸if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher

^a 6 Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12

condemn the tendency of Jews to think that their special relationship with God will shield them from judgment.

2:5 day of God's wrath. While God's wrath is manifested in the present (1:18), it will be decisively and universally revealed on the future day of judgment (Isa 13:13; Zeph 1:15; 1 Thess 1:10).

2:6-11 This is a particularly clear example of "chiasm" (the word comes from the Greek letter *chi*, formed like our *X*), a literary device in which parallel lines correspond in an *X*-pattern such as *a-b-c/c'-b'-a'*:

- a God judges everyone the same (v. 6)
 - b Life is the reward for doing good (v. 7)
 - *c* Wrath is the penalty for evil (v. 8)
 - c' Wrath for doing evil (v. 9)
 - b' Life for doing good (v. 10)
- a' God shows no favoritism (v. 11)

2:6 Paul quotes the OT (Ps 62:12 or Prov 24:12; see Eccl 12:14; Hos 12:2) to make clear that, for those who are not in Christ, God will judge them according to what they have actually done.

2:7 Paul's claim that people can gain "eternal life" by "doing good" is the first of several similar assertions in this chapter (w. 10,13,26–27). He may refer to Christians, whose "doing," or "works," will provide critical and necessary evidence of their faith and the transforming power of the Spirit on the day of judgment (2 Cor 5:10; Jas 2:14–26). Or he may refer to people in general, arguing that sincerely and consistently doing good will bring eternal life. But his subsequent argument shows that sin's power prevents every human from living up to this standard (3:9). **2:9 first for the Jew.** The precedence of Jews, a recurring them in the letter (e.g., v. 10; 1:16), involves their privilege in receiving the "words of God" (3:2)—whether the outcome is judgment or salvation.

2:12 law ... law ... law ... law. Refers in Paul's writings basically to the commanding element of the Torah that God gave to his people Israel through Moses at Sinai (1 Cor 9:8–9; see Rom 5:13–14; Gal 3:17). So people who sin "apart from the law" are Gentiles, who did not receive the Mosaic law.

2:13 obey. Jewish teaching stressed the importance of doing the law: "Not the expounding [of the law] is the chief thing, but the doing [of it]" (Mishnah '*Abot* 1:17; see Jas 1:22). **declared righteous.** See note on v. 7.

2:14 – 15 These "Gentiles" (v. 14) may be Gentile Christians, who, though not having the law "by nature" (i.e., by birth), have the law of God "written on their hearts" (v. 15) in accordance with the prophecy of Jer 31:31 – 34. Alternatively, they may be non-Christian Gentiles who, while not having *the* law (of Moses), have knowledge of God's general moral will in their consciences and so, like Jews, have a kind of "law" ("a law for themselves," v. 14). By putting vv. 14 – 15 in parentheses, the NIV leans toward this second view: Paul qualifies the absolute distinction between those who have the law and those who do not in v. 12. Paul uses "defending" (v. 15), not "saving," because only God's grace in the gospel of Christ saves. If Paul is referring to non-Christian Gentiles, he means that their consciences sometimes witness that they have done things that God requires; at the same time, however, their consciences are also "accusing them" (v. 15).

2:16 people's secrets. The hidden things of the heart. "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7; cf. Ps 139:1-2; Jer 17:10).

2:17–29 The Jews and the Law. Addressing his dialogue partner explicitly for the first time as a "Jew" (see note on v. 1), Paul claims that the Jews' reliance on the law (vv. 17-24) and circumcision (vv. 25-29) are futile because they fail to keep the law.

2:17-20 The list of things that Jews boast in are legitimate sources of pride. God entered into relationship with Israel alone among all the nations, gave them his law, and set them out as a "light" (v. 19) to the nations (e.g., Isa 49:6).

of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — ²¹you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?^q ²²You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?^r ²³You who boast in the law,^s do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."^{at}



The half shekel was used to pay the temple tax, and not paying it may have been considered "robbing" the temple (Rom 2:22). This first-century coin was found at the temple mount in 2008. Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

²⁵Circumcision has value if you

observe the law,^u but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.^v ²⁶So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements,^w will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?^{x 27}The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you^y who, even though you have the^b written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly,² nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.^{a 29}No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit,^b not by the written code.^c Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.^d

God's Faithfulness

3 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ²Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.^e

³What if some were unfaithful?^f Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?⁹ ⁴Not at all! Let God be true,^h and every human being a liar.ⁱ As it is written:

^a 24 Isaiah 52:5 (see Septuagint); Ezek. 36:20,22 ^b 27 Or who, by means of a

2:21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? Although they have the law and teach it to others, the Jews have not consistently obeyed that law (v. 13). Paul is not claiming that all Jews "steal" (here), "commit adultery" (v. 22), and "rob temples" (v. 22). In dependence on OT prophetic denunciations of Israel (e.g., Jer 7:9), Paul cites examples of behavior that starkly contrast with the demands of the law God gave them.

2:24 Paul quotes from Isa 52:5, which refers to the way Israel's exile and oppression by Gentiles have led people to discredit God himself. In an ironic twist, Paul applies it to Jews failing to live up to their covenant obligations. 2:25 Circumcision. God instructed Abraham to circumcise every male in the Israelite household as "the sign of the covenant" (Gen 17:11) that God entered into with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9–14). Circumcision became an important distinguishing mark of the people of Israel, gaining special prominence in the aftermath of the attempt of the pagan king Antiochus IV to stamp out the Jewish religion (167–164 BC). Many Jews in Paul's day lived where they had to struggle to preserve their identity among pagans, so they emphasized outward distinguishing marks of their Jewish faith such as circumcision, dietary rules, and Sabbath observance. **has value if you observe the law.** Again, "doing" is what counts in God's judgment of humans (see note on v. 7).

2:26 not circumcised. Paul again (see note on v. 7) may refer to Christian Gentiles, who "fulfill" the law through faith and the Spirit (v. 29; 8:4). Alternatively, he may simply be giving the flip side of v. 25: just as Jews who disobey the law lose their status as God's people, so Gentiles who obey it are given that status. Whether there are Gentiles who, in fact, do fulfill the law is another question.

2:27,29 the written code. Or "letter" (Greek gramma). Refers to the law

of Moses, exemplified by the Ten Commandments, "written" in letters on the stone tablets that Moses received from God (7:6; Exod 31:18; cf. especially 2 Cor 3:3).

2:29 circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Moses called on Israel to "circumcise [their] hearts" (Deut 10:16; see Jer 4:4), i.e., transform themselves in their inner persons so that they might obey God consistently. Ultimately, however, the human heart is so hard that only God can circumcise his people's hearts. Moses therefore predicted that God would one day do just that (Deut 30:6), and the prophets also stressed that God would one day replace his peoples' "heart[s] of stone" with "heart[s] of flesh" by means of the work of his Spirit (Ezek 36:26 – 27). These promises are fulfilled in the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus' death and resurrection and marked by the coming of God's Spirit on his people with power (Acts 2:1–41).

3:1-8 God's Faithfulness. While Jews and Gentiles are on the same footing with respect to God's ultimate judgment, Jews continue to enjoy the advantage of possessing detailed revelation from God in the OT. Their failure to respond appropriately to that revelation does not cancel God's faithfulness to his promises—including his promise to punish his people for their sin.

3:1 Following the diatribe style (see note on 2:1), Paul uses rhetorical questions to advance his argument. Ch. 2 could suggest that Jews no longer have any "advantage" over Gentiles.

3:2 First of all. Paul breaks off his list of advantages to comment on the implications of Jews being "entrusted with the very words of God." See 9:4–5 for a longer list of Jewish privileges.

3:4 proved right. Paul quotes David's confession of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba (Ps 51:4; see 2 Sam 11) to show that God is "in the right" when he punishes his people for their sin.

2:21 9Mt 23:3,4 2:22 'Ac 19:37 2:23 sver 17 2:24 tlsa 52:5: Eze 36:22 2:25 "Gal 5:3 "Jer 4:4 2:26 "Ro 8:4 × 1Co 7:19 2:27 yMt 12:41,42 2:28 ^z Mt 3:9; Jn 8:39; Ro 9:6.7 a Gal 6:15 2:29 b Php 3:3; Col 2:11 Ro 7:6 ^d Jn 5:44; 1Co 4:5; 2Co 10:18; 1Th 2:4; 1Pe 3:4 3:2 ° Dt 4:8; Ps 147:19 3:3 ^fHeb 4:2 ^g 2Ti 2:13 3:4 h Jn 3:33 Ps 116:11

3:4 JPs 51:4 3:5 ^kRo 6:19; Gal 3:15 3:6 ¹Ge 18:25 3:7 ^m ver 4 3:8 ^mRo 6:1 3:9 ^over 19,23; Gal 3:22 3:12 ^oPs 14:1-3 3:13 ^aPs 5:9 ^cPs 14:0:3 3:14 ^sPs 10:7 3:18 ^lPs 36:1 3:19 ^uJn 10:34 ^vRo 2:12 "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."^{*a*j}

⁵But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)^{k 6}Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?^{1 7}Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory,^m why am I still condemned as a sinner?" ⁸Why not say — as some slanderously claim that we say — "Let us do evil that good may result"?ⁿ Their condemnation is just!

No One Is Righteous

⁹What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.^o ¹⁰As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

- there is no one who understands;
- there is no one who seeks God.

¹²All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one." bp

¹³ "Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit." cq

- "The poison of vipers is on their lips." dr
- ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."^{es}
- ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
- ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,
- ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know."^f
- ⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."^{gt}

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says,^u it says to those who are under the law,^v so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be de-

^{*a*} 4 Psalm 51:4 ^{*b*} *12* Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20 ^{*c*} *13* Psalm 5:9 ^{*d*} *13* Psalm 140:3 ^{*e*} *14* Psalm 10:7 (see Septuagint) ^{*f*} *17* Isaiah 59:7,8 ^{*g*} *18* Psalm 36:1

3:5 God's righteousness. Can refer to God's putting his people "in the right" (see 1:17 and note) but also, as here, to his acting in accordance with his own nature and revelation. God is "in the right," or just, even when he inflicts wrath on his people because, as a holy God, he must punish sinfulness.

3:6 judge the world. See Gen 18:25: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

3:8 as some slanderously claim. As the "apostle to the Gentiles" (11:13), Paul was thrust into the center of controversy, and false rumors about his teaching were evidently circulating in Rome. Let us do evil that good may result. Paul's claim that a person is justified by faith alone sounds to some as if he is opening the door to unrestrained behavior. He simply dismisses this unfounded charge here, but he deals with it in more detail in ch. 6.

3:9–20 *No One Is Righteous.* Paul's indictment of both Gentiles (1:18–32) and Jews (2:1—3:8) climaxes in this summary that portrays both as helpless under sin's power (v. 9) and thus unable to escape from its clutches by their own efforts (v. 20).

3:9 Do we have any advantage? "We" probably refers to Jews. Even though Jews have a certain "advantage" in possessing "the very words of God" (v. 2), they do not have any ultimate advantage over Gentiles when it comes to salvation and damnation. under the power of sin. Throughout Romans, Paul refers to sin in the singular to make the point that the many sins people commit stem from a single, basic fact: they are helpless slaves to sin's power. This fundamental human predicament is matched by God's work in Christ to break through sin and liberate humans, who are enslaved to it (3:24; 6:1-23).

3:10–18 Paul uses five quotations from different parts of the OT to underline that sin is universal. It is possible, though by no means certain, that early Christians gathered together this series of references before Paul's ministry began. It echoes a Jewish practice called "pearl-stringing," citing OT texts on a particular theme. The series is framed by quotations using the opening words "there is no" to show that all people, without exception, are caught in sin's power (vv. 10,11,12,18). In between, quotations focus on the evidence of sin in human speaking (vv. 13–14) and general lifestyle (vv. 15–17).

3:19 law. The entire OT. Paul usually uses "law" to refer to the commandments given to Israel at Sinai, but the prominence of this body of legislation for the life of Israel meant that the "law" could also refer to the OT Scriptures as a whole (1 Cor 9:8-9; 14:21,34; Gal 4:21b-22). those who are under the law. Jews, to whom God gave the Mosaic law (2:12). the whole world held accountable to God. If the OT brands God's own people as sinful, how much more are Gentiles also guilty? See "Law," p. 2649.

3:20 works of the law. Whatever a human being does in obeying God's

clared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; " rather, through the law we become conscious of our \sin^x .

Righteousness Through Faith

²¹But now apart from the law the righteousness of God^y has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.^{z 22}This righteousness is given through faith^a in^a Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ^{b 23}for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace^c through the redemption^d that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, ^{be} through the shedding of his blood^f — to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished⁹ — ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where, then, is boasting?^h It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No,

^{*a*} 22 Or *through the faithfulness of* b 25 The Greek for *sacrifice of atonement* refers to the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant (see Lev. 16:15,16).

law (v. 28; Gal 2:16 [three times]; 3:2,5,10). **through the law**. The law of Moses. But the relationship between "works of the law" and "works" in general elsewhere in Romans (4:2,4,6; 9:12; 11:6) indicates that Paul's claim includes ultimately anything humans do. God's verdict of "righteous" cannot come through human activity of any kind, but only by faith (3:22; 4:1–8).

3:21 — **4:25** Justification by Faith. Paul develops the theme of God's righteousness (3:21 – 26) announced in 1:17, and he elaborates on why faith is important, first generally (3:27 – 31) and then with reference to Abraham (4:1 – 25).

3:21 – 31 *Righteousness Through Faith.* In one of the most important theological sections in the Bible, Paul explains that (1) God's righteousness involves his completely gracious justification of any person who puts their faith in Christ; (2) this justification is based on Christ's sacrificial death; and (3) the nature of Christ's death enables God to remain just even as he justifies sinful humans. Paul then elaborates on the importance of faith, a key element in vv. 21–26.

3:21 But now. With these two simple words, Paul conveys the incredibly good news that a new era, in which "the righteousness of God has been made known," has begun. apart from the law ... to which the Law and the Prophets testify. In a balance typical of Romans, Paul insists that God's new work in Christ breaks new ground in God's plan (it moves beyond the era of the old covenant and its law) but is what God has all along planned to do (the whole OT testifies to it).

3:22 faith in. Could also be translated "the faithfulness of" (see NIV text note), referring to Jesus' obedience to the will of the Father in going to the cross for sinful humanity (5:19; Phil 2:8). But Paul's emphasis throughout this context of human believing (as in the case of Abraham in ch. 4) favors the NIV rendering. In this case, Paul adds the phrase "to all who believe" to emphasize a key point in his argument: as all humans are caught up in sin (v. 23; 1:18—3:20), so God's righteousness is available for all humans, Jew and Gentile alike (1:16).

3:24 all are justified. "All" is not in the Greek text but is carried over from v. 23. Justification is an important Pauline theological teaching. Paul uses the verb for "justify" (Greek *dikaioō*) 25 times, primarily in Romans (15 times) and Galatians (6 times). In addition, many of the occurrences of the related word for "righteousness" (Greek *dikaiosynē*) relate to the doctrine of justification (Paul uses this noun 56 times, 32 times in Romans and 4 times in Galatians). "Justify" language is taken from the world of a court of law and refers to a declaration of status, not to moral transformation. Justification has a negative and a positive side: God no longer holds our sins against us in his judg-ment (4:8), and he gives us a righteous standing before him. **freely by his grace.** Whatever God does for us is done in grace (4:4–5; 5:1).

grace. "Grace" is a thread that runs throughout Romans. The display of God's grace in the gospel is rooted in the character of God himself. As 4:4-5 makes clear, no human can ever make a claim on God because of anything they have done (11:5-6). A holy God can never be indebted to his creatures. Whatever he gives us, therefore, he gives "freely" and without compulsion (4:16). Not only is grace needed at the beginning of the Christian life, but believers "stand" in grace (5:2): we live in the realm in which grace "reign[s]" (5:21; see 5:15,17,20). That reign of grace, Paul hastens to clarify, does not absolve us of the need to live righteously before God; rather, it gives us the power to do so (6:1,14-15,17). So interwoven is grace in this new era of salvation that Paul can even speak of his own ministry (1:5; 12:3; 15:15) and the ministry of believers generally (12:6) as a matter of "grace." It is quite appropriate, therefore, that Romans is framed by prayers that God's people might fully experience this grace of God (1:7; 16:20). redemption. In Paul's day referred to paying money to secure a slave's freedom. In Christ, God has paid a price to secure the release of every believer from sin's slavery (v. 9). The OT uses "redemption" to refer to the exodus: God intervened to release his people Israel from their slavery in Egypt (Ps 111:9; cf. Ex 6:6; 15:13). Christ's death provides a new, spiritual "exodus" for the people of God.

3:25 sacrifice of atonement. Greek hilasterion, which refers to the "atonement cover" in Heb 9:5 and most of its occurrences in the Greek OT. This "atonement cover" was a plate that covered the ark of the covenant law in the inner sanctuary (the Most Holy Place) of the OT tabernacle. It figures prominently in the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16:2.13-15) and came to signify the place where God deals with his people's sins. Christ, on the cross, is now the final and definitive "place" where God deals with the sins of his people. As in the OT ritual, Christ's sacrifice is propitiatory; i.e., it functions, among other things, to satisfy God's wrath against sin (1:18; 2:5; 1 John 2:2). his righteousness. Perhaps, as in vv. 21-22, God's act of putting people "in the right" or even God's covenant faithfulness. But more likely, it refers to God's own attribute of "justness": God's failure to punish past sins with the wrath they deserved (as in the case of the OT believers) created the perception that God was not being fully just, a problem that Christ's sacrificial death on behalf of all God's people fully answers.

3:26 just and the one who justifies. Succinctly summarizes the two key themes in the paragraph: Christ's sacrificial death enables God to (1) justify sinful people (2) while he remains just.

3:27 law that requires faith. Perhaps the OT law, which, in the broad sense of the Pentateuch, calls for faith (e.g., Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4); or perhaps, in a play on words, the "law," or "principle," of faith (v. 28) in contrast to the law of Moses that calls for works.

3:20 "Ac 13:39; Gal 2:16 ^Ro 7:7 3:21 %Ro 1:17; 9:30 ^Ac 10:43 3:22 *Ro 9:30 ^bRo 10:12; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11 3:24 *Ro 4:16; Eph 2:8 ^aEph 1:7, 14; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12 3:25 *1Jn 4:10 ^HHeb 9:12, 14 *Ac 17:30 3:27 ^bRo 2:17, 23; 4:2; 1Co 1:29-31; Eph 2:9 3:28 'ver 20, 21; Ac 13:39; Eph 2:9 3:29 'Ro 9:24 3:30 '6al 3:8 4:2 '1Co 1:31 4:3 "ver 5, 9, 22; Ge 15:6; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23 4:4 "Ro 11:6 4:8 °PS 32:1, 2; Co 5:19 4:9 'Ro 3:30 'ver 3 4:11 'Ge 17:10,11 *ver 16, 17; Lk 19:9 'Ro 3:2 because of the law that requires faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.^{i 29}Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,^{j 30}since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.^{k 31}Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Abraham Justified by Faith

4 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about — but not before God.¹³What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."^{am}

⁴Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a giftⁿ but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

 ⁷ "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
 ⁸ Blessed is the one

whose sin the Lord will never count against them." bo

⁹Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised?^p We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.^{q 10}Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.^r So then, he is the father^s of all who believe^t but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹²And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

^a 3 Gen. 15:6; also in verse 22 ^b 8 Psalm 32:1,2

3:30 there is only one God. Paul argues that the central Jewish confession in the "oneness" of God, the "Shema" (Deut 6:4; cf. 1 Cor 8:4; Gal 3:20; Jas 2:19), means that Gentiles and Jews have access to this one God—and on the same basis: by faith.

3:31 we uphold the law. Paul's teaching may uphold the law by (1) reasserting its condemning function (vv. 19-20), (2) insisting that the OT testifies to justification by faith (v. 21; see Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4), or (3) maintaining the need for the law's commands to be fulfilled—by Christ, our representative (v. 25; see 8:4).

4:1–25 Abraham Justified by Faith. Paul uses Abraham to elaborate three of the key points he makes about faith generally in 3:27-31: (1) Faith excludes "boasting" (vv. 1–2; cf. 3:27). (2) Faith must be distinguished from works, from the effort to please God by what we do (vv. 3–8; cf. 3:28). (3) Faith brings Gentiles and Jews together into one family of God (vv. 9–17; cf. 3:29–30). Paul concludes by poignantly describing the nature of Abraham's faith (vv. 18–25). A recurring thread in Paul's discussion is the key verse Gen 15:6 (vv. 3,9,22). God's promise to Abraham was a foundational event in God's unfolding plan to create a people for himself and to reassert his sovereignty over all creation (Gen 12–22). Some Jewish interpretations stressed Abraham's fidelity to the law, but Paul focuses on Abraham's faith in response to the promise of God—a faith, to be sure, that issued in works of righteousness (see Heb 11:8–12,17–19; Jas 2:21–23).

4:1-**8** Abraham has nothing to boast about before God because his status before God is nothing he earned but is God's gift in response to his faith.

4:1 our forefather according to the flesh. While Abraham was physically ("according to the flesh") the ancestor of the Jewish people, he is, in a spiritual sense. "the father of all who believe" (v. 11).

4:3 Paul quotes Gen 15:6, which describes how God graciously considered Abraham's faith (in response to God's promise [cf. Gen 15:1-5]) to fulfill all that God expected of him. This connection between faith and righteousness is the heart of Paul's argument in 3:21-4:25.

4:5 God who justifies the ungodly. A justly famous claim about the nature of God's justification of sinful humans. God does not justify people who believe they have earned their righteousness, as in the case of an employer who is obliged to pay employees for the work they have done. Rather, God justifies people who are, in themselves, ungodly, illustrating that justification is by grace alone.

4:6 – **8** Following Jewish methods of citing Scripture, Paul confirms his claim based on "the law" (see 3:27 and note), or the Pentateuch (v. 3, which quotes Gen 15:6), with the Prophets and the Writings — in this case, from Ps 32:1 – 2. **credits** … **count**. Translates the same Greek word rendered "credited" in vv. 3 – 5, connecting Ps 32:1 – 2 with Gen 15:6. But more important is the conceptual parallel: righteousness before God and forgiveness of sins are gracious gifts of God.

4:9–12 The argument of this brief paragraph rests on simple chronology: God instituted the rite of circumcision as a "sign of the covenant" (Gen 17:11) at least 13 years (29 years in Jewish tradition) after God accepted Abraham because of his faith (Gal 3:15–18). Abraham, then, is qualified to be the "father of all who believe" (v. 11): both Gentiles

^{3:28} works of the law. See note on v. 20.

¹³It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise^u that he would be heir of the world,^v but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless,^{w 15}because the law brings wrath.^x And where there is no law there is no transgression.^y

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace^z and may be guaranteed^a to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations."^{*ab*} He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life^c to the dead and calls^d into being things that were not.^a

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations,[†] just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."^{bg 19}Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead^h — since he was about a hundred years oldⁱ and that Sarah's womb was also dead.^{j 20}Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,^{k 21}being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.^{1 22}This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."^{m 23}The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us,ⁿ to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him^o who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.^{p 25}He was delivered over to death for our sins^q and was raised to life for our justification.

^a 17 Gen. 17:5 ^b 18 Gen. 15:5

who come to faith without being circumcised and Jews who believe while being circumcised.

4:13–17 Paul continues to use Abraham's experience to make a point that is vital to his overall purpose in Romans: to make clear to the squabbling Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome (chs. 14–15) that they are united through their common faith in the God who always intended to create people for himself—a people from "many nations" (v. 17).

4:13 not through the law. In Gal 3:15-18, Paul points out that God gave the law of Moses "430 years" (Gal 3:17) after his promise to Abraham. Here Paul focuses on the law's intrinsic inability to bring sinful humans into the state of righteousness. heir of the world. The OT focuses on the land of Israel as the "inheritance" that Abraham and his descendants would receive (Gen 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7,18-21; 17:8; see Exod 32:13). But from the beginning, God promised that Abraham would be the means by which "all peoples on earth [would] be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Later parts of the OT (e.g., Isa 11:10-14; 55:3-5) and some Jewish traditions (in the Apocrypha, see Sirach 44:21; in the OT pseudepigrapha, see Jubilees 19:21; 2 Baruch 14:13; 51:3) stress that God's promise to Abraham and his descendants is universal. Paul, reflecting certain OT texts (e.g., Isa 65:17-25), pushes this universalization further, suggesting that the entire cosmos has replaced the promise of a particular land on this earth (see the language of "new creation" in 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; see also the "new heaven" and "new earth" of Rev 21:1-5).

4:15 the law brings wrath. Sinful humans cannot fulfill God's good and holy law (7:12). The law cannot liberate sinners from their helplessness but simply confirms that they, indeed, fall far short of God's standard (3:20; 5:20; 7:7-11). **transgression**. Greek *parabasis*; specifically violating a law or commandment that one is formally responsible to obey (2:23; 5:14; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 2:14). The law, then, brings wrath down on God's people because it formally and in detail spells out their responsibility to honor God — a responsibility that sin prevents them from discharging.

4:16 not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. The reference may be to two groups: Jews in general, who still enjoy the benefits of God's promises (11:1-2,28), and Christians, who share Abraham's faith. But Paul more likely has in

4:13 "Gal 3:16,29 'Ge 17:4-6 4:14 "Gal 3:18 4:15 × Ro 7:7-25: 1Co 15:56; 2Co 3:7; Gal 3:10; Ro 7:12 yRo 3:20; 7:7 4:16 ZRo 3:24 Ro 15:8 4:17 b Ge 17:5 c Jn 5:21 ^d Isa 48:13 ^e1Co 1:28 4:18 ^f ver 17 ^g Ge 15:5 4:19 h Heb 11:11,12 Ge 17:17 Ge 18:11 4:20 KMt 9.8 4:21 Ge 18:14; Heb 11:19 4:22 m ver 3 4:24 "Ro 15:4; 1Co 9:10; 10:11 ° Ro 10:9 PAc 2:24 4:25 q Isa 53:5,6; Ro 5:6.8

view Jewish Christians: those who are "of the law" and who also believe. **4:17 many nations.** Gen 17:5 (which Paul quotes here) probably includes Gentiles; Paul certainly applies it this way. **the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.** Paul probably intends four related ideas: (1) "Calls into being things that were not" alludes to God's creating all things from nothing (*ex nihilo*; cf. Isa 41:4; 48:13). (2) Jews used the phrase "gives life to the dead" to refer to conversion from paganism (especially in the OT pseudepigrapha, Joseph and Asenath). (3) God gave "life" to the "dead" body of Abraham and the "dead" womb of Sarah in the miraculous birth of Isaac (v. 19). (4) God also gave "life" to the dead body of Jesus by raising him from the dead (v. 24).

4:18–25 Abraham believed "against all hope" (v. 18), i.e., in the face of contrary evidence, and "in hope" (v. 18), i.e., by resting on the hope of God's sure promise. His faith in a God who brings life from the dead is then a paradigm for Christians, who also believe in a God who brought life to the dead body of Jesus.

4:20 he did not waver through unbelief. This claim appears to be in tension with Abraham's laughter when he heard God's promise about having a son (Gen 17:17). Some Jewish and Christian interpreters have interpreted his laughter as a joyful response to God's promise, but the text of Genesis, which in fact makes clear Abraham's failings, does not support this reading. Paul is probably generalizing, referring to the basic course of Abraham's life (see especially the remarkable demonstration of Abraham's faith in Gen 22).

4:24 us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Christians, like Abraham, believe in a God who "gives life to the dead" (v. 17). Abraham looked ahead to the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises (Heb 11:13). Christians can look ahead to this consummation with even greater assurance because we also look back at the climactic fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus.

4:25 delivered over to death for our sins. See Isa 53:5–6,8,12. **raised to life for our justification.** As Jesus' own resurrection was his "justification," or vindication (1 Tim 3:16), so we, who are "alive" and "raised with Christ" (Col 2:13; 3:1; see Rom 6:5,8; Eph 2:5–6), are justified with him. The two-part parallel saying in v. 25 may be an early Christian confessional formula.

5:1 *Ro 3:28 5:2 *Eph 2:18 *1Co 15:1 "Heb 3:6 5:3 *Mt 5:12 * Jas 1:2,3 5:5 *Php 1:20 *Ac 2:33 5:5 *Php 1:20 *Ac 2:33 5:8 *Jn 15:13; 1Pe 3:18 5:9 *Ro 3:25 *Ro 1:18 5:10 *Ro 11:28; Col 1:21 *2C 6:18, 19; Col 1:20 22 *Ro 8:34 5:12 *Ver 15, 16, 17; 1Co 15:21, 22 *Ge 2:17; 3:19; Ro 6:23

Peace and Hope

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,^r we^{*a*} have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access⁸ by faith into this grace in which we now stand.^t And we^{*b*} boast in the hope^{*u*} of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we^{*b*} also glory in our sufferings,^v because we know that suffering produces perseverance;^{w 4} perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope^x does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, ^y who has been given to us.

⁶You see, at just the right time,^z when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.^{a 7}Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.^b

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood,^c how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath^d through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies,^e we were reconciled^f to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!^{g 11}Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man,^h and death through sin,ⁱ and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

^a 1 Many manuscripts let us ^b 2,3 Or let us

5:1—**8:39** The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation. The first half of Romans (chs. 1–8) is sometimes divided between chs. 1–5 ("justification") and chs. 6–8 ("sanctification"), but the sequence of thought makes better sense with the transition occurring between chs. 4 and 5. The first main part (1:18—4:25) focuses on right standing with God ("righteousness," "justification"), and the second main part (chs. 5–8) describes the benefits that those who have attained this right standing enjoy. Paul's argument in chs. 5–8 follows a general chiastic pattern (*a-b-c* / *c*⁻*b*⁻*a*⁻):

- a Believers can be confident of final glory (5:1-11)
- Because believers are in Christ rather than in Adam (condemnation) (5:12–21)
 - c Believers are set free from the power of sin (6:1-23)
 - c' Believers are set free from the binding authority of the law (7:1 25)
- b' Believers are free from condemnation because of the Spirit's work (8:1-17)
- a' Therefore, believers can be confident of final glory (8:18-39)

5:1–21 The Hope of Glory. Faith joins believers to Jesus Christ, the "second Adam" (see v. 14; 1 Cor 15:21–22,45 and notes; see also note on vv. 12-21), and because of that relationship believers can be certain that they will be saved on the day of judgment.

5:1-11 Peace and Hope. Because we have been justified by faith, we enjoy the benefit of peace with God (reconciliation) in the present (vv. 1,11) and have a secure hope that, despite the trials we face in this life (vv. 3-4), God's love and his work for us in Christ and the Spirit will save us from God's wrath on the day of judgment (vv. 5-10) and bring us to glory (v. 2).

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith. Summarizes the central argument of the first part of the letter (1:18-4:25) and transitions to the second main section (5:1-8:39). we have. Makes better sense in this context than "let us have" (see NIV text note). **peace with God**. Not the subjective feeling of the peace of God, but the objective state of being at peace with God. The enmity that characterizes the relationship between God and his sinful, rebellious creatures is ended for those who are justified by faith (vv. 10-11; Eph 2:16; Col 1:21-22).

5:2 this grace in which we now stand. While God has always acted toward humans in grace, the new era of salvation is especially characterized by an effusion of God's grace (John 1:17). hope of the glory of God. The hope that God will glorify us. This future glory that God promises to believers brackets chs. 5-8 (8:18,30). This use of "glory" reflects how the OT uses the Hebrew $k\bar{a}b\bar{d}$ to depict God's "weighty" nature: his honor, majesty, and overwhelming presence (Deut 28:58; Ps 22:23; Isa 26:15; Ezek 39:13). Sinful humans "fall short" of God's glory (3:23), but in accordance with the prophetic promise (Isa 60:1–2), believers are promised a share in that glory.

5:3-4 The road to glory is strewn with rocks and strange turns. But far from lessening our hope, these "sufferings" (v. 3), in God's providence, become the means of strengthening us and thus deepening our hope.

5:5 put us to shame. In the OT, "shame" sometimes refers to a negative verdict in the judgment of God (e.g., Pss 6:9–10; 25:3; 119:80; Isa 28:16 ["panic"]; 45:16; 45:24; Jer 17:13). Believers need not fear this outcome "because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." Paul is alluding to Joel 2:28–32, which promises an outpouring of God's Spirit (Acts 2:17–21).

5:6 at just the right time. The time God had determined was the appropriate time for him to fulfill his promises (see Gal 4:4: "when the set time had fully come"; cf. Mark 1:15).

5:7 righteous person ... good person. Perhaps the distinction is between an upright, law-abiding person and a person who is good to us.
5:8 God not only enables us, through his Spirit, to feel his love in our hearts (v. 5), but he also powerfully demonstrates his love for us by sending his Son to die on our behalf.

5:9-10 Paul signals the importance of what he says here by saying it twice: God's initial work in justifying sinful people and reconciling them to himself shows that he will surely complete his work by saving those same people from his wrath at the time of his judgment. **shall we be saved ... shall so ften found in Paul's letters (1:16; 13:11; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:6; Phil 1:19,28; 2:12; 1 Thess 5:9; 1 Tim 2:15; 4:16; 2 Tim 4:18). 5:12-21** *Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ*. The building block of this passage is comparing ("just as ... so also") Adam and Christ (vv. 12, 18, 19, 21). Each is a key figure in redemptive history, whose acts have ultimate significance for all whom they represent. Adam's

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.^j ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.^k

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man,¹ how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,^m overflow to the many! ¹⁶Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, deathⁿ reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people,^o so also one righteous act resulted in justification^p and life for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man^q the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience^r of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.^s But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ^{t 21}so that, just as sin reigned in death,^u so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

sin, which brought death and condemnation to all humans, is more than
made up for by Christ's obedience, which brings righteousness and life
to all who receive God's gracious gift.
5.12 This forms a chiasm (see note on 2.6–11).

a Sin enters b Death results b' Death comes to all

a' Because all sinned

Therefore. Could also be rendered "In order to accomplish this," with "this" referring to vv. 1-11. According to this view, Paul is arguing that our confidence in salvation (vv. 9-10) is based on our belonging to the "second Adam," Jesus Christ (see note on 5:1-21). sin entered the world through one man. Paul assumes that his readers know the tragic story of the fall of the original humans (Gen 3). death through sin. As God warned Adam and Eve (Gen 2:17), death followed in the wake of sin. The parallel between this verse and v. 18 suggests that "death" refers mainly to spiritual death, or "condemnation" - although physical death, at least in its painful side, may be included as well. all sinned. When and how this took place is debated. At first it might seem that Paul means simply that all humans die because all humans, in their own persons, commit sin. But the parallel passages in vv. 18a,19a stress the significance of the "one trespass" by the "one man," Adam. We can reconcile these emphases if we understand that Adam's one sin led to all humans becoming subject to sin's power, leading inevitably to their own sinning. But it is also possible that Paul is viewing Adam as a representative figure, whose own sin is, at the same time, the sin of all human beings. The OT assumes the "corporate" significance of key individuals (e.g., Achan's sin is also the sin of Israel [Josh 7:1,11]; see also Heb 7:9-10).

5:13-14 Paul does not finish the sentence he began in v. 12 (the dash at the end of v. 12 indicates this break). He turns aside from his main argument to deal with a related matter. He may simply be emphasizing that death is universal: even people who lived before God gave the Mosaic law were subject to death. But Paul may be providing evidence for the "representative" reading of v. 12: even people who did not directly violate a commandment (as Adam did in the Garden of Eden and the Israelites did after God gave the law) suffered the penalty of death, and only their participation in Adam's sin can finally explain this.

5:14 pattern. Greek *typos*, from which we get the word "typology." Adam is a "type" of Christ, "the one to come." God has designed the history of salvation in such a way that OT events, persons, and places 5:13 ¹Ro 4:15 5:14 ^k1Co 15:22,45 5:15 ¹Ver 12,18,19 ^mAc 15:11 5:17 ⁿVer 12 5:18 ^oVer 12 ^pRo 4:25 5:19 ^sCo 4:15 ^sC

foreshadow NT events, persons, and places. The way Adam represents humans points ahead to the way Christ represents believers.

5:15–16 In one sense Adam's sin and Christ's obedience are comparable. But in another sense they are very different: God is at work in his grace through Christ, so Christ's act of obedience more than cancels the long history of human sins and their consequences.

5:15 many...one. "Many" contrasts with "one." Only context indicates whether "many" includes everyone. Paul clearly teaches that all humans are bound up with Adam's sin and death, so "many died" must mean "all died." But Paul also clearly teaches that only believers fully benefit from Christ's work, so "the many" who experience the grace of Christ cannot be universal.

5:17 those who receive. Read in isolation from the rest of Scripture, vv. 18–19 could suggest that just as all humans have been condemned in Adam, so all humans will have eternal life in Christ. But this verse qualifies that universalism (i.e., that "all people" will be saved) by emphasizing *receiving* the gift: only those who respond in faith (3:21— 4:25) eternally benefit from Christ's act of obedience. Both Adam and Jesus are representatives of humans: Adam represents all, Jesus represents all who receive God's gift.

5:18 one righteous act. Christ's obedience to the Father's will in going to the cross. justification and life for all people. See note on v. 17. Paul might mean that Christ has in principle made it possible for all human beings to experience justification and life (cf. "those who receive," v. 17). But he might be referring simply to "all people" who are in Christ in contrast to "all people" who are in Adam.

5:19 made sinners. Or possibly "considered to be sinners" (e.g., "condemned," as in the parallel v. 18). made righteous. Not transformed into people who act righteously, but considered to be righteous in the judicial sense (see note on 3:24).

5:20 so that the trespass might increase. One of the reasons that God gave the Mosaic law was to reveal the extent of human sin and the need for new measures to deal with that sin. By multiplying commandments, the law provides many more opportunities for disobeying God (see 3:20; 4:15; 7:7–12; Gal 3:19).

5:21 While vv. 12–21 are very important verses about "original sin," they focus on (as the last clause makes clear) the incredibly powerful effects of Christ's "one righteous act" (v. 18). **through righteousness**. As a result of being justified. Believers, who belong to Christ, can be sure that God's grace reigns over them: their present state of right standing before God will certainly result in eternal life.

6:1 ver 15: Ro 3:5.8 6:2 "Col 3:3,5; 1Pe 2:24 6:3 * Mt 28:19 6:4 y Col 2:12 z Ro 7:6: Gal 6:15; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:10 6:5 a 2Co 4.10. Php 3:10,11 6:6 b Eph 4:22; Col 3:9 ^cGal 2:20; Col 2:12,20 ^dRo 7:24 6:9 °Ac 2:24 ^fRev 1:18 6:10 9 ver 2 6:11 h ver 2 6:13 ver 16, 19; Ro 7:5 Ro 12:1; 1Pe 2:24 6:14 KGal 5:18 Ro 3:24

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?^{v 2}By no means! We are those who have died to sin;^w how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized^x into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead^y through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.^z

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.^{a 6}For we know that our old self^b was crucified with him^c so that the body ruled by sin^d might be done away with,^a that we should no longer be slaves to sin — ⁷because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, ^e he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ^{f 10}The death he died, he died to sin⁹ once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin^h but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness,¹ but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.^j ¹⁴For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law,^k but under grace.¹

^a 6 Or be rendered powerless

6:1–23 Freedom From Bondage to Sin. Those who are justified by faith can have confidence that God will vindicate them in his future judgment (ch. 5). But they also can have confidence that God has provided, in Christ, for what they need to live faithful and fruitful lives for God in the present. For God not only liberates sinners from the penalty of sin ("justification"; cf. 3:21—4:25, see note on 3:24) but also frees them from the power of sin (v. 6).

6:1 – 14 Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ. Believers, who are united to Christ, participate in his victory over sin and the new life his resurrection inaugurated.

6:1 Shall we go on sinning ...? The immediate occasion for Paul's rhetorical question is 5:20: "where sin increased, grace increased all the more." But this same question naturally arises from Paul's broader teaching about the gospel: if people are justified by faith alone, are they free to live any way they want?

6:2 By no means! Paul rejects any such implication with his strongest negative (Greek *mē genoito*, a formula typical of the diatribe style Paul is using [see note on 2:1]). **died to sin.** Not removed entirely from sin's influence but set free from its absolute power (vv. 6,14,18,22).

6:4 baptism. Could refer to "baptism" (i.e., "immersion") in the Spirit (perhaps, e.g., 1 Cor 12:13) but probably refers to the widespread early Christian practice of water baptism. This may suggest that baptism has the symbolic value of picturing the believer's death to sin (entering the water) and rising again to new life (coming up from the water). Or baptism may function here as shorthand for the conversion experience since the NT closely associates water baptism with conversion (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21). In any case, Paul is clear that faith, not baptism, is what effects the transfer from the old life to the new. glory of the Father. God's glory is often closely associated with his power (Ps 145:11; Col 1:11; 1 Pet 4:11). we too may live a new life. As our identification with Christ's death in baptism sets us free from sin's power, so our identification with Christ in his resurrection (vv. 5,8) enables us to live according to God's will and the Spirit's direction (7:6).

6:6 our old self. Or "our old man." The masculine rendering has the virtue of bringing out more clearly the connection between this verse and Adam, who is called "the man" throughout 5:12–21. The "old man" is a way of describing humans in their natural state, represented by Adam, the "old man," and therefore dominated by sin and death. See also Eph 4:22; Col 3:9. was crucified with him. As God deems all people to be "in Adam" (prior to conversion), so he deems believers to be "in Christ." In our relationship to him, we participate in his death, burial, and resurrection and all the benefits those central redemptive events secured. See also Gal 2:20. **body ruled by sin**. Humans in their preregenerate state, dominated by sin's power. **might be done away with.** Not destroyed but "rendered powerless" (see NIV text note); the old self no longer dictates how a believer lives.

6:7 set free. Or "justified." But the unusual Pauline use of the preposition "from" after "set free" suggests he is referring to liberation rather than justification (but see Acts 13:38).

6:8 we will also live with him. The reference may be to the spiritual life we now enjoy in and with Christ (v. 11; Eph 2:5–6; Col 2:13) or to the future physical resurrection (2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:21; 1 Thess 4:17; 2 Tim 2:11). See also v. 5.

6:10 he died to sin. Although Christ was sinless and never succumbed to sin's power (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15), his full identification with human beings in the incarnation meant that sin's power affected him. He therefore had to "die" to it. This provides a crucial step in the logic of this section: Christ died to sin (v. 10), and believers died with Christ (v. 6); therefore, believers died to sin (v. 2).

6:11–13 Our participation in Christ's death and resurrection puts us in a decisively new relationship to sin and to God. But we also need to live out this new relationship by thinking about ourselves in a new way (v. 11) and by acting in accordance with our new status (vv. 12–13).

6:14 sin shall no longer be your master. Succinctly summarizes what this section teaches in the form of a promise. **under the law.** Might mean "under the condemnation pronounced by the law" but more likely refers to the general state of being bound to the authority of the Mosaic law (v. 15; 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 3:23; 4:4–5,21; 5:18). So the contrast ("not under the law, but under grace") is probably salvation-historical—between the Mosaic law that was central to the old covenant and the grace that reigns with new power in the new covenant (see John 1:17). Paul is not, of course, saying that there is no "law" in the new covenant era (1 Cor 7:19; 9:20–22; Gal 6:2) nor is he saying that there was no grace in the old covenant. But as much as the law of Moses was a gracious gift to Israel, it did not provide the power to conquer sin's power. So the prophets looked to a time when God would act in a new way to transform the human heart (Ezek 36:25–27). It is Christ's new covenant work that provides this power.

Slaves to Righteousness

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey — whether you are slaves to sin,^m which leads to death,ⁿ or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God^o that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching^p that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin^q and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹I am using an example from everyday life^r because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness⁸ leading to holiness. ²⁰When you were slaves to sin,[†] you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!^{u 22}But now that you have been set free from sin^v and have become slaves of God,^w the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death,[×] but the gift of God is eternal life^y in^{*a*} Christ Jesus our Lord.



6:16 " Jn 8:34; 2Pe 2:19 "ver 23 6:17 "Ro 1:8; 2Co 2:14 9:T1 1:13 6:18 "ver 7, 22; Ro 8:2 6:19 ' Ro 3:5 "ver 13 6:20 ' ver 16 6:21 ' ver 23 6:22 ' ver 18 "1Co 7:22; The 2:16 6:23 *Ge 2:17; Ro 5:12; Gal 6:7,8; Jas 1:15 *Vit 25:46

7:1 ^zRo 1:13

Roman relief of a slave being freed. In Rom 6:16–18, Paul likens sin to slavery and notes that believers have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Roman civilization, Relief portraying slave being freed/De Agostini Picture Library/A. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images

Released From the Law, Bound to Christ

7 Do you not know, brothers and sisters^z—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? ²For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the

a 23 Or through

6:15–23 Slaves to Righteousness. Paul uses another rhetorical question, similar to the one in v. 1, to reinforce his teaching from vv. 1–14. The focus shifts from the negative (free from sin) to the positive (slaves of God).

6:16 obedience, which leads to righteousness. In the first part of Romans, Paul uses "righteousness" to refer to "right standing" before God. But in 6:15 – 23, Paul contrasts "righteousness" with "sin" (vv. 18,20) and "impurity" (v. 19), revealing that he is using the word in another of its biblical senses: behavior that conforms to God's standard. 6:17 slaves to sin. As he does throughout Romans, Paul refers to "sin" (singular) as a power that exerts its influence over people. The many sins people commit are a symptom of the ruling authority of the sinful impulse within fallen human beings. pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. The Greek (using *typos*) suggests that the gospel. New covenant obedience stems from transformed hearts (see the promise of Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:9–12).

6:19 human limitations. Greek sarx ("flesh"). Paul could mean that our sinful tendency makes it necessary for him to remind us of God's holy standards. But it is more likely that he refers to our difficulty in understanding the things of God, requiring him to use analogies "from everyday life" (such as slavery) to make his point. **holiness**. Could also be translated "sanctification." God himself sanctifies all those who believe in Jesus: they become "holy," or "saints," members of God's own people (e.g., 1:7). But sanctification is also a process of becoming increasingly obedient to the will of God (1 Thess 4:3); believers need to engage in this lifelong pursuit of holiness if they expect to enjoy eternal life (v. 22; see Heb 12:14: "without holiness no one will see the Lord"). **7:1–25** Freedom From Bondage to the Law. Paul now develops the idea of not being "under the law" (6:14,15), insisting that believers must be set free from the binding authority of the law of Moses in order to enjoy new life in Christ (vv. 1–6). The possibility that this teaching (and other teachings about the law in Romans) might be interpreted as disparaging the law leads Paul to assert emphatically that the law is "holy, righteous and good" (v. 12). Nevertheless, sin has used God's good law to bring death (vv. 7–11), a startling development that Paul explains further in vv. 13–25.

7:1 – 6 Released From the Law, Bound to Christ. After reminding his readers of a common truth (v. 1) and illustrating it (vv. 2–3), Paul makes his central point (v. 4) and explains it (vv. 5–6).

7:1 the law. Probably, as throughout ch. 7, the law of Moses. Since God gave this law specifically to Jews, "those who know the law" may refer to Jewish Christians. But many, if not most, of the Gentile Christians in Rome were probably former "God-fearers": Gentiles who had not converted to Judaism but who were interested in Judaism, attending the synagogue and coming to know the law of Moses in that setting.

7:2 For example. Paul illustrates the principle of v. 1 in vv. 2–3 with reference to the marriage relationship. This is not an allegory in which the various details stand for some spiritual entity. Since this is an illustration with one purpose, we must be careful about reading significance into the details. It would probably be wrong, for instance, to draw any conclusions from it about biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage.

7:2 *1Co 7:39 7:4 *Ro 8:2; Gal 2:19 CO 1:22 7:5 *Ro 7:7-11 *Ro 6:13 7:6 *Ro 2:29; 2Co 3:6 7:7 *Ro 3:20; 4:15 *Ex 20:17, Dt 5:21 7:8 *Ver 11 *Ro 4:15; 1Co 15:56 7:10 *Lev 18:5; Lk 10:26-28; Ro 10:5; Gal 3:12 7:11 *Ge 3:13 7:12 **T11 **G law that binds her to him.^{a 3}So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

⁴So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law^b through the body of Christ,^c that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵For when we were in the realm of the flesh,^{*a*} the sinful passions aroused by the law^d were at work in us, ^e so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.[†]

The Law and Sin

⁷What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.⁹ For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ^{bh 8}But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment,ⁱ produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.^{j 9}Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life^k actually brought death. ¹¹For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me,¹ and through the commandment put me to death. ¹²So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.^m

¹³Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin

^{*a*} 5 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesb* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit. ^{*b*} 7 Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21

7:4 you also died to the law. As with the phrase "under the law" in 6:14, 15, Paul might have in mind the condemning power of the law. But he may, more broadly, refer to the binding authority of the law of Moses. To be bound to that law means to be bound still to the old covenant, which was unable to set its adherents free from sin's power. One must therefore be separated from that law and its covenant in order to "belong to another," namely, Christ, in whose resurrection power we participate (6:4–5,8).

7:5 realm of the flesh. Greek *sarx*, a key motif in this part of Romans (see also vv. 18,25 [see NIV text notes]; 8:3 [three times],4,5 [twice],6,7, 8,9,12 [twice],13). Paul uses the word *sarx* to refer to "natural" human existence apart from God (see note on 1:3). He pictures unbelievers as living in a realm dominated by this power. **sinful passions aroused by the law**. A startling claim that Paul explains in vv. 7-11.

7:6 But now. As Paul often does, he contrasts the old realm, dominated by the flesh, sin, and death, with the new realm believers now live in. **what once bound us.** The law of Moses (see v. 4). **Spirit ... written code.** Paul contrasts the new covenant gift of the Spirit and the law of Moses, pictured in terms of the Ten Commandments, carved on stone (2:29; 2 Cor 3:3,6–7).

7:7–25 The Law and Sin. Verses 7-12 are framed by the issue of the nature of the law: it is not "sinful" (v. 7a); rather, it is "holy, righteous and good" (v. 12). But while the law is not itself sinful, Paul reiterates that sin has used it to bring death (vv. 7b–11).

Verses 13–25 respond to a question that vv. 7–12 naturally raise: how could God's good law become the occasion for sin and death? Paul's answer focuses on human inability: God gives his good law to people who are already captive to the power of sin; therefore, they cannot obey the law that God has given them, and death results. The spiritual status of the person whom Paul describes in these verses is debated. Noting that Paul apparently refers to himself using the present tense ("I am," "I do," "I want," etc.) and that the person "delight[s] in God's law" (v. 22), many interpreters think Paul is describing his own experience as a Christian. Others, however, think that Paul is describing his past experience as a Jew under the law. They point to language that appears to contradict what Paul says in Romans about Christians: "sold as a slave to sin" (v. 14) versus "set free from sin" (6:18,22); "a prisoner of the law of sin" (2:2) versus "free from the law of sin" (8:2). Whatever specific situation Paul has in view, his teaching in this passage stands: humans are unable to obey God's law and cannot therefore find salvation through it.

7:7 Is the law sinful? The question naturally arises from the claim of v. 5 ("sinful passions aroused by the law") and the earlier series of negative comments on the law (v. 4; 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 6:14–15). I... I. From this point to the end of the chapter, Paul uses the first-person singular ("I," "me"). He is undoubtedly reflecting on (1) his own experience, but in keeping with first-century Jewish ways of thinking, his own experience is bound up with (2) his solidarity as a human being with Adam and his sin and with (3) his own people Israel. These three foci mingle in this passage. In this verse Paul is thinking of his own life but also of the experience of Israel as a whole: it was through the law that the Israelites became "conscious of [their] sin" (3:20).

7:8,11 the opportunity. The Greek word has the sense of a bridgehead, a position seized in enemy territory that becomes a base of operations. The law's series of specific "dos" and "don'ts" stimulated in Paul and other Jews the desire to rebel against God and his rules.

7:8 sin was dead. Sin exists in every human since Adam, but the law has enabled sin to become especially powerful.

7:9 Once I was alive apart from the law. Paul may be reflecting on (1) his own state of relative "innocence" in childhood or before he came truly to understand what the law was requiring of him; (2) his solidarity with Adam, who was, indeed, "alive" before he disobeyed God's commandment about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17; 3:1-7); or (3) his solidarity with the Israelites, who experienced a kind of "death" (v. 10) when God's law came and branded them clearly as sinners (3:20; 4:15; 5:13-14).

7:10 the very commandment that was intended to bring life. Probably a generalization, representing the Mosaic law, which promised life for those who faithfully followed its precepts (Lev 18:5; Deut 30:15–20). 7:11 deceived me. Possibly alludes to Eve's response to God in Gen 3:13: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

7:13 Did that which is good ... become death to me? As he so often does in Romans, Paul uses a question arising from his previous teaching to move his argument along. How could the "good" law (v. 12) be the occasion of death? might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

¹⁴We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual,ⁿ sold^o as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.^p ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.^q ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.^r ¹⁸For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^{*as*} For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do— this I keep on doing.^t ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.^u

²¹So I find this law at work:^v Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being^w I delight in God's law;^x ²³but I see another law at work in me, waging war^y against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?^{z 25}Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature^b a slave to the law of sin.

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation^a for those who are in Christ Jesus, ^b ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life^c has set you^c free^d from the law of sin^a and death. ³For what the law was powerless^f to do because it was weakened by the flesh,^d God did by sending his

^{*a*} 18 Or *my flesb* ^{*b*} 25 Or *in the flesb* ^{*c*} 2 The Greek is singular; some manuscripts *me* ^{*d*} 3 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesb (sarx)* refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verses 4-13.

7:14 Iaw. The law of Moses. What Paul says in these verses about the law of Moses applies to any law, or commandment, or even the promptings of the conscience (see 2:14 - 15)—anything that brings us face-to-face with the will of God for us. **but**. Paul announces at the outset the basic tension of the passage: the law is "spiritual" (here), "good" (v. 16), something to "delight in" (v. 22)—it is "God's law" (vv. 22,25); but the human being is "unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin" (here), "wretched" (v. 24), "a slave to the law of sin" (v. 25; cf. v. 23)—a person in whom "good ... does not dwell" (v. 18). See "Law," p. 2649.

7:15–20 Paul vividly portrays the frustration of the human condition. The very best people seek to obey God, but they find themselves unable to do so consistently. What this reveals, Paul concludes, is that people are subject to some kind of sinful power: "sin living in me" (vv. 17,20), "my sinful nature" (v. 18). Paul is not suggesting that people are not responsible for their actions. Rather, he is reminding us that human beings are fatally bent away from God and toward sin by virtue of their involvement in Adam's sin (5:12–21).

7:21 this law. Perhaps the law of Moses; but more likely Paul is using "law" in the sense of "principle."

7:22 my inner being. Paul uses this same language elsewhere with reference to believers (2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16), but it was also used widely among Greek authors to depict the Godward, immortal side of the human being. Christians, of course, delight in God's law, but so did faithful Jews.

7:23 the law of my mind ... the law of sin. These phrases could refer to contrasting sides of the same law of Moses. This law is "God's law" (v. 22) that the person approves of and seeks to do and that, at the same time, sin has used to bring death (vv. 7 - 11). It may be more likely, however, that the second phrase uses a play on words: fighting against the law of God is another "law," or "power"; sin (see 8:2).

7:24 What a wretched man I am! The cry from the heart of every person who sincerely seeks to obey God but finds themselves unable to meet his demands. this body that is subject to death. Either the physical body that is doomed to die (8:10) or the human person generally, which is under sentence of spiritual death because of sin (vv. 5,9–11,13).

7:14 "1Co 3:1 °1Ki 21:20,25; 2Ki 17:17 7:15 Pver 19; Gal 5:17 7:16 q ver 12 7:17 'ver 20 7:18 sver 25 7:19 t ver 15 7:20 "ver 17 7:21 ver 23.25 7:22 * Eph 3:16 * Ps 1:2 7:23 y Gal 5:17; Jas 4:1; 1Pe 2:11 7:24 ZRo 6:6; 8:2 8:1 a ver 34 b ver 39; Ro 16:3 8:2 ° 1Co 15:45 dRo 6:18 e Ro 7:4 8:3 fAc 13:39; Heb 7:18

7:25 Thanks be to God ...! This cry of victory comes before a final restatement of the struggle, which might suggest that Paul speaks in this section as a Christian, conscious of his deliverance through Christ but also aware of his continuing struggle with sin. On the other hand, the thanksgiving could be an interjection of Paul the Christian into a passage that describes the defeat that he experienced as a Jew trying to live up to the demands of the law of Moses.

8:1–39 Assurance of Eternal Life in the Spirit. Paul begins by restating the basic point he has made in ch. 5: Christians, who belong to Christ Jesus, no longer fear the "condemnation" that those who are "in Adam" must inevitably experience (5:16,18). The confidence in ultimate salvation crops up repeatedly in ch. 8 (vv. 6,10–11,17–18,29–30,31–39). The ministry of the Spirit, a key motif (ch. 8 mentions the Spirit 18 times), is an important source of this confidence. But the Spirit also gives the believer the power to please God in this life (vv. 4–9,12–13,26–27).

8:1-17 Life Through the Spirit. The Spirit brings life to people who are dead because of sin (7:5,7-11,24). Applying the benefits of Christ's death on our behalf (v. 3), the Spirit gives us life now by liberating us from the power of sin and death (v. 2), and he is also instrumental in giving us life in the future, when our bodies are raised from the dead (v. 11). The Spirit conquers the flesh, setting believers on a new path that conforms to the will of God (vv. 4-9). Yet believers must not be inactive: they must put into effect the power of the Spirit's power, believers become children of God, with all the benefits the status of "adoption" (v. 15) brings them, both now and in the future (vv. 14-17).

8:1 Therefore. The joyful proclamation of "no condemnation" rests on our incorporation into Christ and the benefits of his death (5:12–21). This is the central point of all of chs. 5–8, which Paul here restates in light of the believer's new relationship to sin (ch. 6) and the law (ch. 7; cf. 8:2).

8:2 law of the Spirit. Probably the "power" of the Spirit. law of sin and death. Either the Mosaic law, which sin has used to bring death (7:7-11) or, as in the first part of the verse, the "power" of sin that brings death (7:23).

8:3 what the law was powerless to do. Succinctly summarizes the

8:3 9 Php 2:7 h Heb 2:14,17 8:4 Gal 5:16 8:5 Gal 5:19-21 Gal 5:22-25 8:6 | Gal 6:8 8:7 m Jas 4:4 8:9 "1Co 6:19; Gal 4:6 Jn 14:17; 1Jn 4:13 8:10 P Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17: Col 1:27 8:11 ªAc 2:24 ' Jn 5:21 8:13 Sal 6:8 8:14 tGal 5:18 Jn 1:12; Rev 21:7 8:15 * 2Ti 1.7. Heb 2.15 Mk 14:36; Gal 4:5,6 8:16 × Eph 1:13 8:17 yAc 20:32; Gal 4:7 z1Pe 4:13 8:18 a 2Co 4:17; 1Pe 4:13 own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh⁹ to be a sin offering.^{*a*h} And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.¹

⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires;¹ but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.^k ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life¹ and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God;^m it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.ⁿ And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,^o they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you,^p then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life^b because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead^q is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies' because of^c his Spirit who lives in you.

¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation — but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.⁸

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God^t are the children of God.^{u 15}The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again;^v rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^d And by him we cry, "*Abba*, ^e Father."^{w 16}The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit^x that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs^y— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.^z

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.^{a 19}For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the

 a 3 Or flesh, for sin b 10 Or you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive c 11 Some manuscripts bodies through d 15 The Greek word for adoption to sonship is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture; also in verse 23. e 15 Aramaic for father

argument of 7:7 – 25: the law, though God's good gift to his people, cannot liberate people from sin's enslaving power ("the flesh"). **likeness** of sinful flesh. Christ became truly human, taking on "flesh" (John 1:14). But "likeness" suggests that the flesh he took on was not exactly like our "sinful flesh": he was not guilty of sin "in Adam" as we are. sin offering. The Greek here ("concerning sin"; see NIV text note) could mean simply that Christ's death was related to sin. But the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the 0T, uses this Greek phrase to refer to the "sin offering" in Ps 40:6 – 8 (see also Heb 10:6,8; 13:11). So he condemned sin in the flesh. Christ entered the realm of the flesh, where sin seems to hold sway, to conquer the power of sin. Sin is "condemned" so that believers are not (v. 1).

8:4 the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us. May refer to the Spirit's enabling believers to conform to the demands of God's law. Or Paul might mean that because Christ has fulfilled the law in our place, God considers all who are "in Christ" to have fulfilled the law.

8:5–9 "The flesh" is Paul's way of describing the bias toward sin that affects all human life (vv. 7,8; see the note on 7:5). But believers are "not in the realm of the flesh" (v. 9); this bias toward sin no longer controls them. Rather, "the Spirit of God lives in [them]" (v. 9) and creates in them a new way of thinking (vv. 5-6) and living (v. 4).

8:9-11 Paul switches quickly from "the Spirit of God lives in you" (v. 9) to "the Spirit of Christ" (v. 9) to "Christ is in you" (v. 10) to "the Spirit ... is living in you" (v. 11). The NT does not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Trinity (that God is one God existing in three Persons), but passages such as this clearly imply it.

8:12-13 These verses are often connected to the following paragraph

(vv. 14–17), but more likely they conclude vv. 1–11: the life that the Spirit creates for us is worked out as believers respond to the work of the Spirit by actively using his power to conquer sin.

8:14 In the OT, God calls Israel (sometimes also called "Ephraim") his "son" (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9,20), and Israelites accordingly call God "Father" (Jer 3:19). So by naming believers "the children of God," Paul is identifying them as the people of God, destined for "life" (v. 10).

8:15 adoption to sonship. Greek *huiothesia*; refers to the Greco-Roman practice of adoption, which guaranteed to adopted children all the rights and privileges of natural children (v. 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). See "Sonship," p. 2664. While already adopted into God's family, many of the benefits of that status will be given only when God's work of redemption is finished (see v. 23). *Abba*. An Aramaic word for "Father" often used in intimate family settings. Jesus addressed God with this word (Mark 14:36), and believers adopted into God's family enjoy the same kind of intimate relationship with God.

8:16 testifies with our spirit. God's Spirit enables believers to experience their new life in their inner beings.

8:17 if indeed we share in his sufferings. Only those who fully identify with Christ in this life, entering into the sufferings that always accompany a godly lifestyle, will be able to share also in the glory that Christ already enjoys.

8:18–30 Present Suffering and Future Glory. This passage is framed by promises of the glory to which believers are destined (w. 18,30). Like the created world, believers long for their ultimate redemption (w. 19–23), waiting for it in hope (w. 24–25). Believers can persevere in this hope because they recognize that the Spirit is helping them to pray rightly (w. 26–27) and because God is at work on their behalf (w. 28–30).

creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected $it_{,}^{b}$ in hope ²¹ that^{*a*} the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay^c and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning^d as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, ^e groan[†] inwardly as we wait eagerly^g for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. ^h But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us¹ through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts¹ knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^{*b*} have been called^k according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew¹ he also predestined^m to be conformed to the image of his Son,ⁿ that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And those he predestined,^o he also called; those he called, he also justified;^p those he justified, he also glorified.^q

More Than Conquerors

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things?⁷ If God is for us, who can be against us?^{s 32}He who did not spare his own Son,^t but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge^u against those whom God has chosen? It is

^a 20,21 Or subjected it in hope. ²¹For ^b 28 Or that all things work together for good to those who love God, who; or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good with those who

8:18 our present sufferings. As in the related text in 5:3-4, Paul is frank about the reality of Christian suffering. As Paul and Barnabas warned the new believers in the province of Galatia, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

8:19 creation. The "subhuman" creation. Following OT examples (e.g., Ps 65:12–13; Isa 24:4; Jer 4:28; 12:4), Paul personifies the created world. 8:20 the one who subjected it. God, who cursed "the ground" in response to Adam's original sin (Gen 3:17). See "Creation," p. 2642.

8:21 the creation itself will be liberated. While the created world will be thoroughly renovated (2 Pet 3:7 – 13), it will not be destroyed. The "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1) will be a renewing of this world, not a replacement (cf. Col 1:20; Rev 21:5).

8:22 groaning as in the pains of childbirth. Combines suffering with hope and a joyful outcome (see also Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; John 16:20–22).

8:23 firstfruits of the Spirit. In the OT, "firstfruits" describes the first and best part of a crop that is to be offered to God (e.g., Exod 23:19; Lev 2:12). Similarly, God gives the Spirit to believers as the down payment on the many other blessings that he promises to bestow on his heirs, his adopted children (v. 17; see 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). groan inwardly. Not audible groans, but a way of connoting the frustrated longing for ultimate deliverance (Exod 3:7). adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. Illustrates the typical NT tension between the "already" and the "not yet": while already given the status of God's adopted children (v. 15), believers do not yet possess all the benefits of that adoption, such as resurrected, renewed bodies.

8:26 the Spirit himself intercedes. The Spirit makes up for our helplessness when we do not know what to pray for; unknown to us, he brings before God the prayer that perfectly matches God's will for us. wordless groans. The Spirit, along with creation (v. 22) and believers (v. 23), "groans." These groans may be "wordless" because they do not take the form of normal human language or, more likely, because they are unspoken.

8:28 in all things God works for the good. A second reason—in addition to the Spirit's intercession (vv. 26-27)—that believers can "wait ... patiently" (v. 25) for their ultimate redemption: they can be confident that God works in all the circumstances of their lives to accomplish his good purpose for them. This is one of the great promises of Scripture. "The good" is not necessarily what believers might think is good but is what God deems will be best to assist their growth into the image of Christ (v. 29) and bring them to final glory (v. 30). **called**. God's "effectual" calling, whereby he powerfully draws sinners into relationship with him (1:6–7). **8:29–30** This sequence (or "chain") of God's acts on behalf of believers explains the "purpose" (v. 28) that God has for his people. The believer's confidence for the present time, as well as for future glory, is rooted in God's sovereign determination to call them into relationship with him, preserve them in that relationship, and vindicate them on the last day.

8:29 foreknew. Perhaps "knew ahead of time" (see Acts 26:5; 2 Pet 3:17, where the same Greek word is used): God "foreknew" who would believe in him and so predestined them. But "know" probably has the biblical sense of "enter into relationship with" (see Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2, where the same Hebrew word is translated "chosen," "knew," and "chosen," respectively): God chose to initiate a relationship with people "before the creation of the world" (Eph 1:4; cf. Rom 11:2; Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2,20) and on that basis "predestined" them.

8:30 glorified. The final link in the "chain" of God's gracious acts on our behalf (see note on vv. 29–30) and the focus of Paul's concern. Having done all these other things for us, we can be utterly confident that God will complete his work by bringing us to glory.

8:31 – 39 *More Than Conquerors.* A moving hymnic response to the confidence that believers can have for the judgment to come (5:1 — 8:30). God is "for us" (v. 31), tirelessly working on our behalf (vv. 31–34) and showering his love upon us (vv. 35–39).

8:31 these things. The many promises found in 5:1—8:30. who can be against us? Satan may continue to battle against us and people may oppose us, but nothing can ever successfully separate the believer from God.

8:32 The logic here is similar to 5:9–10: since God has done the difficult thing (sending his Son to die for us), we can depend on him to give us all other things, especially what is necessary to bring us to final glory.

8:20 b Ge 3:17-19 8:21 °Ac 3:21; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1 8:22 d Jer 12:4 8:23 ° 2Co 5:5 f 2Co 5:2. 4 9 Gal 5:5 8:24 h 1Th 5:8 8:26 Eph 6:18 8:27 Bev 2:23 8:28 k1Co 1:9; 2Ti 1:9 8:29 Ro 11:2 ^mEph 1:5,11 n1Co 15:49; 2Co 3:18; Php 3:21; 1Jn 3:2 8:30 ° Eph 1:5, 11 P1Co 6:11 9Ro 9:23 8:31 'Ro 4:1 SPs 118:6 8:32 t Jn 3:16; Ro 4:25: 5:8 8:33 "Isa 50:8.9

8:34 ° Ro 5:6-8 "Mk 16:19 *Heb 7:25; 9:24; 1Jn 2:1 8:35 y 1Co 4:11 8:36 ^zPs 44:22; 2Co 4:11 8:37 a 1Co 15:57 ^bGal 2:20; Rev 1:5; 3:9 8:38 ° Eph 1:21; 1Pe 3:22 8:39 d Ro 5:8 9:1 º 2Co 11:10; Gal 1:20; 1Ti 2:7 ^fRo 1:9 9:3 9 Ex 32:32 h 1Co 12:3; 16:22 Ro 11:14 9:4 j Ex 4:22 k Ge 17:2; Ac 3:25; Eph 2:12 Ps 147:19 ^mHeb 9:1 ⁿAc 13:32 9:5 °Mt 1:1-16 °Jn 1:1 9Ro 1:25 9:6 'Ro 2:28.29: Gal 6.16 God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died^v — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God^w and is also interceding for us.^{x 35}Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?^{y 36}As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."^{az}

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors^a through him who loved us.^b ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^b neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ^c ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God^d that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul's Anguish Over Israel

9 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying,^e my conscience confirms^f it through the Holy Spirit—²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself^g were cursed^h and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race,¹ ⁴the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship;^j theirs the divine glory, the covenants,^k the receiving of the law,¹ the temple worship^m and the promises.^{n 5}Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah,^o who is God over all,^p forever praised!^{cq} Amen.

God's Sovereign Choice

⁶It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.⁷ ⁷Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through

^a 36 Psalm 44:22 ^b 38 Or nor beavenly rulers ^c 5 Or Messiab, who is over all. God be forever praised! Or Messiab. God who is over all be forever praised!

8:34 Who then is the one who condemns? Paul alludes to a similar expression of confidence in God's deliverance in Isa 50:7–9.

8:35 trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword. Paul had experienced firsthand God's faithfulness in the midst of such trials (2 Cor 11:23–27).

8:39 neither height nor depth. Perhaps refers to spiritual powers, but more likely is simply a figurative way of referring to everything in the created world (Eph 3:18).

9:1 — 11:36 The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel. Paul tackles one of the most pressing theological problems of his day: how to reconcile God's promises to Israel with Israel's failure to believe the Good News about Jesus the Messiah (9:1-5). Paul writes to the Roman Christians at a time when Gentiles are increasingly dominating the church both in Rome and in the wider Mediterranean world (see Introduction: Recipients; Purpose, 3). This situation is seemingly difficult to reconcile with God's OT promises addressed (at least mainly) to Israel. Paul's response is clear: "It is not as though God's word had failed" (9:6). Paul defends this claim in a four-stage argument. (1) God's promise had never embraced all Jews but only those whom God had chosenwhether Jews or Gentiles (9:6b-29). (2) Israel's predicament is a result of their failure to believe in Christ (9:30 - 10:21). (3) God's continuing faithfulness to his promises to Israel is seen in the present time in the many Jews (like Paul) who have responded to the gospel (11:1-10). (4) That faithfulness will be seen in the future when God saves "all Israel" (11:26; see 11:11-32). The question discussed in these chapters is vital to the truth of the gospel that Paul presents in Romans, for the gospel retains its power only so long as it culminates God's one plan of salvation (1:2; 3:21).

9:1–5 *Paul's Anguish Over Israel.* The central issue in chs. 9–11 is the tension between Israel's predicament (vv. 1–3) and God's promises (vv. 4–5).

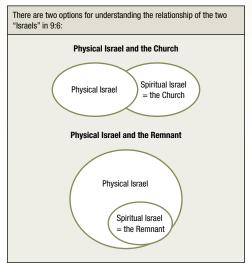
9:3 my people. The Jews. Paul's deep and sincere sorrow for the Jews stems from most of them failing to believe the Good News about Jesus.

Like Moses (Exod 32:30–32), Paul goes so far as to offer his own life on behalf of his fellow Jews—an offer he knows cannot be accepted. **9:4 people of Israel.** In chs. 1–8, Paul refers to "Jews" as a way of connoting national identity. His shift to "Israel" and "Israelites" in chs. 9–11 emphasizes their covenant standing with God (vv. 6,27,31; 10:1,16,19,21; 11:2,7,11,25,26). **adoption to sonship.** This same status is given to believers in Christ (8:15,23). While God's adoption of Christians secures their salvation, Israel's "sonship" means that the people received God's blessing and promises (Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:9–10; Hos 11:1). **covenants.** In addition to the foundational covenant that God entered into with Israel at Sinai (e.g., Deut 5:2–3), the OT mentions several other covenants: with Abraham (Gen 17), Phinehas (Num 25:12–13), and David (2 Sam 23:5), and the "new covenant" (Jer 31:31–34). See also "the covenants of the promise" in Eph 2:12 and "Covenant," p. 2646.

9:5 Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! The punctuation (which is not part of the original manuscripts) is debated (see NIV text note). But referring to the Messiah's "human ancestry" leads us to expect a contrasting reference to his divine status. This would then be one of a handful of NT texts that explicitly call Jesus "God" (John 1:1,18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1). **Messiah**. Greek *christos*; translates a Hebrew word that means "anointed one." The OT uses this language to refer to kings and, by extension, the coming ruler who would deliver Israel from sin and oppression (Ps 2:2; Isa 61:1; Dan 9:25–27 [perhaps]). English translations usually carry over the Greek word into English ("Christ"), but in places where it focuses attention on the OT and Jewish background, the NIV picks up the original Hebrew word (rendered "Messiah").

9:6–29 God's Sovereign Choice. Verse 6a states the thesis of chs. 9–11: God will be faithful to his word (i.e., in this context, his OT promises to Israel). The first stage in Paul's argument for this thesis unfolds in vv. 6b-29. Paul shows from the OT that God never intended for his promise to Israel to apply to all ethnic Israelites but only to those people whom God chose from within Israel (vv. 6b-13) and even from outside

THE TWO ISRAELS IN ROMANS 9:6



Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."^{as 8}In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children,^t but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. ⁹For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."^{bu}

¹⁰Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac.^v ¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God's purpose^w in election might stand: ¹²not by works but by him who calls — she was told, "The older will serve the younger."^{cx 13}Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."^{dy}

¹⁴What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!^{z 15}For he says to Moses,

9:7 * Ge 21:12; Heb 11:18 9:8 * Ro 8:14 9:9 * Ge 18:10,14 9:10 * Ge 25:21 9:11 * Ro 8:28 9:12 * Ge 25:23 9:13 * Mal 1:2,3 9:14 * 2Ch 19:7 9:15 * Ex 33:19 9:16 * Eph 2:8 9:17 * Ex 9:16 9:18 * Ex 4:21 9:19 * Ro 11:19 * 2Ch 20:6; Da 4:35

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."^{ea}

¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.^b ¹⁷For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."^{fc} ¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.^d

¹⁹One of you will say to me:^e "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?"⁶ ²⁰But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who

^{*a*} 7 Gen. 21:12 ^{*b*} 9 Gen. 18:10,14 ^{*c*} 12 Gen. 25:23 ^{*d*} 13 Mal. 1:2,3 ^{*e*} 15 Exodus 33:19 ^{*f*} 17 Exodus 9:16

Israel (vv. 24–29). Paul interrupts this argument to defend God's election (vv. 14–23).

9:6 are Israel. Perhaps all the people of God, both Jew and Gentile (see Gal 6:16 and note), but probably the elect from within physical Israel (vv. 7-13). True, "spiritual" Israel, to whom God's promises apply, is not identical to physical Israel (see "The Two Israels in Romans 9:6," this page).

9:7 Abraham's children. Since the people of Israel were descended from Abraham, they were known as Abraham's "descendants" (2 Chr 20:7; Ps 105:6; Isa 41:8; Jer 33:26) or "children" (Acts 13:26). Paul quotes the OT to show how God selected only some of Abraham's physical descendants to belong to Abraham's true, spiritual descendants (see also Gal 3:7). **through Isaac.** As Gen 21:12 indicates, God chose Abraham's son Isaac, not his other son Ishmael (Gen 16; 17:18–21; see Gal 4:21–31), to continue the line of promise.

9:10–12 The next patriarchal generation illustrates even more clearly that God chooses without regard to any human characteristics or virtues: Esau and Jacob were born to the same parents at the same time (they were twins), yet God chose one and not the other. Indeed, he even chose the younger (Jacob) of the two (Gen 25:23).

9:13 Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. The sense is "Jacob I chose, but Esau I rejected" (see Luke 14:26 and note). The words are taken from Mal 1:2 – 3 and refer to the nations of Israel and Edom. It is possible that Paul applies the words in that sense here, referring to the way God has

used different nations in accomplishing his purposes. But the context makes it more likely that he applies the text to personal election. 9:14 Is God unjust? A natural question arising from v. 13.

9:15 God is sovereign, bestowing his mercy on whom he chooses.

9:17 I raised you up for this very purpose. God made Pharaoh ruler of Egypt at the time of the exodus for his own purposes (Exod 9:16). Pharaoh's repeated refusal to let Israel go stimulated God to perform a series of signs and wonders, which caused God's "name" to become widely known (see note on Exod 9:16).

9:18 hardens whom he wants to harden. The exodus narrative describes Pharaoh as hardening his own heart (e.g., Exod 8:15,32; 9:34) as well as God acting to harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod 7:3; 9:12; 14:4,17; see Exod 4:21 and note). Paul refers to these latter texts to make a point about the sovereignty of God in both salvation (having mercy) and condemnation. Of course, Paul also insists that human beings justly earn their condemnation (1:21; see the emphasis on Israel's unbelief in 9:30—10:21).

9:19 Then why does God still blame us? Another question (cf. v. 14) in response to Paul's stress on God's sovereignty.

9:20–21 The references are to Isa 29:16; 45:9 and to the widespread OT comparison between God and the potter (e.g., Job 10:9; 38:14; Isa 64:8; Jer 18:1–6). God has the right to treat his human creatures as he chooses. Paul does not intend to deny human responsibility; as his repeated emphasis on the importance of faith reveals, human decisions

9:20 9 Isa 64:8 h Isa 29:16 9:21 ⁱ2Ti 2:20 9:22 | Ro 2:4 9:23 KRo 2:4 Ro 8:30 9:24 "Ro 8:28 "Ro 3:29 9:25 °Hos 2:23; 1Pe 2:10 9:26 PHos 1:10 9:27 Ge 22:17: Hos 1:10 'Ro 11:5 9:28 s Isa 10:22,23 9:29 t Jas 5:4 u Isa 1:9: Dt 29:23; Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40 9:30 "Ro 1:17; 10:6; Gal 2:16; Php 3:9; Heb 11:7 9:31 wlsa 51:1; Ro 10:2, 3 × Gal 5:4 9:32 y 1Pe 2:8

26 and.

formed it,⁹ 'Why did you make me like this?' "a^h ²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?ⁱ

²²What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience^j the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? ²³What if he did this to make the riches of his glory^k known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory¹ — ²⁴even us, whom he also called,^m not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?^{n 25}As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," ^{bo}
"In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'

there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"cp

²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,^q only the remnant will be saved.^r ²⁸ For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."^{ds}

²⁹It is just as Isaiah said previously:

"Unless the Lord Almighty^t had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."^{eu}

Israel's Unbelief

³⁰What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;^{v 31}but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness,^w have not attained their goal.^{x 32}Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.^{y 33}As it is written:

^{*a*} 20 Isaiah 29:16; 45:9 ^{*b*} 25 Hosea 2:23 ^{*c*} 26 Hosea 1:10 ^{*d*} 28 Isaiah 10:22,23 (see Septuagint) ^{*e*} 29 Isaiah 1:9

are significant. But God's sovereignty over all things, including salvation and eternal condemnation, is a foundational theme of the Bible. We must affirm both God's sovereignty and human responsibility without denying one or the other.

9:22 objects of his wrath. People who have earned God's wrath by their sin and so are destined for condemnation. **destruction**. Not annihilation but the ultimate "undoing" of humans in hell.

9:23 objects of his mercy. People whom God has chosen to benefit from his grace and enjoy his glory (cf. 5:2; 8:18,30).

9:24–29 Including Gentiles in the people of God is a persistent theme in Romans (e.g., 1:16). Paul illustrates in chiastic order (*a-b / b⁻-a⁻*):

- a God calls people from the Jews (v. 24b)
 - b God calls people from the Gentiles (v. 24c)
 - b' The OT confirms that God calls people from the Gentiles (vv. 25-26)
- a' The OT confirms that God calls people from the Jews (vv. 27-29)

The "not my people" of Hosea (Hos 1:10; 2:23) are the northern tribes of Israel. Paul, reading this prophecy in light of the Abrahamic promises, understands this phrase to include Gentiles as well (vv. 25-26; see 4:16-17). On the other hand, Isaiah (Isa 1:9; 10:22-23) speaks words of both warning and promise to Israel (vv. 27-29). Many Israelites had been unfaithful to God's covenant, leaving only a "remnant" to be saved (v. 27). But God commits himself to preserve this remnant in faithfulness to his promises to Israel (see 11:1-10).

9:30—10:21 *Israel's Unbelief.* The unexpected turn in salvation history—with many Gentiles and comparatively few Jews becoming saved—can be explained from the standpoint of God's election (9:6–29) or from the standpoint of human belief and unbelief (9:30—10:21). Gentiles have chosen to submit to God's righteousness in faith, while Israel, as a whole, has not.

9:30 a righteousness that is by faith. Right standing with God is available only through faith (3:21 — 4:25; see note on 3:21 – 31).

9:31 law as the way of righteousness. The people of Israel have, generally, not found right standing with God because they viewed the law of Moses, and the works it demands, as a way of attaining that right standing.

9:32 stumbling stone. Christ, the one whom God puts in everyone's path. People either build on him in faith or stumble over him to their ruin.
9:33 Paul quotes Isa 8:14; 28:16, which 1 Pet 2:4 – 8 also brings together (cf. Ps 118:22 in Mark 12:10 and parallels; see notes on Mark 12:10; 1 Pet 2:4 – 10).

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."^{*az*}

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous^a for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.^{b 4}Christ is the culmination of the law^c so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.^d

⁵Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."^{be 6}But the righteousness that is by faith^f says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?"^{cg} (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷"or 'Who will descend into the deep?"^d (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,"^{eh} that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹If you declareⁱ with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,^j you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."^{*f* k ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile^j—the same Lord is Lord of all^m and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lordⁿ will be saved."^{go}}

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"^{*b*p}

¹⁶But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"^{*i*q 17}Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,^r and the message is heard through the word about Christ.^{s 18}But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

^{*a*} 33 Isaiah 8:14; 28:16 ^{*b*} 5 Lev. 18:5 ^{*c*} 6 Deut. 30:12 ^{*d*} 7 Deut. 30:13 ^{*e*} 8 Deut. 30:14 ^{*f*} 11 Isaiah 28:16 (see Septuagint) ^{*g*} 13 Joel 2:32 ^{*b*} 15 Isaiah 52:7 ^{*i*} 16 Isaiah 53:1

10:2 their zeal is not based on knowledge. Paul's fellow Jews display a commendable dedication to God, but it is not directed by true insight into the purposes of God. The Gospels repeatedly touch on this issue, as Jews fail to understand that God is revealing himself in Jesus (Matt 12:22–37; John 9:13–41).

10:3 sought to establish their own. Like Paul in his pre-Christian days (Phil 3:6), many Jews viewed their commitment to the law as a basis for their right standing before God. They failed to understand that God has made available his own way of putting them right before him in Christ (9:31–32; 10:5).

10:4 culmination. Greek *telos*; combines the ideas of "end" and "goal." Like the finish line in a race, Christ was what the law all along was directed toward; and now that Israel has reached the finish line (the coming of Christ), the race (the law) has ended. The law no longer governs the people of God in the way that it did before Christ (6:14–15; 7:4–6; Gal 3:23–25). **everyone who believes.** Gentiles as well as Jews (vr. 11–13).

10:5 The person who does these things will live by them. The promise of Lev 18:5 (see note there) summarized a key element of the Mosaic law (see also Ezek 20:11,13,21): the "life" of God's covenant promise would be achieved through obeying the law's commandments. Of course, the Pentateuch as a whole makes clear that faith was always the basis for a relationship with God (Gen 15:6).

10:6–8 Paul quotes language from Deut 30:12–14 to characterize "the righteousness that is by faith" (v. 6), which contrasts with "the righteousness that is by the law" (v. 5). The grace that characterized God's gift of his law in the old economy is now decisively displayed in Christ. Just as Moses made God's requirements accessible to the people of Israel, so Christ, who has come down from heaven and been raised from the dead, is accessible to all people by faith. 9:33 z Isa 28:16: Ro 10:11 10:2 a Ac 21:20 10:3 b Ro 1:17 10:4 ° Gal 3:24: Ro 7:1-4 d Ro 3:22 10:5 ° Lev 18:5: Ne 9:29: Eze 20:11.13.21: Ro 7:10 10:6 PRo 9:30 9 Dt 30:12 10:8 h Dt 30:14 10:9 1 Mt 10:32; Lk 12:8 Ac 2:24 10:11 k Isa 28:16; Ro 9:33 10:12 Ro 3:22,29 ^mAc 10:36 10:13 "Ac 2:21 o Joel 2:32 10:15 Plsa 52:7; Na 1:15 10:16 9 Isa 53:1: Jn 12:38 10:17 'Gal 3:2.5 ^sCol 3:16

10:9 mouth ... heart. Paul takes up the words he quotes in v. 8 (taken from Deut 30:14). Paul's desire to reflect these terms means that we should be careful not to invest public confession of Christ with more significance than the rest of Scripture warrants. **Jesus is Lord.** A fundamental affirmation of Christian faith (1 Cor 12:3).

10:11 Paul returns to the language of Isa 28:16 (9:32-33).

10:12 there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Jesus is Lord of both Jew and Gentile, and both have equal access to this Lord by the same means: faith (v. 4).

10:13 name of the Lord. "The LORD" in Joel 2:32 (from which Paul quotes) is Yahweh, the name that the OT uses over 6,000 times to depict the God of Israel. For Paul, however, this Lord is clearly Jesus (see v. 9). By applying to Christ an OT text that refers to Yahweh, Paul associates Christ with God himself.

10:14 they ... they ... they ... they ... them. Perhaps Israelites in particular (see v. 2), but more likely all people, as in vv. 12–13. Paul lays out the steps necessary for people to call "on the name of the Lord" (v. 13), but in reverse order: preachers are sent, the preachers proclaim the message, people hear the message, and those who hear believe. Paul suggests in vv. 16–21 that God has completed the first three of these steps for Israel: the problem, then, is their failure to believe.

10:15 How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! Paul quotes Isa 52:7, which refers to those who announce the good news that the exiled people of Israel will be able to return to their own land. Paul applies the verse to Christian preachers, who proclaim the ultimate "good news" about God's intervention on behalf of all people in Christ (1:16).

10:18 Paul is not claiming that Ps 19:4 (which he quotes here) refers directly to the preaching of the gospel. Rather, he uses the language of

10:18 tPs 19:4; Mt 24:14; Col 1:6,23; 1Th 1:8 10:19 "Ro 11:11,14 "Dt 32:21 10:20 w Isa 65:1; Ro 9:30 10:21 × Isa 65:2 11:1 y 1Sa 12:22; Jer 31:37 2Co 11:22 ^aPhp 3:5 11:2 ^bRo 8:29 11:3 ° 1Ki 19:10,14 11:4 d 1Ki 19:18 11:5 ° Ro 9:27 11:6 fRo 4:4 11:7 9 Ro 9:31 h ver 25; Ro 9:18 11:8 Mt 13:13-15 ^jDt 29:4; Isa 29:10 11:10 kPs 69:22.23

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."*a*t

¹⁹Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,

"I will make you envious" by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."^{by}

²⁰And Isaiah boldly says,

"I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."^{cw}

²¹But concerning Israel he says,

"All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." dx

The Remnant of Israel

11 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!^y I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham,^z from the tribe of Benjamin.^{a 2}God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.^b Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel: ³"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"^e?^{c 4}And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."^{fd 5}So too, at the present time there is a remnant^e chosen by grace. ⁶And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works;^f if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

⁷What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain.⁹ The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,^{h 8}as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear,ⁱ to this very day."^{gj}

9And David says:

"May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.
¹⁰ May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."^{bk}

^a 18 Psalm 19:4	^b 19 Deut. 32:21	^c 20 Isaiah 65:1	<i>^a 21</i> Isaiah 65:2	^e 3 1 Kings 19:10,14
^f 4 1 Kings 19:18	^g 8 Deut. 29:4; Isaia	h 29:10 ^b 10 Ps	salm 69:22,23	

the psalm (which is about God's revelation in nature) to describe the widespread availability of the gospel (see Col 1:23).

10:19 Did Israel not understand? By quoting from Deut 32:21 in v. 19 and Isa 65:1-2 in vv. 20-21, Paul justifies his implicit claim that Israel has, indeed, understood. In Deut 32:21, God made Israel "envious" to punish them for idolatry.

10:20 those who did not seek me. Gentiles. Both Moses and Isaiah, then, contrast faithless Israel (v. 21) with Gentiles whom God is using positively in his purposes. This contrast harks back to the beginning of this section (9:30–31). Nevertheless, the section ends on a note of hope (v. 21), a note that ch. 11 repeatedly sounds: God still holds out his hands to his people Israel.

11:1–10 The Remnant of Israel. The focus on a "remnant" (v. 5) in this section shows that Paul returns to a theme he first broached in 9:27. The existence of a remnant of true believers reveals God's continuing faithfulness to his promise to Israel (vv. 1-2).

11:1 Paul traces his ancestry to Benjamin, one of the 12 patriarchs (Gen 35:23-26; see Phil 3:5) — a mark of true Jewishness.

11:2 foreknew. Chose beforehand (see note on 8:29).

11:5 a remnant. The key point in this section. As in the time of Elijah, there is hope in the midst of widespread apostasy: God is preserving for himself faithful Jews who, like Paul, have responded in faith to the Good News.

11:6 if by grace, then it cannot be based on works. Echoes earlier teaching (4:4–5). Entrance into the remnant comes as a gift from God, not from human works of any kind.

11:7 What the people of Israel sought so earnestly. Right standing with God (9:31). hardened. Though the Greek verb is a different one, the idea here is the same as in 9:18 (see note there). As the OT quotations of Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10; Ps 69:22–23 show (respectively in vv. 8–10), this hardening, while not unrelated to human unbelief, is an act of God (see Isa 6:8–10; Mark 4:12).

Ingrafted Branches

¹¹Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!¹ Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles^m to make Israel envious.ⁿ¹²But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles,⁰ how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

¹³I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles,^p I take pride in my ministry ¹⁴in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy^q and save^r some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection brought reconciliation^s to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?^{1 16}If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits^u is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷If some of the branches have been broken off,^v and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others^w and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.^{x 19}You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.^y Do not be arrogant,^z but tremble.^{a 21}For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

11:11–24 Ingrafted Branches. God's "hardening" of many Jews (v. 7) does not mean that he has given up on Israel. His plan still includes Jews.

11:11 their transgression. Most Jews refused to believe in Christ. **to make Israel envious.** God designed the salvation that Gentiles enjoy to stimulate Jews to repent (10:19).

11:12 riches for the world. The spiritual benefits bestowed on Gentiles who believe. **greater riches.** The extensive blessings that arrive at the culmination of the ages. **full inclusion.** Or "fullness," or "completeness"; probably the fulfillment of God's purposes for Israel when he saves many of them (vv. 25-26).

11:13 the apostle to the Gentiles. See 1:5; 15:16,18; Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17–18; Gal 1:16; 2:7,9; Eph 3:1,6,8; 1 Thess 2:15–16; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17. Paul does not want the Gentile Christians in Rome to think that his focus on Gentiles implies that he has abandoned all hope for Israel.

11:15 their rejection. Either the Jews' rejecting God or, more likely (vv. 7–10), God's rejecting (many) Jews. **their acceptance.** God's accepting Jews into his kingdom (see 14:3; 15:7), in contrast to "their rejection." **life from the dead.** Either renewal to spiritual life (cf. 6:13; Paul may see the "full inclusion" of Jews [v. 12] as taking place over the course of the church age as Jews come to Christ) or the resurrection

from the dead in the last day (God's "acceptance" of many Jews may be associated with the end times when the dead are physically raised). **11:16 dough offered as firstfruits.** See Num 15:17-21. Offering the "first portion" of the harvested grain to the Lord consecrated the whole batch. **root**. The patriarchs (in the Apocrypha, see 1 Enoch 93:5; see also Philo, *Heir*, 279; Jubilees 21:24). **branches.** Jewish people. While all Jews are set apart as God's people in a general sense (3:1; 9:4-5; 11:1-2,28), only God's election, activated by faith, enables Jews (as well as Gentiles) to be saved.

11:17 some of the branches have been broken off. Some Jews have been cut off from true Israel because of God's hardening and their unbelief (see "their transgression" in vv. 11,12 and "their rejection" in v. 15). wild olive shoot. A Gentile, who does not naturally belong to the olive tree.

11:18 do not consider yourself to be superior. Throughout vv. 11–32 Paul has Gentile Christians especially in view (v. 13). Because so many Gentiles have come to Christ and make up so large a part of the church, they are beginning to look down on their Jewish brothers and sisters.

11:20 tremble. Or "fear." Believers must never presume the security God promises them in Christ. They remain within the people of God only as long as they persist in faith.

THE PATTERN OF GOD'S SAVING PLAN FOR ALL PEOPLE: JEWS AND GENTILES IN ROMANS 11

v. 11: because of their (the Jews) transgression \rightarrow salvation has come to the Gentiles \rightarrow to make Israel envious

v. 12: their (the Jews) transgression \rightarrow riches for the world their loss \rightarrow riches for the Gentiles their full inclusion \rightarrow greater riches

v. 15: their (the Jews) rejection \rightarrow reconciliation to the world their acceptance \rightarrow life from the dead

vv. 17-23: some of the branches have been broken off \rightarrow you (Gentiles), though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in \rightarrow God is able to graft them in again

vv. 25–26: Israel has experienced a hardening in part \rightarrow until the full number of the Gentiles has come in \rightarrow and in this way all Israel will be saved

vv. 30−31: as a result of their (the Jews) disobedience → you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy, and as a result of God's mercy to you → they too may now receive mercy

11:11 | ver 1 mAc 13:46 ¹Ro 10:19 11:12 º ver 25 11:13 PAc 9:15 11:14 9 ver 11: Ro 10:19 1Co 1:21; 1Ti 2:4; Titus 3:5 11:15 °Ro 5:10 ^tLk 15:24,32 11:16 "Lev 23:10, 17; Nu 15:18-21 11:17 V Jer 11:16; Jn 15:2 *Ac 2:39: Enh 2.11-13 11:18 ×.In 4.22 11:20 y1Co 10:12; 2Co 1:24 ^zRo 12:16; 1Ti 6:17 ^a1Pe 1:17

11:22 b Ro 2:4 °1Co 15:2; Heb 3:6 d Jn 15:2 11:23 º 2Co 3:16 11:25 fRo 1:13 ^gRo 16:25 ^hRo 12:16 ⁱver 7; Ro 9:18 ^jLk 21:24 11:27 klsa 27:9; Heb 8:10.12 11:28 Ro 5:10 Dt 7:8; 10:15; Ro 9:5 11:29 "Ro 8:28 º Heb 7:21 11:30 PEnh 2.2 11:32 9Ro 3:9 11:33 'Ro 2:4 'Ps 92:5 t.lob 11.7 11:34 "Isa 40:13,14; Job 15:8; 36:22; 1Co 2:16 11:35 V Job 35:7 ²²Consider therefore the kindness^b and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue^c in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.^d ²³And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.^e ²⁴After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

All Israel Will Be Saved

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant^f of this mystery,⁹ brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited:^h Israel has experienced a hardeningⁱ in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,^j ²⁶and in this way^a all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is^b my covenant with them when I take away their sins."^{ck}

²⁸As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies¹ for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,^{m 29}for God's gifts and his callⁿ are irrevocable.^o ³⁰Just as you who were at one time disobedient^p to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now^d receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. ³²For God has bound everyone over to disobedience^q so that he may have mercy on them all.

Doxology

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches' of the wisdom and^e knowledge of God!^s How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!^t
³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"^{fu}
³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"^{gv}

^{*a*} 26 Or and so ^{*b*} 27 Or will be ^{*c*} 27 Isaiah 59:20,21; 27:9 (see Septuagint); Jer. 31:33,34 ^{*d*} 31 Some manuscripts do not have now. ^{*e*} 33 Or ricbes and the wisdom and the ^{*f*} 34 Isaiah 40:13

^g 35 Job 41:11

11:22 provided that you continue. Only believers who persevere in faith will be saved from God's wrath on the day of judgment. Some theologians think that verses like this reveal that genuine believers can fail to persevere and so not be saved in the end. Others, however, insist that God himself, by his Spirit, maintains believers in the faith.

11:24 contrary to nature. Perhaps alludes to God's grace, which transforms sinful people into God's holy people. But more likely it simply notes that grafting a wild olive branch into a cultivated olive tree is an unusual procedure. See "The Pattern of God's Saving Plan for All People: Jews and Gentiles in Romans 11," p. 2313.

11:25–32 All Israel Will Be Saved. God is faithful to his promises to Israel (vv. 1-2) not only by preserving a remnant of Jewish believers now but also by acting to save "all Israel" (v. 26) in the future.

11:25 mystery. A word Paul uses for an element in God's plan that the OT does not clearly reveal (16:25; 1 Cor 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7 ["secret"]; 1 Tim 3:9 ["deep truths"],16). *This* mystery is the process by which God is using Israel's "hardening" and the salvation of Gentiles to save all Israel (v. 25b-26a). **until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.** Probably when all elect Gentiles come into God's kingdom. **11:26 all Israel will be saved**. "All Israel" need not mean every single Israelite. The OT uses this expression for a significant or representative

number of Israelites (e.g., Josh 7:25; 2 Sam 16:22; Dan 9:11; cf. also Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1). There are three main ways to explain this promise about one of the important results of God's providential work in history: (1) God saves all his elect people, both Jews and Gentiles, as they respond in faith to God's grace throughout history. "Israel" would then refer to the church (see Gal 6:16 and note for this possibility). (2) God saves all elect Jews as they respond in faith to God's grace throughout history. (3) God will save a significant number of Jews at the end of history. Whichever of these Paul has in mind, the salvation will be—as it always is since the coming of Christ into the world—through faith in Christ (10:9–13). **The deliverer will come from Zion.** Either Jesus' first or second coming.

11:28 they are enemies for your sake. God is using the Jewish people's estrangement from him to bring salvation to Gentiles (v. 11). **they are loved.** The striking juxtaposition of "enemies" and "loved" sums up the heart of Paul's teaching about the Jewish people in this chapter. **11:32 all.** Not every single person, but every kind of person—Jew and Gentile alike.

11:33–36 *Doxology.* Paul fittingly concludes his sweeping description of God's plan of salvation with a doxology that expresses wonder and awe at what God is doing.

11:33-35 No one can fully comprehend God, who has no counselors or creditors.

³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things.^w To him be the glory forever! Amen.^x

A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you,^y brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,^z holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform^a to the pattern of this world,^b but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.^c Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is^d—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

³For by the grace given me^e I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ^{f 5}so in Christ we, though many, form one body,^g and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts,^h according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^{*a*} faith,^{i 7}if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach,^{j 8}if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;^k if it is giving, then give generously;^j if it is to lead, ^{*b*} do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in Action

⁹Love must be sincere.^m Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love.ⁿ Honor one another above yourselves.^o ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor,^p serving the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in hope,^q patient in affliction,^r faithful in prayer. ¹³Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.^s

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you;^t bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.^{u 16}Live in harmony with one another.^v Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^c Do not be conceited.^w

^a 6 Or the ^b 8 Or to provide for others ^c 16 Or willing to do menial work

11:36 from ... through ... for. God is the source, means, and goal of 12:4-6 one body ... different gifts. See 1 Cor 12. 12:6 gifts ... grace. The Greek words are similar, suggesting that the all things. 12:1—15:13 The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct. gifts believers use to edify the community are the product of God's grace. prophesying. See note on 1 Cor 12:8-10. The last major section of the body of Romans sets forth general principles and some specific applications of the gospel. The gospel provides 12:7 serving. Any form of service to Christ and his people. teaching. not only salvation from God's wrath but also the power to live changed See note on 1 Cor 12:28. lives. Christ cannot be our Savior without also being our Lord. 12:8 lead. The Greek word could also mean "give aid to." 12:1-2 A Living Sacrifice. This is a basic but comprehensive call to 12:9-21 Love in Action. In a rapid-fire series of commands, Paul urges respond to God's multifaceted "mercy" (v. 1; the word is plural in the believers to demonstrate "sincere" love (v. 9) to both fellow believers Greek). This call to transformed living is the heading for all that follows. (vv. 10,13,15-16) and unbelievers (vv. 14,17-21). 12:1 bodies. Not just the physical body but the whole person, with a 12:9 Love. Not a directionless emotion, but a moral orientation toward view to our engaging the world around us. living. God's grace in Christ kingdom values. has made Christians spiritually alive (6:13). true and proper worship. 12:10 Honor one another above yourselves. The Lord Jesus himself The worship appropriate for thinking creatures who recognize all that models this attitude (Phil 2:3-7). God has done for them. This worship is not confined to the Sunday 12:11 but keep your spiritual fervor. An alternative translation is "be morning worship service; it embraces the whole of life. set on fire by the Spirit." 12:2 pattern of this world. This present evil "age" (Greek aion; see 12:12 joyful ... patient ... faithful. The three commands are related: Luke 16:8; 1 Cor 2:6,8; 3:18; Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:10) focusing on the certain hope for glory that we have in Christ enables us has its own pattern of thinking and living that redeemed believers must to handle affliction with patience (see especially 5:5), and prayer taps avoid. renewing of your mind. The work of God's Spirit within must into this distinctly countercultural mindset (1 Thess 5:16-18). reprogram the "depraved mind" (1:28) that characterizes this world 12:14 Paul's instructions in chs. 12-13 often reflect the teaching of (see Eph 4:23). Jesus. The parallel is very clear here (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-28). 12:3-8 Humble Service in the Body of Christ. Those who are being 12:16 Do not be proud. While broadly applicable, this manifestation transformed through the renewing of their minds will refrain from thinkof sincere love might apply specifically to the situation of the Roman ing too highly of themselves, recognizing the gifts of others. Christians, especially the Gentile ones (v. 3; 11:18,25; 14:3,10,13). be 12:3 the faith God has distributed to each of you. Either the varying willing to associate with people of low position. The NIV text note degrees of faith God has given to each believer or the Christian faith that gives an alternate interpretation, taking the Greek for "people of low all believers hold in common position" to refer to the low position itself.

11:36 w 1Co 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 2:10 *Ro 16:27 12:1 yEph 4:1 zRo 6:13, 16, 19; 1Pe 2:5 12:2 a 1Pe 1:14 ^b1Jn 2:15 °Eph 4:23 d Eph 5:17 12:3 °Ro 15:15; Gal 2:9; Eph 4:7 12:4 f1Co 12:12-14; Eph 4:16 12:5 91Co 10:17 12:6 h 1Co 7:7: 12:4. 8-10 1Pe 4:10,11 12:7 jEph 4:11 12:8 KAc 15:32 2Co 9:5-13 12:9 m 1Ti 1:5 12:10 "Heb 13:1 ^oPhn 2·3 12:11 PAc 18:25 12:12 9 Ro 5:2 'Heb 10:32.36 12:13 \$1Ti 3:2 12:14 t Mt 5:44 12:15 Job 30:25 12:16 "Ro 15:5 w Jer 45:5: Ro 11:25

12:17 PF 20:22 Y2C0 8:21 Y2C0 8:21 Y2:18 ² Mk 9:50; R0 14:19 12:19 ⁴ Lev 19:18; PF 20:22; 24:29 ^b Di 32:35 12:20 ^cPF 25:21, 22; Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27 13:1 ⁴ Titus 3:1; 1PE 2:13, 14 ⁴ Da 2:21; 13:4 ⁴ 1Th 4:6 13:4 ⁴ 1Th 4:6 13:4 ⁴ 1Th 4:6 ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil.^x Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.^y ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.^z ¹⁹Do not take revenge,^a my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^{*ab*} says the Lord. ²⁰On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^{bc}

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Submission to Governing Authorities

13 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities,^d for there is no authority except that which God has established.^e The authorities that exist have been established by God. ²Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.^{f 4}For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.^{g 5}Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes,^h if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

^a 19 Deut. 32:35 ^b 20 Prov. 25:21,22

12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Another possible reference to the teaching of Jesus (Matt 5:39–42,44–45; cf. 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). **do what is right in the eyes of everyone.** The explicit qualification "if it is possible" in v. 18 is implicit here also. Christians cannot (and should not) please everyone, but they should make "the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10) by the way they love people inside and outside the church.

12:18 live at peace with everyone. See Matt 5:9; Jas 3:18.

12:19 leave room for God's wrath. Recognizing that God will judge all people in absolute equity means that believers should feel no compulsion to right all wrongs themselves.

12:20 you will heap burning coals on his head. Paul might mean that our kindness to enemies deepens the seriousness of their sin and so brings greater judgment upon them ("burning" and "fire" are frequent metaphors for judgment in the OT). But Paul more likely means that our kindness might result in their repentance (see Prov 25:21–22, from which Paul quotes; see also note on Prov 25:22).

12:21 evil ... good. The exposition of the many dimensions of love ends where it began (v. 9).

13:1 – 7 Submission to Governing Authorities. Paul turns his attention to governing authorities because they are God's "agents of wrath" (v. 4), charged with judging evil in this world (12:19). Believers, because they are committed to Christ as Lord, may be tempted to ignore or even stand against secular rulers, but believers must recognize the place of government in God's providential ordering of the world (vv. 1,5).

13:1 be subject. Or "be submissive." To submit means to recognize one's place under someone else in a hierarchy that God himself established (1 Cor 14:32,34; Eph 5:21; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5,9; 3:1; 1 Pet 3:1,5). So submission will usually result in obeying the "authority" placed over us. But crowning all hierarchies is God, so our submitting to secular rulers must always take place in light of our allegiance to

our ultimate authority: God (see Acts 4:18–20). governing authorities. In Paul's day, these "authorities" would have included everyone from the Roman emperor down to local bureaucrats. God has established ... established by God. The Bible consistently recognizes that God's sovereignty extends to secular rulers (e.g., 1 Sam 12:8; Prov 8:15–16; Isa 41:2–4; 45:1–7; Jer 21:7,10; 27:5–6; Dan 2:21:37–38; 4:17).

13:2 judgment. Either the punishment inflicted by secular rulers or, perhaps more likely, God's judgment.

13:3 Paul describes secular rulers as they should function, not as they always do function. He knows from firsthand experience and from the long history of his own people that rulers do not always reward good and punish evil.

13:4 your good. For both individual believers and society as a whole. sword. A symbol of the force that the Roman Empire used to enforce order. Paul clearly acknowledges that government has the right to use force to punish wrongdoing; whether this force includes capital punishment is debated.

13:5 Paul succinctly summarizes his two points in vv. 1b-4: believers submit to rulers out of fear of being punished for wrongdoing (vv. 3-4) and because they recognize that God has appointed those rulers (vv. 1b-2). On this reading, "conscience" refers to a sense of right and wrong (2:15; 9:1). But it can also refer to the painful knowledge of a wrong that one has committed. If this is the meaning here, then Paul warns believers that they will have a sense of wrongdoing if they do not submit to the authorities.

13:6 The issue of paying taxes may reflect the influence of Jesus' teaching; he delivered his famous maxim "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt 22:21) in the midst of a discussion about taxes. It is also possible that Paul has an eye on the Roman Christians since secular historians mention a "tax revolt" in Rome at about the time Paul writes Romans.

Love Fulfills the Law

⁸Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.¹⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet,"^{*a*j} and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ^{*b*k 10}Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.¹

The Day Is Near

¹¹And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come^m for you to wake up from your slumber,ⁿ because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.^o So let us put aside the deeds of darkness^p and put on the armor^q of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.^{r 14}Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,^s and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.^c

The Weak and the Strong

14 Accept the one whose faith is weak, ^t without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt^u the one who does not, and the one who does

^{*a*} 9 Exodus 20:13-15,17; Deut. 5:17-19,21 ^{*b*} 9 Lev. 19:18 ^{*c*} 14 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesb (sarx)* refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.

13:8–10 Love Fulfills the Law. Paul returns to the key Christian virtue of love (12:9–21).

13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding. Not "never incur a debt" but "make sure that you pay debts you incur on time." **continuing debt.** There is one debt Christians will never discharge: the debt to love. As often in the NT, the focus is on the obligation Christians have toward "one another" (fellow believers; cf. Gal 6:10). But believers are also called to love all people (12:9–21).

13:9 The commandments. Paul cites, respectively, the seventh, sixth, eighth, and tenth commandments from the Decalogue (Exod 20:13–17; Deut 5:17–21). This sequence is also found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) and in other Jewish writings. Love your neighbor as yourself. Paul once again echoes Jesus (Matt 22:34–40), who, when asked what is the greatest commandment in the law, cited the command to love God from Deut 6:5 and this command to love one's neighbor from Lev 19:18. As Jesus teaches so memorably in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the "neighbor" whom we must love is anyone the Lord puts in our path (Luke 10:25–37).

13:10 love is the fulfillment of the law. See also v. 8. Genuine love for others inevitably leads us to obey all the other commandments that set forth our obligations to other humans.

13:11 – 14 *The Day Is Near.* Paul frames his call to a distinctly Christian lifestyle with reminders of the nature of the time in which believers live: rescued from this evil age (see 12:2 and note); living in "the daytime" (v. 13), the time when God's plan has come to fulfillment; and looking ahead to the day when our salvation will be complete (v. 11).

13:11 this. Everything Paul commands in 12:1—13:10. **our salvation is nearer now.** Paul often uses the language of "salvation" to refer to the ultimate completion of God's work in our lives—a work that will not be finished until Christ returns and transforms our bodies so that we can enjoy the eternal kingdom of God (see 5:9–10 and note).

13:12 "Night" (and "darkness") and "day" (and "light") were ways of referring, respectively, to evil and good behavior in Paul's day (and ours). But "day" also alludes to the OT predictions about the day of the Lord, when God intervenes to save his people and judge their enemies (e.g., Isa 27; Jer 30:8–9; Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 15–17; cf. 1 Cor 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 6:2; Phil 1:6,10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2–8; 2 Thess 2:2–3; 2 Tim

1:12,18; 4:8). In keeping with NT teaching elsewhere, that day, when Christ returns to fully redeem his people, is imminent (1 Cor 7:29; Phil 4:5; Jas 5:9; 1 Pet 4:7; 1 John 2:18; see note on Amos 2:16).

13:13 daytime. Or simply "day," probably referring to the inaugurated "day of the Lord" (see note on v. 12).

13:14 clothe yourselves. See also Gal 3:27. Paul often uses the imagery of putting on clothes to urge believers to adopt the new way of life in Christ (v. 12; Eph 4:24; 6:11,14; Col 3:10,12; 1 Thess 5:8). The imagery may come from the early Christian baptism ritual in which new converts would put on a new set of clothes to symbolize their transition to a new existence.

14:1-15:13 The Weak and the Strong. Christians in Rome were divided over whether believers needed to continue to observe certain traditional Jewish practices derived from the law of Moses. Paul labels the Christian who thinks that believers should continue to observe those Jewish practices as "one whose faith is weak" (14:1); Paul labels those who do not believe that these practices are necessary as the "strong" (15:1). Paul urges them to live in peace with each other, respecting the opinions of believers they might differ with on this issue. While dealing with a firstcentury problem, Paul's advice is timeless. He gives believers guidelines on how to get along when they disagree about issues that are not central to the faith. See also the somewhat parallel passage in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. 14:1-23 Do Not Judge Each Other. Paul addresses both the "weak" and the "strong," but he focuses special attention on the need for the strong to give up their rights to avoid creating spiritual problems for the weak. 14:1 the one whose faith is weak. A person who is not convinced that their faith in Christ gives them liberty to engage in certain kinds of behavior.

14:2 eats only vegetables. Refrains from eating meat (see v. 6). While the Mosaic law does not forbid meat, many Jews living in pagan environments would refrain from eating meat because of fears that it might have some association with pagan religion (Dan 1:3-16).

14:3 God has accepted them. Paul refrains from correcting either the "strong" or the "weak," showing that he views the issue dividing them as belonging to the *adiaphora*—practices that Scripture neither requires nor prohibits.

13:8 ver 10: Jn 13:34: Gal 5:14; Col 3:14 13:9 Ex 20:13-15, 17; Dt 5:17-19,21 ^kLev 19:18; Mt 19:19 13:10 | ver 8 Mt 22:39,40 13:11 m 1Co 7:29-31; 10:11 "Eph 5:14; 1Th 5:5,6 13:12 º 1Jn 2:8 PEph 5:11 PEph 6:11, 13 13:13 'Gal 5:20,21 13:14 SGal 3:27: 5:16: Eph 4:24 14:1 tRo 15:1: 1Co 8:9-12 14:3 "Lk 18:9

14:3 ° Col 2:16 14:4 " Jas 4:12 14:5 × Gal 4:10 14:6 y Mt 14:19: 1Co 10:30,31; 1Ti 4:3,4 14:7 22Co 5:15; Gal 2:20 14:8 a Php 1:20 °2Co 5:15 14:10 d 2Co 5:10 14:11 ° Isa 45:23; Php 2:10,11 14:12 ^fMt 12:36; 1Pe 4:5 14:13 9 Mt 7:1 14:14 h Ac 10:15 1Co 8:7 14:15 ^jEph 5:2 ^k1Co 8:11 14:16 11Co 10:30 14:17 m 1Co 8:8 "Ro 15:13 14:18 º 2Co 8:21 14:19 PPs 34:14; Ro 12:18; Heb 12:14 9Ro 15:2; 2Co 12:19 14:20 'ver 15

not eat everything must not judge^v the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to judge someone else's servant?^w To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵One person considers one day more sacred than another;^x another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God;^y and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives for ourselves alone,^z and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ^a ⁹For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life^b so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.^c

¹⁰You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister^{*a*}? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.^d ¹¹It is written:

"'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'"^{be}

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.^f

¹³Therefore let us stop passing judgment⁹ on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. ¹⁴I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself.^h But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.^{i 15}If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.^j Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.^{k 16}Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.^{1 17}For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,^m but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,^{n 18}because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.^o

¹⁹Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace^p and to mutual edification.^{q 20}Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.^r All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat any-

^{*a*} 10 The Greek word for *brother or sister (adelphos)* refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God's family; also in verses 13, 15 and 21. ^{*b*} 11 Isaiah 45:23

14:5 one day more sacred than another. Probably Jewish ceremonial days as well as the Sabbath. See also Gal 4:10; Col 2:16. fully convinced in their own mind. A principle that runs through this passage (w. 14,16,22–23). Paul does not want a person to be forced to do something that their conscience is telling them not to do (1 Cor 8:7, 10,12).

14:6 does so to the Lord. Again, Paul views both the "weak" and the "strong" as sincere believers acting out of good motives.

14:7–9 Christ's death and resurrection establishes his lordship, which extends to every part of the believer's life.

14:10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Addressed to the "weak" believer who judges the "strong" believer for ignoring standard Jewish piety (v. 3). why do you treat them with contempt? Addressed to the "strong" believer who views with disdain and condescension the "weak" believer's insistence on clinging to certain rules. we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is God, not our fellow believers, to whom each Christian is ultimately answerable. We should not let other believers force us to violate our conscience, nor should we presume to stand in the place of God by judging fellow believers.

14:13 The two parts of this verse bridge the two parts of ch. 14: the first summarizes vv. 1-12, and the second introduces the key idea of vv. 14-23. **stumbling block or obstacle**. Originally referred to, respectively, as (1) a physical object that might cause one to trip and fall and (2) a trap or snare. The Bible widely uses both words to refer to matters that might cause a believer to stray from their commitment to God (v. 20; cf. Exod 23:33; Josh 23:13; Ps 106:36; Isa 8:14; Matt 18:7; 1 Cor 8:9; 1 John 2:10).

14:14 nothing is unclean in itself. Following the lead of Jesus, who "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19), Paul is convinced that Christians no longer need to view any food as forbidden (Acts 10:15,28; 1 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:15). for that person it is unclean. Pious Jews who had been taught since birth that faithfulness to God required them to avoid certain foods would not easily have lost this scruple when they became believers. As he does throughout this passage, Paul recognizes the seriousness of violating one's conscience (vv. 5,23; cf. 1 Cor 8:4–7).

14:15 distressed because of what you eat. Addressed to the "strong" in faith. The concern is that the "strong" believer's eating might put pressure on the "weak" believer to eat also, which would violate the "weak" believer's conscience and thus cause them spiritual harm. you are no longer acting in love. All believers should be motivated in their behavior not by their own rights but by the central Christian virtue of love for others (12:9; 13:8–10). destroy someone for whom Christ died. Bring ultimate spiritual ruin on a person for whom Christ gave his life. It is not clear whether Paul views this as a real possibility or whether he uses very strong language to motivate believers to act in a loving way toward each other.

14:16 what you know is good. The freedom in Christ to eat any food or treat every day the same.

14:17 righteousness. Either one's righteous status before God (4:3; 5:17) or behavior that meets God's standard (e.g., 6:16,18).

14:20 the work of God. Perhaps the individual believer, "for whom Christ died" (v. 15), but more likely the Christian community. All food is clean. See note on v. 14.

thing that causes someone else to stumble.^{s 21}It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.^t

 22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn^u himself by what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts^v is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.^{*a*}

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak^w and not to please ourselves. ²Each of us should please our neighbors for their good,^x to build them up.^{y 3}For even Christ did not please himself^z but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." ^{ba} ⁴For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,^b so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind^c toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father^d of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Accept one another,^e then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews^{c†} on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises^g made to the patriarchs might be confirmed ⁹and, moreover, that the Gentiles^h might glorify Godⁱ for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name."^{*d*}

¹⁰Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." ek

¹¹And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him."^f

¹²And again, Isaiah says,

^{*a*} 23 Some manuscripts place 16:25-27 here; others after 15:33. ^{*b*} 3 Psalm 69:9 ^{*c*} 8 Greek *circumcision* ^{*d*} 9 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49 ^{*e*} 10 Deut. 32:43 ^{*f*} 11 Psalm 117:1

14:21 drink wine. Perhaps simply another matter that illustrates Paul's general point, but probably another of the issues (along with eating meat and observing special days) that divided the "strong" and the "weak." Jews often abstained from wine to avoid possible ritual contamination (Dan 1:3–16).

14:22 keep between yourself and God. The "strong" believer does not need to give up their liberty, but they must be willing to avoid practicing their liberty in situations that might cause spiritual harm to others.
14:23 from faith ... from faith. What one's faith convinces a person

they can or cannot do (see note on v. 1). **15:1–13** Accept Each Other in Christ. Paul concludes his plea for unity among the Roman Christians by exhorting the "strong" (vv. 1–4), summarizing his key concern (vv. 5–7), and rehearsing the theological point that underlies his exhortation: the equality of Jew and Gentile in the new covenant people of God (vv. 8–13).

15:1 We who are strong. Those who are convinced that their faith gives them liberty to eat anything (14:2), treat every day alike (14:5), and drink wine (14:21). Even though he is a Jewish Christian, Paul aligns himself with the "strong" (14:14). **bear with the failings of the weak.** See Gal 6:2.

15:2 neighbors. Alludes to the love command of Lev 19:18, quoted in Rom 13:9 (see note).

15:3 Christ did not please himself. Christ went to the cross at the will of the Father, sacrificing himself for the sake of others (Mark 14:36; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6–7). **The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.** A quotation from Psalms, from which NT authors frequently draw to describe Christ's passion (Matt 27:34; Mark 15:35–36;

Luke 23:36; John 15:25; 19:28 and note). Here Paul refers to how Christ (the "me" of Ps 69:9) on the cross suffered for doing the Father's will.

15:4 everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. A fundamental principle in the Christian understanding of the Bible. What God caused to be written in the OT has ultimate relevance to Christians, who experience the fulfillment of the OT promises (see 1 Cor 10:6,11; 2 Tim 3:16–17). Of course the many different kinds of material in the OT relate to Christians in different ways.

15:5 the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had. A mindset that puts the interests of others ahead of our own (Phil 2:4–7).

15:7 Accept one another. Not grudgingly accept into our fellowship believers we disagree with but welcome them warmly as true brothers and sisters.

15:8 a servant of the Jews. Christ focused his earthly mission on his fellow Jews (Matt 15:24). Israel, as Paul also insists, has a certain priority in God's plan by virtue of being chosen as God's OT people (1:16; 3:1-2; 11:1-2; 28).

15:9–12 This series of OT quotations (see NIV text notes) focuses on the participation of Gentiles in the worship of the God of Israel. By choosing OT texts that focus on praising God and rejoicing in him, Paul reinforces the concern of v. 6.

15:9 that the Gentiles might glorify God. Summarizes a keynote in the theology of Romans: God faithfully fulfills his promises to his people Israel while at the same time accomplishing his purpose to integrate Gentiles fully into the people of God (see especially 11:11-32).

15:12 in him the Gentiles will hope. Isa 11:10 (which Paul is quoting)

14:20 \$1Co 8:9-12 14:21 t1Co 8:13 14:22 º 1Jn 3:21 14:23 ver 5 15:1 "Ro 14:1; Gal 6:1,2; 1Th 5:14 15:2 ×1Co 10:33 ^y Ro 14:19 15:3 22Co 8:9 a Ps 69:9 15:4 b Ro 4:23.24 15:5 °Ro 12:16; 1Co 1:10 15:6 d Rev 1:6 15:7 °Ro 14:1 15:8 f Mt 15:24; Ac 3:25, 26 º 2Co 1:20 15:9 h Ro 3:29 i Mt 9:8 2Sa 22:50; Ps 18:49 15:10 k Dt 32:43 15:11 Ps 117:1

15:12 m Rev 5:5 "Isa 11:10; Mt 12:21 15:13 ° Ro 14:17 ^pver 19; 1Co 2:4; 1Th 1:5 15:14 9 Eph 5:9 '2Pe 1:12 15:15 ° Ro 12:3 15:16 tAc 9:15; Ro 11:13 ^u Ro 1:1 ^v Isa 66:20 15:17 * Php 3:3 *Heb 2:17 15:18 yAc 15:12; 21:19; Bo 1:5 2 Bo 16:26 15:19 a Jn 4:48; Ac 19:11 ^b ver 13 ^cAc 22:17-21 15:20 d 2Co 10:15.16 15:21 elsa 52:15 15:22 ^fRo 1:13 15:23 9Ac 19:21: Ro 1:10,11 15:24 h ver 28 "The Root of Jesse^m will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."^{an}

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace^o as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.^p

Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

¹⁴I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness,^q filled with knowledge^r and competent to instruct one another. ¹⁵Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me^{s 16}to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.^t He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God,^u so that the Gentiles might become an offering^v acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus^w in my service to God.^{x 18}I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles^y to obey God^z by what I have said and done — ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders,^a through the power of the Spirit of God.^b So from Jerusalem^c all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. ²⁰It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.^{d 21}Rather, as it is written:

"Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." be

²²This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.^f

Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

²³But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you,^{g 24}I plan to do so when I go to Spain.^h I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a

^{*a*} 12 Isaiah 11:10 (see Septuagint) ^{*b*} 21 Isaiah 52:15 (see Septuagint)

reads "the nations will rally to him." The difference is a matter of wording only; Paul, as usual, is using the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT).

15:14—**16:27** The Letter Closing. This includes many of the standard elements in such closings: the author's travel plans (15:14-29), a request for prayer (15:30-33), a reference to ministry associates (16:1-2,21-23), greetings (16:3-16), and a doxology (16:25-27). Each of these elements is much longer in Romans than in most of the other NT letters.

15:14–22 *Paul the Minister to the Gentiles.* Paul reminds the Romans of his past ministry.

15:14 As he does in the letter opening (1:8–12), Paul reveals a deft diplomatic touch by speaking so highly of believers who live in a city he has never visited.

15:16 a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. Paul's authority to write "quite boldly" (v. 15) to the Roman Christians is based on God's own appointment of him to be "the apostle to the Gentiles" (see 11:13 and note; cf. Gal 1:15–16). **the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God.** Describing his apostolic ministry in priestly terminology, Paul identifies the offering he makes: the Gentiles themselves. Paul may have in mind the prophecy of Isa 66:19–20, which speaks of declaring God's glory "among the nations" and of bringing people from "all the nations" to Jerusalem as an "offering to the Loro."

15:19 signs and wonders. Paul's ministry was accompanied by authenticating miracles (Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11-12; 20:9-12; 28:8-9; 2 Cor 12:12), much as God revealed his power through the "signs and wonders" at the time of the exodus (Exod 7:3; see also Exod 11:9-10). from Jerusalem all the way around to

Illyricum. For the ministry of Paul in Jerusalem, see Acts 9:28–29. The NT never refers to a ministry of Paul in Illyricum, a Roman province in the region of modern-day Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Albania. But Paul might mean that he ministered "as far as the border of" Illyricum (e.g., in Macedonia and Greece). Paul's Greek suggests the idea of an arc, and an arc drawn from Jerusalem to Illyricum would touch on the regions in the eastern Mediterranean where Paul planted churches. I have fully proclaimed the gospel. In key cities throughout this region, Paul planted vibrant churches that can carry on the work of evangelism in their own locales.

15:20–21 Paul is convinced that God has called him to a ministry of pioneer church planting, a ministry he thinks is foreshadowed by Isaiah's prophecy about the servant of the Lord (Isa 52:15); Paul applies language from Isaiah's "servant" texts to himself elsewhere (1:1; Gal 1:15–16; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23).

15:23–33 *Paul's Plan to Visit Rome*. Paul shifts his focus to his present situation and his future plans.

15:23 no more place for me to work in these regions. Paul has completed his ministry of initial church planting.

15:24 Spain. The entire Iberian Peninsula in Paul's day (i.e., the territory now associated with the countries of Spain and Portugal), which had become a Roman province only recently. Paul might have chosen to preach in Spain because he identified it with places such as Tarshish or "the distant islands" in OT prophecy (e.g., Isa 66:19). **assist me on my journey there.** Spain was a long way from Paul's "sending church" (Antioch), and he needed financial and logistical help from a church closer to his new ministry area. while. ²⁵Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalemⁱ in the serviceⁱ of the Lord's people there. ²⁶For Macedonia^k and Achaiaⁱ were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.^m ²⁸So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. ²⁹I know that when I come to you,ⁿ I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit,^o to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.^{p 31}Pray that I may be kept safe^q from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, ³²so that I may come to you^r with joy, by God's will,^s and in your company be refreshed.^{t 33}The God of peace^u be with you all. Amen.

Personal Greetings

16 I commend^v to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon^{*a*,*b*} of the church in Cenchreae.^{w 2}I ask you to receive her in the Lord^x in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

³ Greet Priscilla^c and Aquila,^y my co-workers in Christ Jesus.² ⁴ They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

⁵Greet also the church that meets at their house.^a

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert^b to Christ in the province of Asia.

^{*a*} 1 Or *servant* ^{*b*} 1 The word *deacon* refers here to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways; similarly in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12. ^{*c*} 3 Greek *Prisca*, a variant of *Priscilla*

15:25 the service of the Lord's people there. The "collection" for impoverished Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Paul mentions this important project in all three letters written on his third missionary journey (here; 1 Cor 16:1–2; 2 Cor 8–9).

15:26 Macedonia and Achaia. Christians living in these Roman provinces, which included the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. Several severe famines afflicited Jerusalem and its surrounding territory in Paul's lifetime (Acts 11:27–28 refers to a famine affecting the entire Roman Empire).

15:27 the Jews' spiritual blessings. The ancestors of the Jews were the original recipients of the promises. Gentiles enjoy the blessings God promised his people only by being included in the one people of God (11:17–24). See "The Pattern of God's Saving Plan for All People: Jews and Gentiles in Romans 11," p. 2313.

15:31 Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea. Paul's bold turn to the Gentiles in his preaching of the gospel was very contentious among Jews, especially in the Jewish homeland of Judea. He was right to be worried about his reception; when he arrived in Jerusalem, Jews misconstrued his actions in the temple and rioted against him (Acts 21:27–32). **favorably received.** Paul viewed the collection not only as a work of charity but also as a way to ease the developing tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church of his day. Getting Gentiles to give money to their Jewish brothers and sisters and getting the Jewish believers to accept it was a practical way of binding the two groups together.

16:1–27 *Personal Greetings.* Paul had been engaged in missionary work for 25 years when he wrote Romans. He had developed relationships with believers scattered all across the eastern Mediterranean world.

16:1 – 2 Phoebe was a prominent Christian who was planning to travel to Rome. Paul probably took the opportunity of her planned trip to entrust her with the delivery of his letter to the Roman Christians.

16:1 deacon. Greek *diakonos*; could also be translated "servant" (see NIV text note). But calling Phoebe a *diakonos* "of the church" suggests that she holds some kind of official position. Her apparent wealth (she was a "benefactor" [v. 2]) fits well with the office of deacon, which apparently focused on financially and logistically supporting the church (1 Tim 3:11 may mention female deacons [see note]; on "deacons," see also Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–10). **Cenchreae.** A port about six miles (nine kilometers) from Corinth, where Paul is apparently located as he writes this letter (Acts 20:2–3).

16:2 benefactor. The "patron," an important figure in the Greco-Roman world who used their money and influence to support various causes. Phoebe used her worldly advantages to help many believers, including Paul himself.

16:3-16 Although Paul has never visited Rome, he has encountered many of the Christians who live there in the course of his ministry in the eastern Mediterranean. The names of people in the ancient world often signaled their ethnic origin or social status. The 26 names in these verses reveal that the Roman Christian community was very diverse, with men and women, Jews and Gentiles, and people from both the upper and lower classes (Gal 3:28).

16:3 Priscilla and Aquila. Paul first met them in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:2). They were apparently natives of Rome who, along with other Jews and Jewish Christians, had been forced to leave Rome when the emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from the city (probably in AD 49). They not only shared Paul's passion for Christian ministry but were also in the same leather-working trade as Paul.

16:4 risked their lives for me. The NT does not record this incident, but the last part of this verse implies that it was widely known.

16:5 church that meets at their house. Christians in Paul's day did not have dedicated church buildings; they met in private homes. This list of greetings may refer to at least two other such "house churches" (see vv. 14,15). province of Asia. The Roman province located in western Asia Minor (see note on 2 Tim 1:15).

15:25 Ac 19:21 Ac 24:17 15:26 kAc 16:9; 2Co 8:1 ¹Ac 18:12 15:27 m 1Co 9:11 15:29 "Ro 1:10,11 15:30 ° Gal 5:22 P2Co 1:11; Col 4:12 15:31 92Th 3:2 15:32 'Ro 1:10,13 SAc 18:21 t1Co 16:18 15:33 "Ro 16:20; 2Co 13:11; Php 4:9; 1Th 5:23; Heb 13:20 16:1 º2Co 3:1 ºAc 18:18 16:2 * Php 2:29 16:3 ^yAc 18:2 ^zver 7,9,10 16:5 a1Co 16:19: Col 4:15; Phm 2 ^b1Co 16:15

16:7 °ver 11,21 16:9 °ver 3 16:11 °ver 7,21 16:15 °ver 2 °ver 14 16:16 °1C 0 16:20; 2C 0 13:12; 1Th 5:26 16:17 °Gal 1:8,9; 1Ti 1:3; 6:3' 2Th 3:6; 14; 2Jn 10 16:18 *Php 3:19 °C 01 2:4 16:29 °R 0 15:33 °Ge 3:15 °1Th 5:28 16:21 °Ac 16:1 °Ac 13:1 'Ac 17:5 °ver 7,11

- ⁶ Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
- ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews^c who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among^a the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
- ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.
- ⁹Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ,^d and my dear friend Stachys.
- ¹⁰ Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.
- Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.
- ¹¹ Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.^e
 - Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
 - ¹² Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.
 - Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.
- ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.
- ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.
- ¹⁵ Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people^f who are with them.⁹
- ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss.^h

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

¹⁷I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.ⁱ Keep away from them.^j ¹⁸For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.^k By smooth talk and flattery they deceive¹ the minds of naive people. ¹⁹Everyone has heard^m about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.ⁿ

²⁰The God of peace^o will soon crush^p Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.^q

²¹Timothy,^r my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius,^s Jason^t and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.^u

- ²²I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.
- a 7 Or are esteemed by

16:6 Mary. The NT mentions six persons with this name. This Mary is otherwise unknown. Paul commends her for dedicated service of Christ (see also v. 12).

16:7 Andronicus and Junia. Probably a husband-and-wife missionary team. While the Greek word for "Junia" could denote either a woman or a man, it probably here denotes a woman. in prison with me. This imprisonment cannot be identified; Paul alludes to many imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23) not recorded in Acts or his letters. outstanding among the apostles. Or "esteemed by the apostles" (see NIV text note). In any case, the word "apostle" may not refer to the authoritative position that Paul and "the Twelve" occupied (e.g., 1:1; Luke 6:13). The Greek word here was also used in the sense of "accredited messenger," "representative," or "missionary" (1 Cor 9:5; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25).

16:8 – 10 Ampliatus ... Urbanus ... Stachys ... Apelles. Common slave names. They may have been either slaves or "freedmen," former slaves who had gained their freedom.

16:10 Aristobulus. Probably the brother of Herod Agrippa I (ruled Palestine from AD 41-44). Aristobulus was dead at the time Paul wrote Romans (see chart/map, pp. 1930-1931), so the "household" of Aristobulus refers to slaves who served the family that still went by his name. 16:12 Tryphena and Tryphosa. Siblings were often given similar sounding names in the ancient world, so these women were probably sisters, perhaps even twins. **16:16 holy kiss.** A common greeting in the ancient world generally and among Jews in particular (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).

16:17 – 19 A warning about false teachers is unusual in NT letter closings — especially in this case since the letter does not explicitly mention false teaching anywhere else. Paul's description of the teachers is too general to enable us to identify who they were or what they were teaching.

16:18 appetites. Or "bellies," a vivid way of indicating their preoccupation with satisfying their own bodily comforts (cf. Phil 3:19). **naive people.** "Innocence" about doing evil is a good thing (v. 19), but innocence that involves ignorance about Christian doctrine is dangerous.

16:19 wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. Christians should have the wisdom to discern the good they should be doing, and they should be unacquainted with doing what is evil.

16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. A startling juxtaposition, reminding us that the "peace" (Hebrew *šālôm*) that God intends to establish involves an ultimate victory over evil. Paul alludes to the first promise of redemption given in the Garden of Eden: God promised that Eve's offspring would "crush" Satan's "head" (Gen 3:15).

16:21 Timothy. One of Paul's closest ministry associates; he joined Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3) and was with Paul in Corinth as he wrote this letter to the Romans (Acts 20:3–4). **Jason.** Perhaps the same Jason with whom Paul stayed during his ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5–9).

16:22 wrote down this letter. It was customary in Paul's day for people to dictate their letters to trained scribes (amanuenses).

^{16:13} Rufus. Perhaps the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Christ's cross on the way to his execution (Mark 15:21).

^{16:14–15} None of these people are otherwise known to us. Their names suggest that they were slaves or freedmen (see note on vv. 8–10).



A Latin inscription in Corinth dating to the mid-first century AD mentions an "Erastus," probably the same Erastus mentioned by Paul (see Rom 16:23 and note). The inscription reads: "Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid [this pavement] at his own expense." www.HolyLandPhotos.org

²³Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus,^v who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. ^[24] a **16:23** ^vAc 19:22 **16:25** ^wEph 3:20 ^xRo 2:16 ^yEph 1:9; Col 1:26,27 **16:27** ^zRo 11:36

²⁵Now to him who is able^w to establish you in accordance with my gospel,^x the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery^y hidden for long ages past, ²⁶but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from^b faith — ²⁷to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.^z

^a 24 Some manuscripts include here *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.* ^b 26 Or *that is*

16:23 Gaius. Perhaps the Gaius mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14. This Gaius may also have been known as Titius Justus, whom Acts 18:7 identifies as the person with whom Paul stayed in Corinth. **Erastus . . . the city's director of public works**. The Greek word rendered "director of public works" probably corresponds to the Latin *aedile*. An inscription discovered on an ancient block of stone in Corinth probably refers to this aem Erastus: "Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid [this pavement] at his own expense." Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20 also mention an Erastus, but the name was common enough that it is uncertain whether they refer to the same man.

16:25-27 Some manuscripts of Romans omit this doxology or put it in

a different place in the letter. But the doxology is found in most manuscripts and is probably original.

16:25 mystery. Certain aspects of God's fulfillment of his plan that were not clear before Christ came (see note on 11:25).

16:26 prophetic writings. The entire OT, viewed in terms of its anticipation of the fulfillment of God's purposes. The phrase corresponds to "through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" at the beginning of the letter (1:2). **all the Gentiles.** Paul often associates the "mystery" (v. 25) with including Gentiles in the people of God (Eph 3:6; Col 1:26–27). **obedience that comes from faith.** Another phrase that echoes the beginning of the letter (1:5).

THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

D. A. Carson

It has been said that the Bible is like a body of water in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim. The youngest Christian can read the Bible with profit, for the Bible's basic message is simple (see "The Story of the Bible: How the Good News About Jesus Is Central," p. 2631, and "The Gospel," p. 2686). But we can never exhaust its depth. After decades of intense study, the most senior Bible scholars find that they have barely scratched the surface. Although we cannot know anything with the perfection of God's knowledge (his knowledge is absolutely exhaustive!), yet because God has disclosed things, we can know those things truly.

Trying to make sense of parts of the Bible and of the Bible as a whole can be challenging. What kind of study should be involved when any serious reader of the Bible tries to make sense of the Bible as a whole? Appropriate study involves several basic interdependent disciplines, of which five are mentioned here: careful reading, biblical theology (BT), historical theology (HT), systematic theology (ST), and pastoral theology (PT). What follows looks at each of these individually and shows how they interrelate and how they are more than merely intellectual exercises.

CAREFUL READING

"Exegesis" is the word often used for careful reading. Exegesis answers the questions, What does this text actually say? and, What did the author mean by what he said? We discover this by applying sound principles of interpretation to the Bible.

Fundamental to reading the Bible well is good reading. Good readers pay careful attention to words and their meanings and to the ways sentences, paragraphs, and longer units are put together. They observe that the Bible is a book that includes many different styles of literature — stories, laws, proverbs, poetry, prophecy, history, parables, letters, apocalyptic, and much more. Good readers follow the flow of texts. For example, while it is always worth meditating on individual words and phrases, the most important factor in determining what a word means is how the author uses that word in a specific context.

One of the best signs of good exegesis is asking thoughtful questions that drive us to "listen" attentively to what the Bible says. As we read the text again and again, these questions are progressively honed, sharpened, corrected, or discarded.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

BT answers the question, How has God revealed his word historically and organically? BT studies the theology of individual biblical books (e.g., Isaiah, the Gospel of John), of select collections within the Bible (e.g., the Pentateuch, wisdom literature, the Gospels, Paul's letters, John's writings), and then traces out themes as they develop across time within the canon (e.g., the way in which the theme of the temple develops, in several directions, to fill out a "whole Bible" theology of the temple). At least four priorities are essential:

1. Read the Bible progressively as a historically developing collection of documents. God did not provide his people with all of the Bible at once. There is a progression to his revelation, and to read the whole back into some early part may seriously distort that part by obscuring its true significance in the flow of redemptive history. This requires not only organizing the Bible's historical material into its chronological sequence but also trying to understand the theological nature of the sequence.

2. *Presuppose that the Bible is coherent.* The Bible has many human authors but one divine Author, and he never contradicts himself. BT uncovers and articulates the unity of all the biblical texts taken together.

3. Work inductively from the text — from individual books and from themes that run through the Bible as a whole. Although readers can never entirely divorce themselves from their own backgrounds, students of BT recognize that their subject matter is *exclusively* the Bible. They therefore try to use categories and pursue agendas that the text itself sets.

4. *Make theological connections within the entire Bible that the Bible itself authorizes.* One way to do this is to trace the trajectory of themes straight through the Bible. (That's what the following articles in this study Bible do.)

BT often focuses on the turning points in the Bible's storyline (see "A Biblical-Theological Overview of the Bible," p. 2637), and its most pivotal concern is tied to how the NT uses the OT, observing how later Scripture writers refer to earlier ones.

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

HT answers the questions, How have people in the past understood the Bible? What have Christians thought about exegesis and theology? and, more specifically, How has Christian doctrine developed over the centuries, especially in response to false teachings? HT is concerned primarily with opinions in periods earlier than our own. But we may also include under this heading the importance of reading the Bible globally — that is, finding out how believers in some other parts of the world read the text. That does not mean that they (or we!) are necessarily right; rather, it means that we recognize that all of us have a great deal to learn.

Carefully studying the history of interpretation is one of the greatest helps in freeing us from unwitting slavery to our biases. It induces humility, clears our minds of unwarranted assumptions, exposes faulty interpretations that others have long since (and rightly) dismissed, and reminds us that responsibly interpreting the Bible must never be a solitary task.

The study notes in this study Bible are informed by HT and reflect such knowledge when they present viable alternative ways to interpret texts. But the study notes focus primarily on exegesis and BT.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

ST answers the question, What does the whole Bible teach about certain topics? or put another way, What is true about God and his universe?

At the risk of stating the obvious, ST is systematic: it is organized on principles of logic, order, and need. ST is systemic: it is concerned with how the whole Bible logically coheres in systems of thought. It often organizes truth under headings such as the doctrines of God (theology proper), the Bible (bibliology), humans (anthropology), sin (hamartiology), Christ (Christology), the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology), salvation (soteriology), the church (ecclesiology), and the end times (eschatology). ST is generally framed so as to interact with and address the contemporary world. Even systematic theologians who cherish the narrative of Scripture and make much of the varied ways the Bible addresses its readers end up with highly ordered structures, sometimes calling them "theodramas."

The Bible's unity makes ST not only possible but necessary. The biblical data must control ST; however ST must in turn challenge alternative worldviews. Sometimes it is especially important not to "go beyond what is written," for some Christian truths include within their sweep substantial areas of unknown things. For instance, there are important things we do not know about Jesus' incarnation, about the Trinity, and about God's sovereignty and human responsibility. To pretend we know more than we do generates shoddy ST that can prove misleading and dangerous. A large part of orthodoxy resides in listening carefully and humbly to all of Scripture and then properly relating passage with passage, truth with truth.

Everyone holds to some sort of ST. The quality of ST is based on its foundational data, constructive methods, principles for excluding certain information, appropriately expressive language, and logical, accurate conclusions.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

PT answers the question, How should humans respond to God's revelation? Sometimes that is spelled out by Scripture itself; other times it builds on inferences of what Scripture says. PT practically applies the other four disciplines — so much so that the other disciplines are in danger of being sterile and even dishonoring to God unless tied in some sense to the responses God rightly demands of us. PT may well address such diverse domains as culture, ethics, evangelism, marriage and family, money, the cure of souls, politics, worship, and much more.

LITERARY STRUCTURES

Before we reflect on the way these various approaches to theology interact with one another, something must be said about the literary structures of the Bible. Just as the Bible is not cast as a systematic theology, with separate topical chapters on "God," "Human Beings," "Sin," and so on, so also it is not cast as a series of books that march in tight order through history, each book taking up the story where the previous book stopped.

Some of the different literary genres — i.e., kinds of writing — that make up the Bible are introduced in articles such as "Introduction to the Historical Books," "Introduction to the Wisdom and Lyrical Books," and "Introduction to the Letters." When we look more closely, we find in the pages of the Bible literary genres as diverse as genealogies, parables, laments, confessions, psalms of praise, divine utterances from God, beatitudes, discourse, narrative, government documents and decrees, and even a fable. (A fable is a story without human characters but where animals or trees or other objects represent human beings. See Judg 9:7-15).

God displays his providential wisdom in providing us with a Bible made up of all these literary genres, and more. The diversity constitutes a great advantage, for each genre has a slightly different way of appealing to us, of making its impact on us. Together they do even more than instruct our minds: they fire our imaginations, prompt us to meditate, call up mental pictures, invite us to memorize, appeal to our emotions, shame us when our thoughts or actions are tawdry and unworthy, and make our spirits leap for joy. So while we work through the ways in which exegesis is (for example) tied to BT and to ST, we must always remember that God in his perfect wisdom gave us the fundamental texts, the books of the Bible, in spectacularly diverse forms. Nothing about Bible study is boring or mechanical. Here we come into contact with the instructing, evocative, creative, incredibly rich mind of God.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Some might think it convenient if we could order these disciplines along a straight line: Exegesis \rightarrow BT \rightarrow [HT] \rightarrow ST \rightarrow PT. (The brackets around HT suggest that HT directly contributes to the development from BT to ST and PT but is not itself a part of that line.) But this neat paradigm is naive because no exegesis is ever done in a vacuum. Before we ever start doing exegesis, we already have a ST-framework that influences our exegesis. So are we locked into a hermeneutical circle? See "Hermeneutical Circle," this page.

No; there is a better way. We might diagram it like this. See "Feedback Loop," this page.

In other words, there are always feedback loops — information loops that go back and reshape how one does any exegesis or theology. The loops should not take over the final voice, but they shape the process whether one likes it or not. It is absurd to deny that one's ST does not affect one's exegesis.

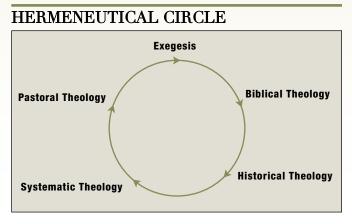
But the line of final control is the straight line from exegesis right through BT and HT to ST and PT. The final authority is the Bible and the Bible alone.

Exegesis and Biblical Theology

BT mediates how exegesis influences ST, partly because it helps one remember that there is promise and fulfillment, type and antitype, development, organic growth, anticipation and consummation (see "A Biblical-Theological Overview of the Bible," p. 2637). The overlap between exegesis and BT is the most striking among the theological disciplines: both are concerned to understand texts, and BT is impossible without exegesis. Exegesis tends to focus on analysis and BT on synthesis. BT reflects on the results of exegesis in the light of individual books and in the developing stream of the narrative of the whole Bible. Exegesis controls BT, and BT influences exegesis.

Exegesis and Historical Theology

The ancient creeds and the history of exegesis and of theology are invaluable, but they do not have the ultimate authority of the Bible itself. Nevertheless, without HT exegesis is likely to degenerate into obscure debates far too tightly tethered to



twenty-first-century agendas. Responsible exegesis wrestles with earlier Christian exegesis and theology.

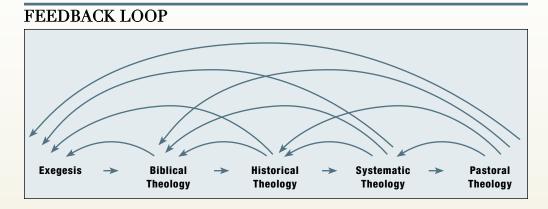
It is possible, however, to become so expert in secondary opinions that one never ponders the text of the Bible itself. Reading the history of interpretation must never usurp the place of reading the Bible.

Exegesis and Systematic Theology

Some think that their exegesis neutrally and objectively discovers the text's meaning and that they build their ST on such discoveries. In reality, ST profoundly influences one's exegesis. Without realizing it, many people develop their own lists of favorite passages of the Bible that then become their controlling grid for interpreting the rest of the Bible; to a large degree this accounts for conflicting exegesis among Christians. This problem may develop in at least two ways.

1. A church tradition may unwittingly overemphasize certain biblical truths at the expense of others, subordinating or even explaining away passages that do not easily "fit" the slightly distorted structure that results. For example, how one understands justification in Galatians may control how one understands justification everywhere else in the NT.

2. A church tradition may self-consciously adopt a certain



structure by which to integrate all the books of the Bible with the result that they automatically classify and explain some passages and themes artificially or too narrowly. Even worse is using parts of the Bible to support one's ST without worrying very much about how the whole Bible fits together.

Historical Theology and Systematic Theology

When studying what the Bible teaches about a particular subject (ST), one must integrate HT. In some measure, ST deals with HT's categories, but ST's priorities and agenda ideally address the contemporary age at the most critical junctures.

Biblical Theology and Historical Theology

Both BT and HT are aware of the passage of time in their respective disciplines: BT focuses on the time during which the biblical documents were written and collected, while HT focuses on the study of the Bible from the time it was completed. Otherwise put, BT focuses on the Bible, while HT focuses on what significant figures have believed about the Bible. BT functions best when interacting with HT.

Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology

BT is historical and organic; ST is relatively ahistorical and universal. Unlike BT, which is deeply committed to working inductively from the biblical text so that the text itself sets the agenda, ST may (legitimately) be at a second or third or fourth order removed from Scripture as it engages, say, philosophical and scientific questions that the biblical texts themselves do not directly raise. But ST is the most comprehensive of the various theological disciplines.

Exegesis and BT have an advantage over ST because the Bible aligns more immediately with their agendas. ST has an advantage over exegesis and BT because it drives hard toward holistic integration.

ST tends to be a little further removed from the biblical text than does BT, but ST is a little closer to cultural engagement. In some ways, BT is a kind of bridge-discipline between exegesis and ST because it overlaps with them, enabling them to hear each other a little better. In some ways, ST is a culminating discipline because it attempts to form and transform one's worldview. BT is important today because the gospel is virtually incoherent unless people understand the Bible's storyline. ST is important today because, rightly undertaken, it brings clarity and depth to our understanding of what the Bible is about.

Pastoral Theology and the Other Disciplines

PT applies exegesis, BT, HT, and ST to help people glorify God by living wisely with a biblical worldview. It answers the practical question, How then should we live?

Although it is possible to treat pastoral theology as an independent discipline, it is wiser to recognize that the Bible was never given to stir up *merely* or *exclusively* intellectual questions. It was given to transform people's lives; it was given to be practical. The notion of impractical theology—theological study that is unconcerned with repentance, faith, obedience, conformity to Christ, and joy in the Lord—hovers somewhere between the ridiculous and the blasphemous.

We may so quickly pursue "what the Bible means to me" (greatly emphasizing "to me") that we completely ignore the distance between ourselves and the text and compromise the Bible's historical specificity and thus the nature of God's revelation. It is far better to read each part of the Scripture, think it through on its own terms, discern its contribution to the whole Bible, and ask how such truth applies to us and our church and society.

Since God created the universe, we are accountable to him, and he has authoritatively spoken in the Bible. Even if we earnestly try to understand God's gracious self-disclosure on its own terms, that is insufficient if we do not respond to God as he has disclosed himself. Interpreters are inseparable from the interpretive process, and our attitude toward the text is important. Desiring merely to master the text is not enough; we must desire to be mastered by it. For one day we will give an account to the one who says, "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word" (Isa 66:2).

A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

D. A. Carson

In "The Bible and Theology," p. 2633, we observed how biblical theology is related to other disciplines, including careful reading, systematic theology, historical theology, and pastoral theology. Biblical theology studies the theology of individual biblical books (e.g., Isaiah, the Gospel of John) and of select collections within the Bible (e.g., the Pentateuch, wisdom literature, the Gospels, Paul's letters, John's writings), carefully thinking through their place in the Bible's developing story. It also traces out themes as they develop across time within the canon.

THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

As currently practiced, biblical theology wears one or more of three "faces":

1. *Face One*. Here one seeks to understand, e.g., the theology of Jeremiah, of Luke-Acts, of the Pentateuch, or of Hebrews. Textbooks abound with the words "Theology of the New Testament" in the title. In most cases these are books with discrete chapters devoted to the distinctive theological emphases of each book or corpus in the NT. The best of these chapters locate the biblical book or corpus within the Bible's entire narrative, not just within the narrative of the NT, and thus they are rightly considered biblical-theological studies.

2. Face Two. Alternatively, one may trace certain themes running through the entire Bible, carefully observing how the passage of time enlarges and enriches them. Many of the ensuing articles in this study Bible are devoted to that kind of biblical theology. For example, the study of how the theme of the temple develops across time within the Bible not only generates insight on that theme but also enables us to see more clearly how the entire Bible holds together.

3. Face Three. Some writers have recently studied a particular biblical book, then carefully noted how that book uses earlier biblical material, and then examined how later biblical books cite or allude to that book. For example, one might study the theology of the book of Daniel, paying close attention to the ways in which Daniel picks up themes and specific passages from earlier OT material, and then study how Daniel is cited and used in the rest of the Bible. This is another way of saying that even though biblical theology sometimes focuses initially on one book of the Bible or on one theme running through the Bible, sooner or later it is interested in understanding how the Bible holds together, how in God's providence it develops across time to become what we hold in our hands today.

What is striking about all these faces of biblical theology is that they keep one eye focused on the passage of time i.e., on where any biblical document or theme is located in what is often called "salvation history" (the history of redemption). God did not choose to disclose everything in one moment of spectacular revelation. Rather, he chose to disclose himself and his purposes progressively, through events and words spread across many centuries, climaxing in his Son, Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS SALVATION HISTORY?

Although the word "history" sometimes refers to what has taken place, it more commonly refers to the story or account of what has taken place. No human account of what has taken place can ever be exhaustive: we simply do not and cannot know enough. For example, a history of the Roman Empire cannot possibly tell us everything that took place within the Roman Empire during the centuries the empire existed. Any history of the Roman Empire will necessarily be selective. A history will be judged as excellent or poor on the basis of how representative it is, how the parts are made to cohere, how evidence has been handled, and the like. However the history is organized, it involves sequence (keeping an eye on time), cause and effect, trends, and evaluation of significance.

Salvation history is thus the history of salvation — i.e., the history of events that focus on the salvation of human beings and issues involving the new heaven and the new earth. Even when the focus narrows to one man, Abraham, and his descendants, that man is given the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). Biblical Christianity is not an abstract or timeless philosophy (though of course it involves abstractions): at least in part, it is the account of what God has done, of the events and explanations he has brought about in order to save lost human beings. (Even what "salvation" means, what it means to be "saved," is disclosed in this history.) From this, four things follow:

1. Salvation history is part of world history. It may tell of some events that other historians are not interested in, but it so describes real events that it necessarily overlaps with other histories. The Bible tells of some events bound up with Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kgs 15:29), Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 39), and Pilate (Matt 27:11-26), but we also know of these men from sources with no connection to the Bible.

2. Salvation history is real history. It depicts events that really did take place. This may seem a rather obvious thing to say, but it has to be said, because some theologians have argued that salvation history — biblical history — is often not historical. Sometimes, they say, it relates things as if they really did take place even though they did not take place. The importance of these "events" that never happened, it is argued, lies in their aesthetics, their important themes, or their ability to stir the imagination. But salvation history is real history.

3. Salvation history includes not only events caused by other events that take place in the natural world but also events caused directly by God. Sometimes, of course, God works in providential ways through the natural order. For example, although biblical authors know about the water cycle-water evaporates from oceans and seas to form clouds that send their precipitation back to earth to run in rivulets and streams and rivers back to the sea (Eccl 1:7) ---they generally prefer to say that God sends the rain (e.g., Matt 5:45). Thus, God works through the natural order. But when God raises Jesus from the dead, there is nothing natural about God's action: this is the direct intervention of God, displaying his might in contravention of nature. Nevertheless, Jesus' resurrection *happened*; it took place *in history*. This must be strongly asserted against those who say that genuinely "historical" events are those that have natural causes. Such a stance rules out what the Bible makes obvious: God can and does directly intervene in history beyond his providential reign that utilizes natural causes. Salvation history includes events like Jesus' resurrection, events that take place but that are caused directly by God.

4. Although the Bible contains a good deal of salvation history, it contains things other than salvation history. For example, it includes wisdom literature, lament, law, prophecy, and much more. But even these disparate kinds of literature that make up the Bible are written at discrete points along the Bible's story line. In other words, salvation history provides the backbone to which all the parts of the Bible are connected.

THE SHAPE OF SALVATION HISTORY

One might summarize salvation history in four words: creation, fall, redemption, consummation. That is the entire story, painted with the broadest brush. Then again, one might add in, after the fall, a number of other turning points: the call of Abraham and the beginning of the Abrahamic covenant, the exodus and the giving of the law, entrance into the promised land, the establishment of the Davidic dynasty, the exile and the end of the exile. Under redemption, one might break down the category into constituent parts: the incarnation, Jesus' atoning death, Jesus' resurrection, and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Of course, one might then further refine the details of this history. For example, one might specify David's seven-year rule in Hebron over two tribes before he captures Jerusalem, makes it his capital, and simultaneously becomes king over the twelve tribes. In discussing the Davidic dynasty, one might list the various monarchs and what they did for good or ill. One might describe the tabernacle and its function as stipulated in the law of Moses, then trace its history until it is displaced by the temple built by Solomon, observing further the destruction of the temple under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, and the building of another temple under the ministry of prophets like Haggai. Likewise, one might expand the discussion of the exile to distinguish the onset of the exile of Israel in 722 BC by the Assyrians from the onset of the exile of Judah in 586 BC by the Babylonians. The distinction between these two dates is of more than antiquarian interest; e.g., the prophets build on the fact that Israel is taken off to captivity long before her "sister" Judah to argue that Judah ought to learn some lessons from the wretched experience of Israel, while in fact she learns nothing and seems committed to duplicating all Israel's sins, with far less excuse (e.g., Jer 3:6 - 4:31). And so far nothing has been said of the salvation-historical contributions of, e.g., Ruth, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah.

All these historical details, many of them significant historical turning points, make up the history of redemption. And all of them, rightly configured, draw lines toward the greatest turning point of all in salvation history: the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SALVATION HISTORY

Five things might usefully be mentioned.

1. The story line of the Bible, the sweep of salvation history, provides the framework on which so much else in the Bible depends. For example, it would be impossible to trace such themes as the tabernacle/temple, the priestly ministry, the Davidic dynasty, and the Messianic hope apart from the salvation-historical framework in which these themes are embedded. Thus, the discipline of biblical theology is grounded on an appropriate grasp of salvation history.

2. The Bible's salvation history largely establishes the direction of its movement. To return for a moment to the simplest outline of salvation history: we begin with *creation*, with God as the Creator and all that he makes declared to be good; we move to the *fall*, which establishes the nature of the problem throughout the rest of the story; we arrive at *redemption*, which is God's answer to the horrible defiance of human rebellion and guilt, turning as it does on the cross and resurrection of Jesus; and we finally reach the *consummation*, when in the wake of redemption God finally brings

to pass all his purposes, secured in Christ and now brought to completion. Salvation-history is cohesive and discloses God's purposes in the direction in which the narrative unfolds.

3. The trajectories that run through and are part of the history of redemption gradually point to the future and become predictive voices. For example, the promise of a Davidic dynasty (2 Sam 7:11b - 16), a promise made about 1,000 years before Jesus, a dynasty that endures forever, is fleshed out in Ps 2, given new and rich associations in the eighth-century BC prophecies of Isaiah (Isa 9), and provided with further images in the sixth-century BC ministry of Ezekiel (Ezek 34). Once this trajectory is established, thoughtful readers look along this trajectory and cannot fail to discern ways in which the depictions of Davidic kings point forward to the ultimate Davidic king. Similar things can be said of many other trajectories that run through salvation history. For example, the theme of the exodus is picked up and developed in the return of the people to the promised land after the exile and culminates in the new exodus theme in the NT (see "Exile and Exodus," p. 2659).

4. Very often these trajectories (or "typologies," as they are often called) in the history of redemption become intertwined to form rich tapestries. For example, although it is possible to follow the themes of tabernacle/temple, Jerusalem, and the Davidic dynasty as separate trajectories (these are teased out in various articles in this study Bible), they come together in 2 Sam 6-7: the ark is brought to Jerusalem and the groundwork is laid for the temple, David's dynasty is established, and Jerusalem, now the capital of Israel, is becoming the city of the great King. From this point forward these themes repeatedly wrap around each other, so that mention of one often pulls in one or both of the others. The destruction of Jerusalem at the onset of the Babylonian exile means the destruction of the temple and the suspension of the Davidic monarchy. Eventually Jesus is hailed as the Messianic King as he rides into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-11), cleans out the temple (Matt 21:12-17), and is crucified as the king who reigns from the cross (Matt 27:27-37), providing the atonement long anticipated by the rites in the temple (Heb 9:1-10:4) and pointing the way forward to the Jerusalem that is above (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22).

5. Above all, salvation history provides the locus in which God has disclosed himself in events and in the words that explain them. As salvation history is the framework of the Bible's story line, so it is the locus of the revelation of the living God, the Lord of history.