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 1 Jn 1:5-2:6 1827
 1 Jn 2:7-14 1828
 1 Jn 2:15-29 1829
 1 Jn 3:1-10 1830
 1 Jn 3:11-24 1831
 1 Jn 4:1-6 1832
 1 Jn 4:7-21 1833
 1 Jn 5:1-21 1834

2 JOHN

■ 2 Jn 1:1-11 1835
 2 Jn 1:12-13 1836

3 JOHN

■ 3 Jn 1:1-4 1836
 3 Jn 1:5-15 1837

JUDE

■ Jude 1:1-16 1824
 Jude 1:17-23 1825
 Jude 1:24-25 1826

REVELATION

■ Rv 1:1-3 1838
 Rv 1:4-8 1839
 Rv 1:9-20 1840
 Rv 2:1-7 1841
 Rv 2:8-11 1842
 Rv 2:12-17 1843
 Rv 2:18-29 1844
 Rv 3:1-6 1845
 Rv 3:7-13 1846
 Rv 3:14-22 1847
 Rv 4:1-11 1848
 Rv 5:1-14 1849
 Rv 6:1-17 1851
 Rv 7:1-8 1852
 Rv 7:9-8:5 1853
 Rv 8:6-9:12 1854
 Rv 9:13-10:11 1855
 Rv 11:1-14 1856
 Rv 11:15-19 1857
 Rv 12:1-18 1858
 Rv 13:1-10 1859
 Rv 13:11-18 1860
 Rv 14:1-13 1861
 Rv 14:14-16:21 1862
 Rv 17:1-18 1864
 Rv 18:1-24 1865
 Rv 19:1-10 1867
 Rv 19:11-21 1868
 Rv 20:1-10 1869
 Rv 20:11-22:6 1870
 Rv 22:7-21 1872

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PREFACE TO THE CHRONOLOGICAL LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE, SECOND EDITION

The *Life Application Study Bible* was created by a team of scholars, pastors, and lay people to help people obey this direct call from Scripture: “Don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (James 1:22). The goal was to create study notes and other practical helps that would allow readers to quickly grasp the meaning of Scripture and then apply God’s truth to the needs and concerns of everyday life.

The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* took another step in helping readers understand and apply the truth of Scripture to life. Instead of using the traditional canonical arrangement of Scripture (Genesis to Revelation), this Bible rearranged the content to appear, as much as possible, in the order the events actually occurred. The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* contains every word of the Bible’s 66 books, but it divides the material into 10 historical eras of biblical history, with Bible books intermingled, helping you see how God’s grand story unfolded. The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* not only retains the features that make the *Life Application Study Bible* so useful but also includes additional features to allow for even greater depth of study in historical and cultural contexts.

Now, this second edition of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* sets out to enrich this incredible tool even more. Upon review, it was decided that this study Bible could be enhanced by highlighting more clearly how each part of Scripture grows out of and expresses its origins in God’s community of faith, the people of Israel. We have accomplished this by updates and revisions related to the following concerns.

First, we set out to highlight more fully the Jewishness of the Bible, both for the Old Testament and, especially, for the New Testament. All readers will experience an enriched understanding of the Bible in its world. And for the growing number of Jewish people who are coming to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, it will help them grasp the deep Jewish roots of their faith, helping to establish their identity in Jesus and encourage their witness to family and friends. Many non-Jewish believers are also eager to learn more about the Jewish background of their faith, which is often obscured in available Bible-study tools.

Second, as anti-Semitism continues to be a prevalent, worldwide issue, we hope this edition will help readers avoid potential anti-Jewish readings of the Bible and the associated false stereotypes of Jewish people that often come with them. Sometimes wrong stereotypes can be unconsciously adopted even by believers who show love and care for the Jewish people. We have therefore chosen to highlight through our terminology the Jewish nature of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments and to adjust wording that might be misleading regarding the role of Israel in Scripture and the work of Jesus the Messiah in the world.

To accomplish these goals, we have substantially edited the content of the first edition of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*. We have reworked many of the study notes at the bottom of pages, revised personality profiles, and added new charts and articles. In many places, we have substituted terms such as “Messiah” for “Christ” (both terms mean “anointed one”) and “believers” or “congregations” for “churches” and made other similar changes.

Much of this work has been done by the editorial team at Jews for Jesus (see page A54), who have expressed their gratitude to the original writers of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, recognizing that the revisions and additions of this new edition simply overlay what has long been a substantial and helpful study Bible. May it now, in its second edition, continue to produce fruit for the Messiah’s Kingdom, just as the earlier edition has done.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRONOLOGICAL LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

WHY THE CHRONOLOGICAL LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE IS UNIQUE

Have you ever opened your Bible and asked the following:

- What does this passage really mean?
- How does it apply to my life?
- Why does some of the Bible seem irrelevant?
- What do these ancient cultures have to do with today?
- I love God; why can't I understand what he is saying to me through his Word?
- What's going on in the lives of these Bible people?

Many followers of Jesus do not read the Bible regularly. Why? Because in the pressures of daily living, they cannot find a connection between the timeless principles of Scripture and the ever-present problems of day-by-day living.

God urges us to apply his Word (Isa 42:23; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Thes 3:4), but too often we stop at accumulating Bible knowledge. This is why the *Life Application Study Bible* was originally developed—to show how to put into practice what we have learned.

Applying God's Word is a vital part of one's relationship with God; it is the evidence that we are obeying him. The difficulty in applying the Bible is not with the Bible itself but with the reader's inability to bridge the gap between the past and present, the conceptual and practical. When we don't or can't do this, spiritual dryness, shallowness, and indifference are the results.

The words of Scripture itself cry out to us, "Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves" (Jas 1:22). The *Life Application Study Bible* does just that. It helps you understand the context of a passage, gives important background and historical information, explains difficult words and phrases, and helps you see the interrelationships within Scripture. But it does much more. The *Life Application Study Bible* goes deeper into God's Word, helping you discover the timeless truths being communicated, see the relevance for your life, and make a personal application. The notes answer the questions "So what?" and "What does this passage mean to me, my family, my friends, my job, my neighborhood, my congregation, my country?"

Developed by an interdenominational team of pastors, scholars, family counselors, and a national organization dedicated to promoting God's Word and spreading the gospel, the *Life Application Study Bible* took many years to complete, and all the work was reviewed by renowned theologians.

This edition is the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, and it goes even further in helping you to understand the Bible and apply it to your life. Instead of the traditional canonical arrangement, this Bible is arranged so events appear in the order in which they occurred. Although it contains every word of the 66 books of the Bible, this Bible is divided into 10 eras of biblical history, with the books intermingled to help you see how the story actually unfolded. The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* retains all the features that make the *Life Application Study Bible* so useful, and it adds more features for even greater depth in studying the Bible.

Imagine reading a familiar passage of Scripture and gaining fresh insight, as if it were the first time you had ever read it. How much richer would your life be if you left each Bible reading with a new perspective and a small change for the better? A small change every day adds up to a changed life—and that is the very purpose of Scripture.

WHAT IS APPLICATION?

The best way to define *application* is to first determine what it is *not*. Application is *not* just accumulating knowledge. Knowledge helps us discover and understand facts and concepts, but it stops there. History is filled with philosophers who knew what the Bible said but failed to apply it to their lives, keeping them from believing and changing. Many think that understanding is the end goal of Bible study, but it is really only the beginning.

Application is *not* just illustration. Illustration only tells us how someone else handled a similar situation. While we may empathize with that person, we still have little direction for our personal situation.

Application is *not* just making a passage “relevant.” Making the Bible relevant only helps us to see that the same lessons that were true in Bible times are true today; it does not show us how to apply them to the problems and pressures of our individual lives.

What, then, is application? Application *begins* by knowing and understanding God’s Word and goes further. It focuses on the truth of the particular Scripture text, shows us what to do about what we’re reading, and motivates us to respond to what God is teaching. All three are essential.

Application is putting into practice what we already know (see Mark 4:24; Heb 5:14). It answers our question “So what?” by confronting us with the right questions and motivating us to take action (see 1 Jn 2:5-6; Jas 2:17). Application is unique for each individual. It is making a relevant truth a personal truth, and it involves developing a strategy and action plan to live our lives in harmony with the Bible. It is the biblical “how to” of life.

You may ask, “How can your application notes be relevant to *my* life?” Each application note has three parts: (1) an *explanation* that ties the note directly to the Scripture passage and sets up the truth that is being taught, (2) the *bridge* that explains the truth and makes it relevant for today, and (3) the *application* that shows you how to take that truth and apply it to your personal situation. No note, by itself, can apply Scripture directly to your life. It can only teach, direct, lead, guide, inspire, recommend, and urge. It can give you the resources and direction you need to apply the Bible; but only *you* can take these resources and put them into practice.

A good note, therefore, should not only give you knowledge and understanding, but point you to application. Before you buy any kind of resource Bible, you should evaluate the notes and ask the following questions: (1) Does the note contain enough information to help me understand the point of the Scripture passage? (2) Does the note assume I know too much? (3) Does the note avoid denominational bias? (4) Do the notes touch most of life’s experiences? (5) Does the note help me *apply* God’s Word?

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT A CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE?

The Bible does not proceed in chronological order from beginning to end. Indeed, the 66 books of the Bible do tell a unified story that begins at Genesis 1:1 and ends at Revelation 22:21, but the books are essentially organized by grouping similar kinds of books together (prophets, letters, etc.) rather than proceeding in chronological order. Some books cover the exact same events from different perspectives, like the books of Kings and Chronicles. Others, like the Psalms, are spread over hundreds of years by many different authors. It is often difficult for ordinary readers to put together the little clues throughout the Bible that show how a particular book or chapter fits into the larger story of the Bible. But seeing that larger story is often the key that unlocks understanding for some parts of the Bible that seem obscure.

The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* helps the reader see the larger story by breaking up the traditional books of the Bible into 10 major eras of biblical history, intermingling the Scriptures into a single, unified story from Creation to the end. This provides readers with a unique viewpoint on the biblical story, and it can give fresh

and exciting insight into books of the Bible that might have been difficult to understand apart from knowing where they fall chronologically. For example, see the way the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are interacting with what is happening in the book of Ezra (pp. 1178–1197). Intermingling the prophets with the historical books can give us a new perspective on the issues they were dealing with. In this case, it shows how the people responded to God's call on their life through the prophets: The Temple was rebuilt and proper worship in Jerusalem was restored! This is only one of many examples. In the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, you will notice that the prophets are an integral part of the story of Israel, and their writings will pop up right in the middle of the story when they confronted a king or the people. You will read Paul's letters to the Thessalonians right when he wrote them, during a stay in Corinth a few months after his visit to Thessalonica. This new view on the text of Scripture will give you surprising and valuable insights.

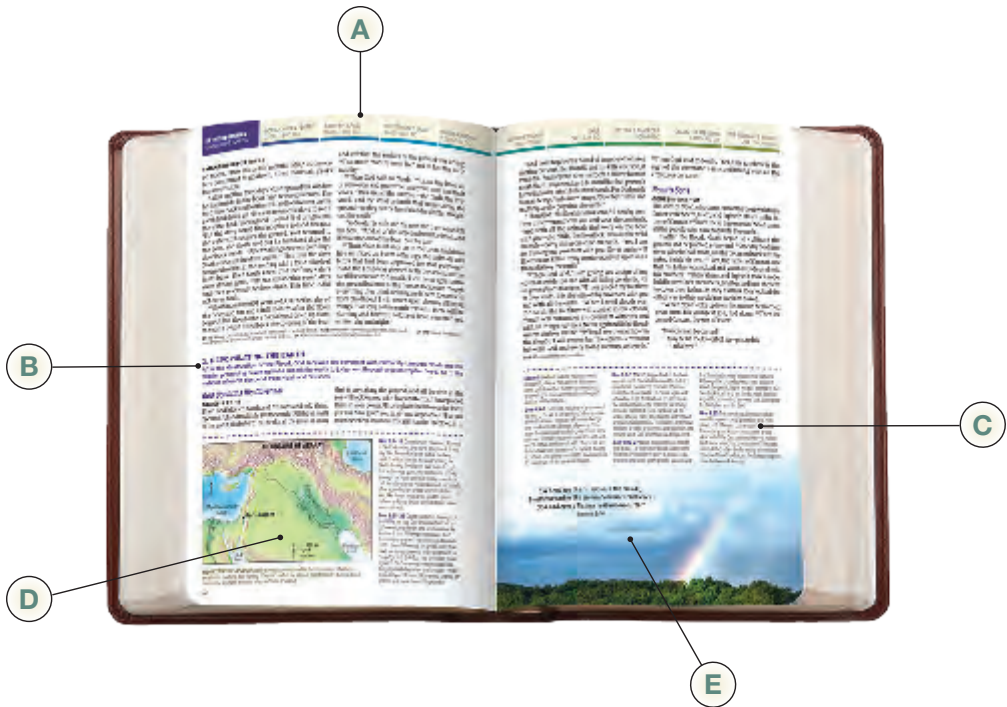
Although a chronological Bible gives us a new and exciting outlook on the message of Scripture, we do need to remember that the Bible was not written as a single story. God gave us the Bible as a collection of 66 individual books, not a chronological rearrangement of those books. While helpful as a tool for gaining insight into the meaning, message, and significance of Scripture, a chronological Bible is not a substitute for a traditional Bible. The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* does contain every word of the Bible, but because it is rearranged and books are often presented out of canonical order or broken up into smaller pieces, we should remember that the books of the Bible are intended to be read as whole books. It is helpful to see the Gospels mingled together in one common narrative, with parallel passages together, but it is not a substitute for reading the book of Matthew as a whole, unbroken story about Jesus' life and his significance. With that in mind, it is our hope that the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* will be a vital tool in helping you understand the Bible, but it should not replace a traditional Bible in any sense.

Organizing the Bible into chronological order is sometimes tricky, and excellent scholars do not always agree on the order of certain books or passages. The editors of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* created the chronological arrangement by consulting several scholarly resources, but it should not be considered the only legitimate way to organize the Bible chronologically. Some books, such as the book of the prophet Joel, are very difficult to place chronologically. In cases like that, we used our best judgment, but ultimately certainty eludes us. In many places, the study notes will mention the possibility of alternative chronologies. We encourage readers to question our decisions and consider alternatives to the arrangement we have provided—the text of Scripture is infallible, but our arrangement of it in this Bible certainly is not!

FEATURES OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

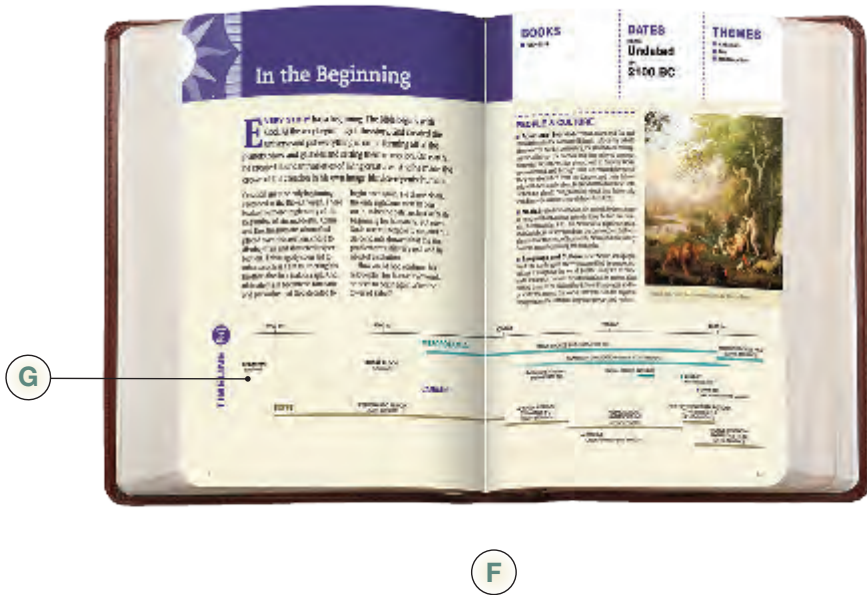
Front matter features

- **Canonical Table of Contents** A table of contents listing each passage of Scripture in its canonical order was created in order to give you a quick way to find any passage in this Bible based just on the reference, even if you have no idea what place that book or verse has in the chronological story.
- **Chronological Survey of the Bible** To help you understand the Old and New Testaments from their chronological viewpoint, a quick overview of the whole story, including gaps like the intertestamental period, begins on p. A25.



Interior features

- A. Chronological Header System** You'll never be at a loss for where you are in the story of the Bible. Every page shows the entirety of the historical eras covered with the current era highlighted for quick recognition of where you are in God's story.
- B. Outline** The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* has a new, custom-made outline that was designed specifically from an application point of view. Several unique features should be noted:
 1. To avoid confusion, each section outline has only three levels of headings. Main outline heads are marked with a capital letter. Subheads are marked by a number. Minor explanatory heads have no letter or number.
 2. Brief paragraphs below each main head and subhead summarize the content of the following Bible text and offer important contextual information.
- C. Notes** In addition to providing the reader with many application notes, the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* also offers several kinds of explanatory notes that help you understand culture, history, context, difficult-to-understand passages, background, places, theological concepts, and the relationship of various passages in Scripture to other passages. Maps, charts, and diagrams are also found on the same page as the passages to which they relate. For an example of an application note, see the note on John 20:23 (p. 1521). For an example of an explanatory note, see the note on Mark 11:1-2 (p. 1452). The abbreviation ff appears in some notes to indicate that the comments apply not only to the verse referenced but to the following passage as well.
- D. Maps** The *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* has more maps than any other Bible. A thorough and comprehensive Bible atlas is built right into each Bible section. There are two kinds of maps: (1) a section introduction map, telling the story of that section of Bible history; and (2) thumbnail maps in the notes, plotting most geographic movements in the Bible. In addition to these numerous full-color maps, there is a comprehensive set of color maps and diagrams at the back of this Bible.



E. Illustrated Verses Many photos appear throughout this Bible that illustrate important verses and bring the Bible to life.

F. Section Introductions The Section Introductions are divided into several easy-to-find parts:

Overview. This is a summary with general lessons and applications that can be drawn from the section as a whole.

Timeline. This puts the Bible books or passages of that section's era into their historical setting. It lists the key events of that era and the dates when they occurred.

People and Culture. This is an overview of the important people and cultural issues that provide background for what is happening historically during that time.

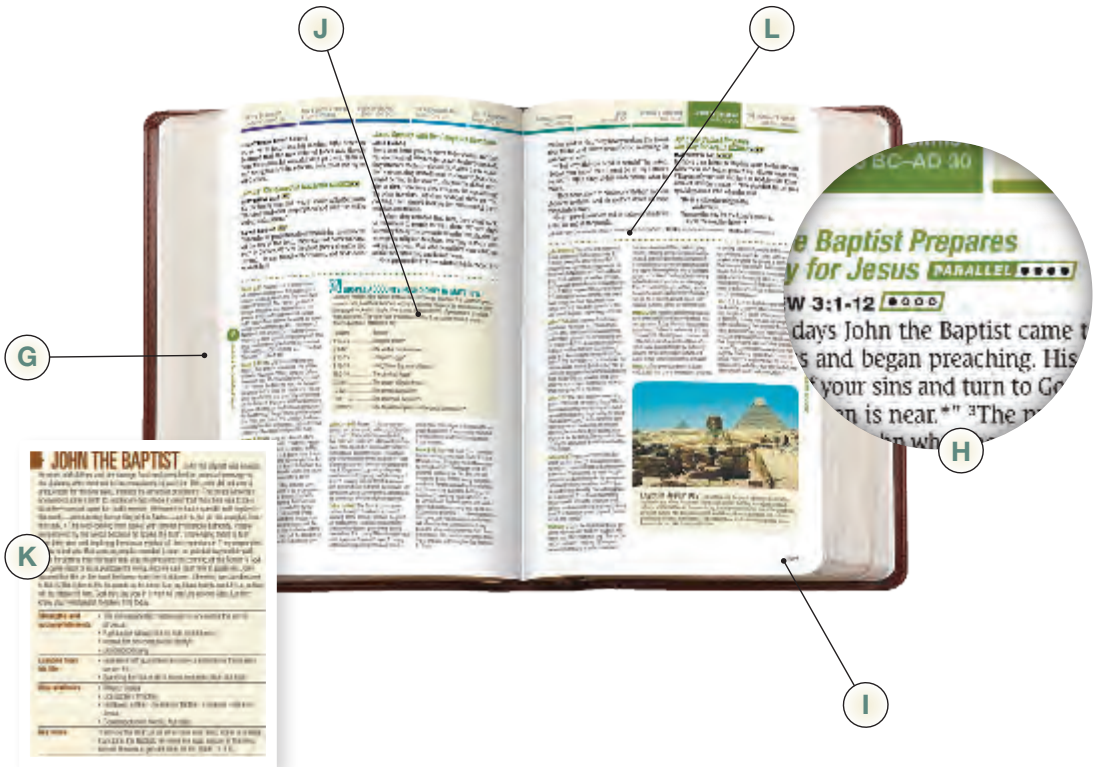
Books in this Section. This is a list of straight facts about each book in the section—those pieces of information you need to know at a glance.

Article. Some introductions include an article that explains an important biblical or theological concept to help in understanding that section.

Megathemes. This feature gives the main themes of the section, explains their significance, and then tells why they are still important for us today.

Map. This shows the key places found in the section and retells the story of the section from a geographical point of view.

G. Timeline Three types of timelines appear in this Bible. There is a master timeline listing all the events that are recorded throughout the Bible (p. A36). There are also more detailed timelines at the beginning of each era of biblical history, showing the events of that section in the context of other major world powers and events. Finally, there is a running timeline of key dates in the margins of the text to indicate when in history that passage took place.



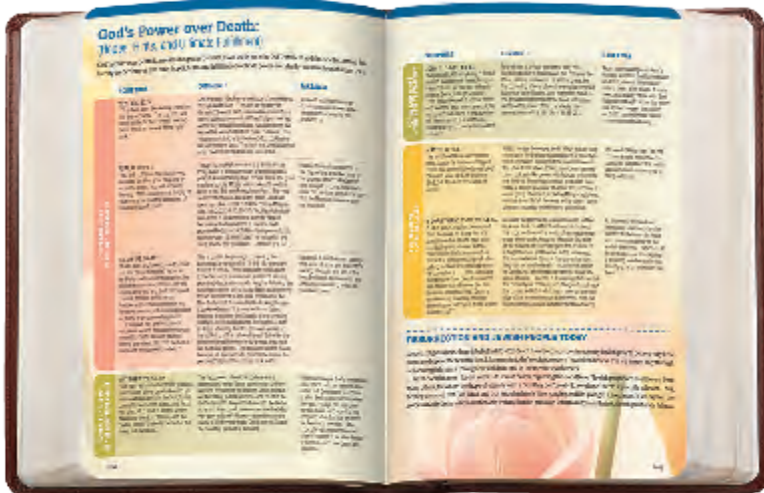
H. Parallel Passage Indicator Parallel passages are placed one after another. Each is identified by a bar signifying that it is part of a parallel section. Markers identify how many passages—two, three, or four—are in the parallel. The parallel passages are also marked to indicate which one it is in the parallel: first, second, third, or fourth.

I. Archaeological Notes These notes feature full-color images and highlight important places, archaeological discoveries, and historical artifacts that put the Bible into real historical context.

J. Charts and Diagrams Hundreds of charts and diagrams are included to help the reader better visualize difficult concepts or relationships. Most charts not only present the needed information but show its significance as well.

K. Personality Profiles Another unique feature of this Bible is a collection of profiles of many Bible people, including their strengths and weaknesses, greatest accomplishments and mistakes, and key lessons from their lives.

L. Textual Notes and Sectional Headings Directly related to the New Living Translation text, the textual notes examine such things as alternate translations, meaning of Hebrew and Greek terms, Old Testament quotations, and variant readings in the ancient biblical manuscripts. The NLT text also contains sectional headings in order to help you more easily understand the subject and content of each section; these headings appear as the third level of the three-level header system described under point B.



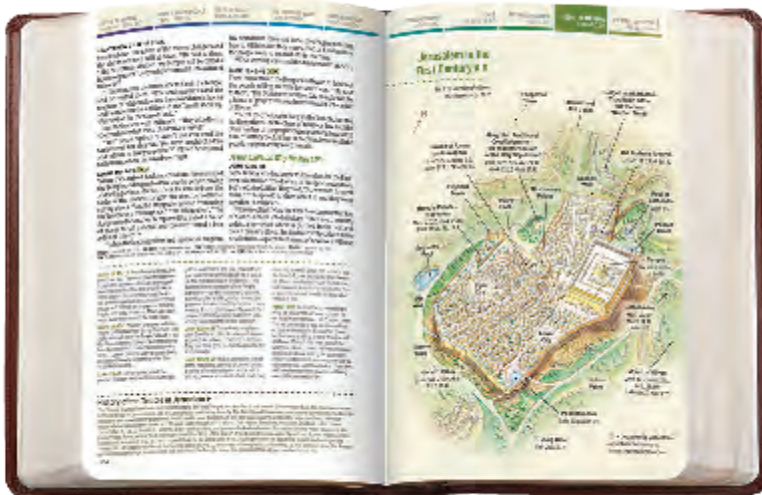
M

M. Articles Twenty two-page articles give added Jewish perspective on a number of important biblical themes.



N

N. Harmony of the Gospels A visual harmony of the Gospels was developed specifically for this Bible. It is located on p. 1278 and explained in detail there.



O. Full-Color Illustrations. Eight full-color illustrations were commissioned specifically for the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, including four drawings of Jerusalem from various periods in history and detailed illustrations of the Tabernacle and Temple.

Back matter features

- **A Resource for Sharing and Growing Our Faith** The Resource for Sharing and Growing Our Faith is a special supplement written with you in mind. It includes five articles that you will find useful in your ministry: (1) “How to Lead Someone to Faith in Jesus the Messiah” includes the basic steps for coming to faith in Jesus the Messiah, along with Scriptures you might use to guide someone else to faith. (2) “Helping a New Believer Take the Next Steps in Following Jesus” gives you ten discussion points to walk through with a new believer over the course of several weeks. These will help in understanding the basics of faith in Jesus. (3) “Finding Answers to Tough Questions” gives you often-asked questions (that you probably have been asked from time to time) and offers ideas for how to process and respond to those questions. (4) “So You’ve Been Asked to Speak” walks you through the process of preparing a talk or Bible study using the many features of the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*. (5) Finally, “Taking the Step to Application” teaches you how to make application a natural part of your personal study as well as a part of Bible studies you lead or talks you give.
- **The Bible Book-by-Book** Since the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible* is arranged chronologically in 10 sections rather than canonically in 66 books, individual book introductions could not be included throughout the Bible; instead, they are gathered together here so that you can still get an overview of the meaning and message of each individual book of the Bible.
- **Master Index** This Bible contains a complete master index to all the notes, charts, maps, archaeological notes, articles, illustrations, and personality profiles, as well as separate indexes for each of these.
- **Dictionary/Concordance** A concise concordance identifies terms and proper names of special interest and points to the important occurrences in context. Each word is followed by a brief definition or description.
- **Glossary of Jewish Terms** Throughout the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible, Second Edition*, you will find Hebrew equivalents for English terms as well as the ceremonial names of standard practices such as circumcision. This glossary will offer concise definitions for these words.
- **Suggested Bible Readings for the Jewish Year** Traditionally known as the *Parashot*, this reading plan includes the entirety of the Five Books of Moses and portions of the Prophets and Writings given in the order they are read at weekly meetings in the synagogue. You will also find a New Testament *parasha* included here as well.

A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

Biblical history spans the entire course of time from the creation of the world to the time of the early followers of Jesus in the late first century A.D. At its most basic level, it is simply the story of God fashioning a people for himself and redemptively interacting with them throughout history. From the creation of the world and the first human beings to the fall of humanity; to the calling of Abraham and the rise of Israel; to the return of Judah from exile in Babylon; to the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; and finally to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in all believers—God continually works to redeem a people for himself, a people he can lovingly bless with good things as they seek him and find their hope in him, the source of all good things.

■ In the Beginning: Creation—2100 B.C.

The story begins with the very creation of the world, when God formed the heavens and earth and then all living things to inhabit them. All that he created was “good,” but God distinguished human beings from the rest of creation by creating them in his very own image. He abundantly provided for Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, by placing them in a specially prepared garden, and he enjoyed unbroken fellowship with them. But this perfect world was soon poisoned by sin when Adam and Eve sought to be their own masters and disobeyed God. Instead of trusting and obeying God, they swallowed the lie of the serpent, who told them they could be like God. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and from then on suffered pain, sorrow, hardship, and even death. But thankfully, the story of God’s people did not end there. In fact, that was just the beginning.

Sadly, the curse of sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve was passed down to all their descendants as well. Every human being is “bent,” so to speak, just like their ancestors. This can be seen as early as their first child: Cain killed his brother out of jealousy. The curse of sin continued until the whole world was so wicked that God chose to wipe it all out and start over, in a sense, with a new people, a people descended from a righteous man named Noah.

God instructed Noah to build a giant boat

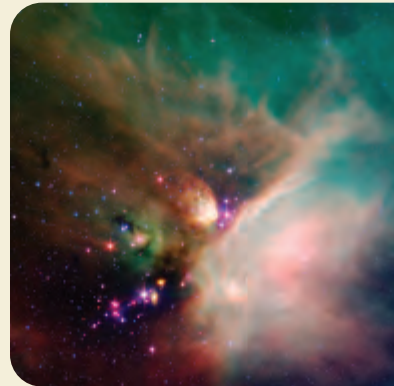
to save his family and pairs of every kind of animal living on the earth. Then God made it rain for 40 days until the whole earth was covered with water, and every living thing that was not on the boat—including human beings—died. After the floodwaters subsided, Noah and his family left the boat to start a new humanity. God told them to multiply and fill the earth, and he promised never again to destroy the earth with a flood.

Noah’s descendants multiplied. Everyone spoke a single language, enabling them to easily work together. So they decided to build a great tower to the heavens, a testimony to their own greatness. But God chose to confuse them with different

languages, making it virtually impossible for them to continue with their great project, since they could no longer understand each other. As a result, the people soon dispersed and spread out over all the earth, which is what God had commanded them to do in the first place.

■ God’s Chosen People: 2100—1800 B.C.

It appears that with each generation after Noah, people drifted further and further from God. God chose once again to create a new people for himself *within* the rest of humanity—this time through a man named Abram (eventually renamed Abraham). Through this chosen people, God would ultimately bless all of humanity. Interestingly, the Bible does not mention why God chose Abram. It simply says God told him to leave his family and his home country and go to a new land that God would show him. God promised to bless Abraham and make a great nation from his descendants. And Abraham obeyed God. Thus begins the rest of the story of the Old Testament—the story of God’s chosen people.



In obedience and faith, Abraham left his home and traveled to the land of Canaan. God told Abraham that this was the land he was going to give him, and he sealed his promise with a solemn covenant ceremony. God also reaffirmed his promise to give Abraham many descendants. After an agonizing wait, God finally gave Abraham and his wife, Sarah, a son, Isaac. Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 91. Then God



tested Abraham's faith by telling him to sacrifice Isaac. This was the ultimate demonstration of Abraham's faithful trust in God since Isaac was the only son born to Abraham and Sarah, the only visible hope that God would fulfill his promise to bless Abraham with many descendants.

Abraham obeyed, and God spared Isaac's life.

Isaac lived much like his father, sojourning in various places in Canaan. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, gave birth to twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Esau was older, but he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew; and Jacob, at the instigation of Rebekah, then tricked his father into granting him the blessings that belonged to Esau. So Esau became very angry with Jacob, and Jacob fled to the homeland of his ancestors, where he lived with his uncle Laban for many years. While working for Laban, Jacob married Laban's daughters Leah and Rachel and began to raise a family. He eventually returned to Canaan and reconciled with Esau. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. His 12 sons became the ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. God also reaffirmed to Jacob the covenant he had made with his father, Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham.

One of Jacob's 12 sons was named Joseph, clearly Jacob's favorite. Though one of the youngest, Joseph had dreams (literally) of one day becoming master over his brothers. His brothers became very angry with him because of this and sold him to slave traders headed to Egypt. Yet God blessed Joseph even while a slave in Egypt. Through a complicated interplay of circumstances, Joseph was eventually brought before Pharaoh himself to interpret Pharaoh's dream. God gave Joseph wisdom to understand that the dream foretold of a coming worldwide famine. As a result, Pharaoh made him second in command of all of Egypt in order to prepare. During the famine, Joseph's brothers were forced to

travel to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, though they did not know he was their long-lost brother. Eventually Joseph revealed his identity to them, and they were reconciled. Joseph convinced his entire family, including his father, Jacob, to move to Egypt. And there Jacob's descendants flourished and multiplied.

■ **Birth of Israel: 1800–1406 B.C.** Many years later, a new leader arose in Egypt who did not know of all that Joseph had done, and he began to oppress the Hebrews for fear that they might rebel against him. The Hebrews were made slaves, and eventually Pharaoh even ordered all the Hebrew baby boys to be thrown into the Nile River. One Hebrew couple, however, hid their baby boy in a basket in the river to keep him from being killed. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and adopted him, calling him Moses.

Moses grew up in the Egyptian royal court. One day, he witnessed an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrews, so Moses killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. When Pharaoh found out, Moses fled to the land of Midian. There God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, revealing his name—the LORD—and telling him to go back to Egypt and lead his people out of slavery to the land that God was giving them. Moses was reluctant to go, but the Lord assured him that he would be with him and would give him power to do amazing miracles before Pharaoh. God also sent Moses' brother, Aaron, along with him to Egypt.

When Moses arrived in Egypt, he spoke to Pharaoh, telling him God's command to let the Hebrews go out into the wilderness to worship God. Pharaoh refused and then treated them even more harshly.

This set in motion a series of ten plagues that God inflicted on Egypt. Each plague cycle followed essentially the same pattern: Moses told Pharaoh to let God's people go; Pharaoh refused; the plague was unleashed; Pharaoh recanted and agreed to let Israel go; Moses

prayed for the plague to be stopped; Pharaoh then changed his mind and refused to let the Israelites go. The final plague was a curse upon the firstborn of all people and animals in Egypt. All homes without the blood of a lamb smeared on the doorframe would be visited by the angel of



death. The firstborn sons of Egypt were killed by the angel that night, including Pharaoh's own son. The annual feast of Passover commemorates this momentous event.

After this tenth plague, Pharaoh allowed Israel to leave Egypt; but once they had left, he again changed his mind and set out in pursuit of them. Just as Pharaoh's army was closing in on the Israelites, who were blocked by the Red Sea, the Lord miraculously parted the sea and allowed the Israelites to pass through on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, the sea closed over them and they drowned. This whole event, the Exodus, became a defining moment in the history of the nation of Israel, when God decisively rescued and redeemed his people for himself. Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, God would refer to himself as the one who led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt with strength and miraculous signs.

With the threat of the Egyptians behind them, the Israelites were now free to journey to the place where God wanted them to worship him. They began to grumble for food, so God provided quail for meat, and each morning manna, mysterious bread-like flakes, fell from heaven. At times, God also provided water from a rock.

Finally the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, and God met with Moses there. God gave him the Ten Commandments and other instructions to give to the people. These essentially defined what it meant to live as the people of God. While the Israelites were at Sinai, God also gave Moses instructions for building the Tabernacle, which would serve as a sort of portable temple as the Israelites moved from place to place on their way to the land that God had promised to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even while Moses was receiving God's Law, however, the people demonstrated their persistent unfaithfulness by constructing an idol and worshipping it! And Moses' brother Aaron, who had just been appointed high priest over the Israelites, was the one who instructed them to build it!

After the Israelites had camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for a year, God directed them to begin making their way to the Promised Land. God told Moses to send 12 scouts into Canaan. All but Joshua and Caleb reported that the land was good but that the inhabitants were stronger than them. So the Israelites refused to take possession of the land. Because they failed to trust in God for victory, he condemned them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until that entire generation had died, except for Joshua and Caleb. God continued to provide for his people during those forty years, despite their repeated instances of grumbling and unfaithfulness to him. At the end of 40 years,

the new generation of Israelites came to Kadesh-barnea, and then they began making their way to the Promised Land once again. They set up camp on the plains of Moab. The Promised Land lay just across the Jordan River to the west. Moses reviewed the history of God's dealings with them up to that point and exhorted them to be faithful to God after they conquered the land. Moses died just before the Israelites entered the land, leaving his assistant Joshua to lead the conquest.

■ The Promised Land: 1406–1050 B.C.

The first city to be taken was the imposing city of Jericho, which stood just across the Jordan River in Canaan. But the Israelites did not even have to lay siege to the city or attack its gates to capture it, because God miraculously caused the walls of the city to fall down.

Joshua then led the Israelites to capture towns throughout the Promised Land. The entire conquest of the land occurred over many years, but they never fully completed it. God had commanded the Israelites to completely drive out the Canaanites,

but they were satisfied to simply live alongside the inhabitants. Several areas within the land continued to be controlled by Canaanites even after the conquest period was over, and their idolatry was a snare to the Israelites for centuries to come.

After Joshua died, God repeatedly raised up leaders, called judges, to deliver his people from oppression. This oppression was typically a direct result of the Israelites' sin. This cycle of sin, oppression, and deliverance occurred throughout the period of the judges. During this time the Israelites also experienced conflict among themselves as the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely wiped out by the other tribes in a bloody civil war. The period of the judges was a spiritually dark, chaotic time for Israel, all the people doing whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

■ United Kingdom: 1050–930 B.C.

The Israelites asked Samuel, the last of the judges, for a king to rule over them like the kings of the nations around them. God told Samuel to agree



to their request but to warn them of the hardships a king would bring upon them. God had been their king, but they had rejected his leadership in favor of being more like the other nations.

God led Samuel to anoint Saul from the tribe of Benjamin as the first king (c. 1050 B.C.). Saul was tall and handsome. He also proved to be an able military leader in many ways. But his spiritual character was lacking. On various occasions, he sacrificed God's ways to ensure military success or personal gain. For these reasons, God rejected Saul as king and chose a man after his own heart to replace him: David. David was an unlikely choice. The youngest of eight brothers, he was



not even considered at first. But soon after Samuel anointed David to be the next king, David demonstrated that he was indeed specially chosen by God; for he slew the Philistine giant Goliath when all Israel's soldiers, including his brothers, were too afraid to face the giant in battle.

David joined Saul's warriors at his palace and became close friends with Saul's son Jonathan. David quickly proved himself to be a very able military leader and gained the favor of the Israelite people. This incited Saul's bitter jealousy, and Saul began trying to kill David. David fled, moving from place to place, at times narrowly escaping Saul and his men. When David heard that Saul and his sons had been killed in a battle with the Philistines, he moved to Hebron and was proclaimed king over Judah. But the commander of Saul's army proclaimed Ishbosheth, one of Saul's sons, king over Israel. Eventually Ishbosheth was assassinated by his own men, and David was proclaimed king over all the Israelite tribes.

After becoming king over all Israel around 1000 B.C., David captured the fortified city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and moved his capital there. David was extremely successful in battle against virtually all the surrounding nations. He established a treaty with the powerful and wealthy city-state of Tyre. The king of Tyre supplied David with stonemasons and coveted cedar, and David built himself a palace and stockpiled materials for building the Temple.

The high point of David's reign was when God chose to establish a permanent covenant with David and his descendants. David wanted to build

a permanent Temple for the Lord in Jerusalem but the Lord had a different plan: God was going to build *David* a "house," that is, he was going to establish David's family line as the ruling dynasty over Israel forever.

Unfortunately, David's reign as king was not without trouble. David himself committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, one of his most valiant warriors, and she became pregnant. Then David sought to cover up his sin by arranging Uriah's death on the battlefield. Later in his reign, David brought a plague upon all Israel because he ordered a census to be taken of all men of military age. Several of David's children brought heartache to him as well. David's son Amnon raped his own half-sister Tamar, and then her full brother Absalom killed Amnon in revenge. Absalom then fled into exile. Years later Absalom returned, but he mounted a rebellion against his father and proclaimed himself king. David was forced to flee Jerusalem for a time and set up his capital in Mahanaim. David's men fought against Absalom's men, and Absalom was killed, so David returned to Jerusalem.

Just before David died in 970 B.C., he appointed his son Solomon as king over Israel. Having received an extensive and powerful kingdom, Solomon was able to focus on tasks such as building a beautiful royal palace and the Temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. At the same time, Solomon capitalized on Israel's strategic position as a land bridge between Egypt and the other major powers of the ancient Near East. Solomon exacted lucrative tolls from those traveling through Israel, and he even engaged in arms dealing, buying horses and chariots from various nations and selling them to others. Solomon expanded his kingdom until it reached as far as the Euphrates River. Solomon's wisdom and riches were renowned throughout the ancient Near East.

However, Solomon's reign was not entirely a success story. He married literally hundreds of wives, primarily to seal political alliances with other nations, and this led to the spread of idolatry in Israel as these wives brought their idolatrous ways with them. Solomon even funded the building of pagan shrines for his wives on the hill across from the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Solomon's extravagant royal court also placed a huge tax burden on the people of Israel, a burden that became difficult to bear.

■ **Divided Kingdom: 930–586 B.C.** These cracks in Solomon's kingdom eventually led to outright rebellion. When his son Rehoboam became king in 930 B.C., the people of Israel demanded that he grant some reprieve from the

heavy tax burden placed on them by his father. Rehoboam foolishly vowed instead to tax the people even more. So 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel refused to submit to Rehoboam, and they set up their own king instead. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal. From then on, the kingdom established by the 10 northern tribes was called Israel, and the kingdom in the south that continued to be ruled by Davidic kings was called Judah. The division between these two kingdoms was very real, and they often fought wars against each other.

The northern tribes installed a man named Jeroboam as their king, and he immediately set a wicked precedent of idolatry for Israel. In order to keep his people from traveling to Jerusalem (in Judah) to worship at the Temple, Jeroboam set up calf idols at the northern and southern extremes of his kingdom and encouraged the people to worship there instead. He also appointed priests who were not Levites. His wickedness was so renowned that later wicked kings were said to follow the example of Jeroboam, who led Israel into sin.

The people of Judah continued to worship at the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, and their priests were descended from Aaron, as the law of Moses stipulated. Not that idolatry was never a problem in Judah, but for most of Judah's existence, idolatry did not typically receive the same degree of royal backing and widespread acceptance as it did in the northern kingdom.

Another distinction between the two kingdoms was the frequency with which royal dynasties changed. The northern kingdom experienced numerous assassinations and coups, which led to new dynasties taking power. But the southern kingdom always remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty.

Perhaps one of the most significant kings of Israel was Ahab, who took the throne in 874 B.C. Ahab was a skilled military leader. Spiritually, however, Ahab was very wicked, leading the Israelites into idolatry and other sins. Much of his wickedness was due to the influence of his wife Jezebel, the daughter of a pagan king. Jezebel promoted idolatry throughout the land, and she and Ahab were often condemned by the prophet Elijah.

Around this time a number of prophets gained prominence in Israel and Judah, and they spoke out against many sins that had grown rampant in society, including social injustice, idolatry, and general unfaithfulness to the Lord. They also foretold of a day when God would send his deliverer to Israel, a divine ruler who would set all things right once again. This deliverer is sometimes referred to as the Messiah ("anointed one"). The writings of several of these prophets became part of the Old Testament.

Over time, Assyria regained strength and absorbed nation after nation into its vast empire. Israel's territory was repeatedly reduced by Assyrian attacks until it was less than half its original size. Finally in 722 B.C., Israel's capital city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians, and the northern kingdom came to an end. Many Israelites were exiled to faraway lands, and other foreign peoples were brought in to diffuse the possibility of unified revolt. The Bible makes it clear that this exile was a direct result of the wickedness and idolatry of the people of Israel. Long before, when God gave his Law, the Torah, to Moses, he had forewarned the people that they, too, would be cast out of the Promised Land if they became like the wicked Canaanites. Now the day of reckoning had finally come for Israel's many sins of idolatry and injustice.



Several kings of Judah stand out. Jehoshaphat was regarded as a righteous king by the writers of Scripture, and he earnestly sought the Lord when foreign armies threatened Judah. However, he formed an alliance with wicked King Ahab of Israel, which had consequences later.

King Ahaz of Judah was deemed a wicked king by the writers of Scripture. When the northern kingdom of Israel teamed up with the Arameans to attack Judah (733 B.C.), Ahaz made the fateful decision to appeal to Assyria for help, essentially making Judah a vassal (subservient) kingdom to Assyria. He also replaced the altar of the Lord with a replica of a pagan one he saw in Damascus, and he got rid of many other sacred Temple items. Eventually he closed up the Temple entirely and allowed idolatry to flourish in Judah.

Ironically, Ahaz's son Hezekiah was one of the most righteous kings of Israel, and he was also a successful military leader. Hezekiah knew that the Assyrians would soon attempt to conquer Judah. Hezekiah prepared the city for this attack, which kept it from falling for a long time. Finally God sent a plague throughout the Assyrian camp, and the few who survived broke off the siege and returned to Assyria. Hezekiah also restored and purified the Temple and the worship of the Lord, purged idolatry from the land, and reinstated the festival of Passover.

Just as quickly as Hezekiah had restored proper

worship of the Lord, his wicked son Manasseh corrupted it all once again. Manasseh promoted idolatry throughout Judah like no one else before him. He placed a pagan idol in the Temple of the Lord and even sacrificed his own sons by fire just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Near the end of his life, Manasseh was taken away into exile in Babylon, and he repented of all that he had done. After he was allowed to return to Judah, he strove to undo all the evil that he had done, tearing down pagan altars and restoring worship of the Lord.

By the time Manasseh's grandson Josiah became king of Judah (640 B.C.), Assyria was in decline, and the Babylonians were on the rise in the ancient Near East. Josiah capitalized on the situation, expanding the borders of Judah to include nearly all of the northern kingdom of Israel, whose people had by this time been carried away into exile. Josiah then strove to purge the land of idolatry and restore proper worship of the Lord. He also arranged for extensive repairs to be made to the Temple. Josiah died in 609 B.C. while trying to stop the Egyptians from passing through Judah and Israel to help the Assyrians, who were on the run from the Babylonians and the Medes in the far north.

After Josiah died, the Babylonians essentially took over Judah, installing and quickly deposing several of Josiah's sons as kings of Judah. They also exiled the upper echelon of society to Babylon in several waves (605 B.C., 597 B.C., and 586 B.C.) until finally in 586 B.C. the Babylonians attacked the city of Jerusalem and completely destroyed the Temple, leaving the once-proud nation in ruins.

■ **Exile: 586–538 B.C.** Unlike the experience of the northern kingdom of Israel, the people of Judah were, for the most part, allowed to maintain their cultural and religious distinctiveness even in exile, and no large-scale effort was made

to repopulate the land of Judah with foreigners. It was during the Exile that the people of Judah first came to be referred to as Jews (from the name *Judah*).

This time of exile had a massive impact on virtually every aspect of Israelite life. Only the poor were left in Judah, and the

ritual sacrificial system had essentially ceased. At the same time, many of those taken into exile

became somewhat prosperous and even occupied positions of significant political power in the governments of their captors. Daniel and his friends were groomed to be part of the royal court, and Daniel was a close adviser to several Babylonian and Persian rulers.

The Babylonians were the ones who conquered Judah and took them off into exile, but the Babylonians soon faced a military threat themselves. The mighty Persian empire from the north was growing, and they eventually conquered Babylon and nearly everything else in the known world at the time. Persia had a different stance toward conquered peoples than Babylon had, which led to the end of this period of exile for the Jewish people.

■ **Return and Diaspora: 538–6 B.C.** King Cyrus of Persia captured Babylon in 539 B.C. and absorbed the Babylonian empire into his vast domain. In order to foster gratitude and loyalty among his subjects, Cyrus quickly decreed that those held captive in Babylon were free to return to their native lands. So around 538 B.C., a small contingent of Jews returned home to the land of Israel and reestablished a semiautonomous state under the dominion of Persia. They repaired the altar, reinstated the daily sacrifices, and rebuilt the

Temple as well. As the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah attest, Israel continued to enjoy relative religious freedom under the Persians throughout the remainder of the Old Testament period, despite occasional periods of oppression.

Not all of the Jews returned to the Promised Land, however. Over the decades in exile, many had largely integrated with the societies in which they were living and had built lives for themselves there. Over time the Hebrew language came to be replaced by Aramaic (the dominant language of the land of their exile) as the primary spoken language among Jews, and many Jews began to intermarry with the local foreign peoples and to regard their place of exile as their permanent home. This large population of Jews living permanently outside of the Promised Land while maintaining some degree of religious and cultural distinctiveness is often referred to as the *Diaspora* ("scattering"). Some, like Daniel,



Mordecai, and Esther continued to serve God faithfully even in prominent positions while far from the land of Israel. Over time, more and more of the Jews chose to return home, even leaving important positions to do so, such as Nehemiah, who was cup-bearer to the king.

The Intertestamental Period

The time between the last recorded events of the Old Testament and the first recorded events of the New Testament are sometimes referred to as the intertestamental period. Many often think of this period as shrouded in mystery and darkness. In reality, quite a bit is known about this very formative period of biblical history, and understanding these events can help us better understand the New Testament. In a real way, the intertestamental period set the scene for the life and ministry of Jesus and his followers. For example, the Pharisees and Sadducees didn't even exist during Old Testament times; but by the time of Jesus, these two groups were key players in the political and religious life of Israel—so much so that Jesus spent considerable time and energy engaging with them and often spoke in opposition to them.

A brief review of a few events from the Old Testament will help us better understand the events that came after them. When the Assyrians exiled the northern kingdom *out* of the land, they brought foreign peoples from other lands *into* Israel in order to diffuse the possibility of unified revolt. Inter-marriage among these foreigners and Israelites in Palestine gave rise to a group of people known as Samaritans, characterized by their acceptance of only the Torah (the five books of Moses) and their belief that Mount Gerizim was the appointed place of worship. When Babylon conquered and exiled the southern kingdom of Judah, they destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, bringing a halt to the ritual sacrificial system of Israel. This crisis led to a shift in focus away from the Temple and its rituals to the written word of Scripture, which was still accessible even in exile. Thus, it is likely during this time that synagogues and scribes became more widespread in Israelite society.

It is roughly at this point that we quietly exit the period of the Old Testament and enter the time known as the intertestamental period. Perhaps the single most significant event that occurred during this period was the rise of Alexander the Great. After ascending to the throne at the age of 20 (336 B.C.) and securing his grip over Macedonia and the Greek peninsula, young Alexander launched a series of stunning victories over the Persians that eventually culminated in his complete dominion over virtually all

former Persian territory. Just as quickly as he rose to power, however, Alexander succumbed to illness and died in 323 B.C. at the age of 32.

One major effect of Alexander's conquest relates to his promotion of the Greek language and culture throughout his conquered lands. Greek soon came to function as a near universal means of communication and understanding throughout the ancient Near East. The pervasiveness and lasting influence of the Greek language can be seen most clearly in the fact that every single book of the New Testament, over 300 years after Alexander's death, was written in Greek.

Upon Alexander's death, his kingdom was broken up among his generals and other successors. A series of wars followed, with each successor vying for territory controlled by another. In time (around 220 B.C.), the Near East came to be dominated by three primary Greek powers: the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt; the Seleucid dynasty in much of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Persia; and the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia. The land of Israel was initially part of the Ptolemaic realm, and Jews typically enjoyed a great deal of religious freedom and even favor at times.

During this time a large number of Jews moved to Alexandria in northern Egypt, where they became relatively prosperous and influential. It was in Alexandria that a group of Jewish biblical scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek to make it more accessible to the increasing number of Jews who no longer spoke Hebrew. The translation, known as the Septuagint, would later become the Bible of the early followers of Jesus, and most Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are drawn from it.

In 198 B.C., the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III seized the land of Israel from the Ptolemies. When his son Antiochus IV Epiphanes took the throne in 175 B.C., everything changed for the Jewish people. Antiochus held ambitions of conquering the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt. In order to shore up his defenses and to prepare for his Egyptian campaign, Antiochus imposed a strict policy of Hellenization upon his subjects, most notably the Jewish people in Palestine. Compliance was regarded as loyalty, and refusal



was interpreted as rebellion. Jewish people were required to adopt the beliefs and practices of the Greeks (often abhorrent to the pious), and they were forbidden to practice many distinctly Jewish rituals and customs, such as circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and the laws of kosher food. Copies of the Law of Moses were burned. A pagan idol of Zeus was even placed in the Temple in Jerusalem. Antiochus sold the office of high priest in Israel, restricted to the line of Aaron by Mosaic law, to the highest bidder who would promote Antiochus's policies. Unsurprisingly, these policies caused a crisis of conscience for many Jewish people. The crisis became even more pronounced in 167 B.C. after Antiochus was forced by the Romans to turn back from certain defeat. He vented his anger mercilessly upon many Jewish people who refused to give up their religious beliefs, and he banned Judaism altogether. The situation was growing ripe for revolt.

Open revolt finally broke out under the leadership of a priest named Mattathias and his five sons, who are often referred to as the Maccabees (meaning "hammers"). By 164 B.C. they had recaptured the Temple and ritually purified and restored it (the event commemorated by Hannukah, the Feast of Dedication). The next several decades were characterized by armed resistance against the Seleucid rulers, and several of Mattathias's sons lost their lives. Over time, they established their dynasty as the permanent political leaders of Israel. They were also granted the office of the high priesthood. This concentration of political and religious power in a single family led to various abuses. Ironically, each succeeding Maccabean ruler also became increasingly enamored with the Hellenistic way of life. All this led to dissension among the Jewish people, and various sects and parties arose with different views on these issues. The Pharisees largely opposed Hellenization and the singular power of the ruler. The Sadducees favored both. Still others, such as the Qumran community, wholly rejected the Maccabean dynasty and the Temple system as completely corrupt and withdrew into their own communities.

Maccabean rule over Israel continued until 63 B.C., when the rising Roman Empire finally engulfed Israel and Jewish independence came to an end. Around 39 B.C., a young Idumean named Herod was named king of Judea by the Roman Senate. Herod the Great proved to be an extremely shrewd leader, an able builder (including completely refurbishing the Temple in Jerusalem), but fiercely brutal against those who opposed him.

By the end of the intertestamental period, distinct Jewish communities could be found throughout the known world, and each one would have been forced to reconcile how God's people

were to continue to live in faithful obedience to God's laws in the midst of their unique cultural setting. In all of this, there also continued to be an ever evolving hope in a Messiah, the anointed one, God's chosen instrument of deliverance and restoration for his people. Various Old Testament passages laid the foundation for this hope, but exactly who the Messiah would be and what he would do were open to about as many interpretations as there were communities of God's people.

- **Jesus the Messiah: 6 B.C.–A.D. 30** In the midst of this incredibly complex interplay of religion, political struggle, and social change, God did indeed send his Messiah, the long-awaited hope of his people. But God's Messiah would not be quite like any conceived by human minds. The story of the New Testament opens with the shockingly humble birth of the King of kings.

The birth of the Messiah (called *Christ* in Greek, from the word for "anointed") took place in the final years of Herod the Great, probably around 6 or 5 B.C.

(The odd phenomenon of Jesus being born "B.C." is due to a miscalculation by religious scholars about 500 years after Jesus' death.)

The angel Gabriel appeared to a virgin named Mary and foretold that she would conceive and bear a son by the

power of the Holy Spirit and that he would be the Son of God and was to be called Jesus. Her fiancé, Joseph, was also told by an angel that Mary would give birth to the Messiah. Caesar Augustus ordered a census of the entire Roman world, so Joseph traveled with Mary to Bethlehem, the town of his ancestors. There Mary gave birth to Jesus, fulfilling prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Shepherds came to worship him, as did wise men (royal astrologers) from the East, perhaps as much as two years later.

Herod the Great attempted to eliminate this newborn threat to his reign by killing all baby boys in Bethlehem. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to Egypt and then returned after an angel informed them of Herod's death. They resettled in Nazareth, and Joseph took up work as a carpenter or perhaps a stone mason. The Bible tells nothing more of Jesus' childhood until he was 12, when he amazed the scribes and teachers of the law with his understanding. As Jesus



grew into adulthood, it is likely that he took up Joseph's trade.

At about the age of 30, Jesus began his public ministry. John the Baptist had been drawing great crowds throughout Israel with his declaration that "the Kingdom of Heaven is near" and his baptism of repentance. Jesus was baptized by John, after which God the Father verbally affirmed Jesus' Sonship and the Holy Spirit descended upon him. Soon after this, Jesus also began to preach that "the Kingdom of Heaven is near," a key theme in his teaching and parables. Some of John's own followers began to follow Jesus, apparently with the blessing of John himself, who saw his role as preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, who had now arrived in the person of Jesus.

Early in his ministry, Jesus based his work in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. Using figurative and even somewhat cryptic stories called parables, Jesus captured people's interest and taught them about the Kingdom of Heaven. He also healed many sick people, cast out demons, and performed other miracles that demonstrated his divine power and provided a foretaste of life in the Kingdom of Heaven. He began to draw large crowds of followers. Jesus selected a special group of 12 disciples to follow him everywhere he went. Several of these men were previously fishermen, including Peter, Andrew, James, and John. These men would remain with Jesus throughout his ministry and became privy to his most intimate teaching and deeds.

Jesus' ministry likely lasted at least three years, the initial years marked by increasing popularity, the final year marked by increasing dissent and even animosity. Throughout his ministry, Jesus consistently had conflicts with two particular groups of religious leaders: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These two groups had very differing views from each other on both religion and politics. Jesus castigated the Pharisees for hypocrisy and exposed the Sadducees' faulty understandings of Scripture and of God's power. At the same time, some from each group ended up following him. Jesus often praised prostitutes, tax collectors, and other "sinners" who repented of their sins and followed him. Over time, the combination of Jesus' growing popularity, the opposition from religious leaders, and his claims to be the Son of God proved more than most of the leaders could tolerate, and a plot was hatched to get rid of him.

By the end of his ministry, Jesus began another journey from Galilee in northern Israel to Jerusalem in the south to celebrate Passover with his disciples. By now Jesus was extremely well known throughout Israel, and many believed him to be—or at least wondered if he *might*

be—the Messiah, as he claimed. No doubt many were hoping for the overthrow of the hated Roman rule. News of Jesus' impending arrival in Jerusalem went ahead of him, and people laid palm branches and cloaks on the road to receive him as king. Jesus, in turn, chose to enter the city on a donkey just as the Old Testament prophet Zechariah had foretold, apparently in recognition of his role as Messiah. Thus, the city was ripe with expectation for the upcoming week of Passover, when Jewish people celebrated their deliverance from slavery in Egypt many centuries before.

Immediately upon entering the city in triumph, Jesus went up to the Temple and threw out the money changers and merchants, declaring that his Father's house was to be a house of prayer. His actions angered many of the religious leaders.

Jesus spent much of the week of Passover teaching in the Temple area and debating with the Pharisees and Sadducees. He also foretold of events to come, including the destruction of the Temple and his eventual return to earth to gather his people. At some point in the week, Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' 12 closest disciples, agreed to betray Jesus to the religious leaders for 30 pieces of silver.

On Thursday of that week, Jesus shared the Passover meal with his 12 disciples. Judas Iscariot left during the meal to carry out his act of betrayal. Afterward, Jesus and his disciples went just outside the city to Gethsemane, an olive garden where they often relaxed from the busy events of the day in Jerusalem. There Judas carried out his betrayal. The guards arrested Jesus, and most of his disciples fled.

Jesus was interrogated throughout the night in order to find him guilty of a crime worthy of death. Various accusations were made, but none held up to close scrutiny. By morning, they settled on Jesus' own claim to be the Messiah in order to accuse him of treason

against Rome. They led him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who held ultimate power to sentence someone to death, and they accused Jesus of treason. Pilate, fearful of potential unrest that could endanger his own position with Rome,



acquiesced and condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion.

After Jesus was subjected to various abuses, beatings, and ridicule by Roman soldiers, he was nailed to a cross and put on public display as a deterrent to all who might consider committing the same crime of treason against Rome. Jesus' charge was posted: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Jesus continued to suffer on the cross until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when he cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and he died.

Pilate granted permission to a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was a member of the Sanhedrin and probably a Pharisee, to bury Jesus' body in his own nearby tomb. Because the Sabbath was fast approaching, Jesus' body was

quickly placed in the tomb without being treated with burial spices.

On Sunday, some women who had followed Jesus and cared for his needs went to Jesus' tomb to finish preparing his body for burial. When they reached the tomb, however, they discovered that Jesus' body was gone! Angels at the

tomb then told them that Jesus had risen from the dead! The women ran back to tell the other disciples the news. Jesus was alive!

During the 40 days following his resurrection, Jesus appeared to various disciples on different occasions, confirming that he had been raised from the dead, giving them further instructions and teaching, and commanding them to go out and be his witnesses, telling people everywhere about him. He told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem (not their home area of Galilee) until the Holy Spirit came and filled them with power. He then ascended to heaven as his disciples watched, where he remains until he returns in glory for his people.

■ The Messiah's People: A.D. 30–Present

During the annual festival of Pentecost (*Shavuot*; also called Weeks or Harvest), 50 days after Passover, the promised Holy Spirit finally came upon Jesus' disciples, and they began proclaiming the great works of God in languages they did not even know. Peter spoke to the crowd about Jesus and his resurrection and implored his listeners to repent and follow him. About 3,000 Jewish people became believers in Jesus that

day, launching what would become a worldwide movement.

The depth of Jesus' impact upon these new believers became immediately visible by their commitment to love and care for each other. Many voluntarily gave their possessions to help provide for the needs of other believers, and they made specific arrangements to care for the needs of widows. God also worked many miracles through Peter and the other leaders, confirming their authority and encouraging the believers.

Persecution soon came, however. A believer named Stephen and James, the brother of John, were killed for their faith in Jesus. Many believers fled Jerusalem, but God used even this to spread the Good News across the known world. Eventually new communities of believers were established as far away as Damascus and Antioch in Syria. Some of the leaders in the Jerusalem congregation moved to Antioch, including a man named Barnabas. James, the brother of Jesus, became a leader of the believers in Jerusalem.

One of the persecutors was a zealous young Pharisee named Saul. As he traveled to Damascus from Jerusalem to pursue Jesus' followers, the risen Messiah appeared to him, temporarily blinding him. Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting him. Saul completed his journey to Damascus but arrived there a new man—a zealous servant of Jesus. God would eventually use Saul, who became known as Paul, to reach countless people with the Good News.

In the meantime, the movement of Jesus' followers continued to grow, as did the bounds of the Good News itself. What had originally started out as a Jewish movement had expanded to include Samaritans (who were despised by the Jewish people), proselytes (Gentiles who had become Jews), and God-fearing Gentiles (who participated in the Jewish faith without fully becoming Jewish). The community of believers received these changes with joy, but this also introduced questions that were not fully resolved until several years later.

Over time, Barnabas convinced Paul to join him at Antioch, and later they traveled through Cyprus and Galatia, preaching to both Jewish and Gentile audiences. During this journey, Paul was repeatedly persecuted by his own people, but he continued his mission by preaching to Gentiles. (Nevertheless, in every city, Paul went first to the synagogue to tell his people about Jesus, their promised Messiah.) This all raised a key question: Did the Gentile believers need to adhere to the Jewish Law in order to be followers of Jesus? That is, did Gentiles who believed in Jesus also need to be circumcised and follow kosher food laws? Soon after Paul and Barnabas



returned from their journey, the leaders in Jerusalem held a council to decide the issue. After some discussion, they agreed that Gentile believers did not need to become Jewish converts to follow Jesus. They were acceptable to God just as they were.



Soon after this Paul embarked on two more missionary journeys. The great distances traveled were made possible in part by Rome's excellent road system and the relative peace ("Pax Romana") due to Rome's unrivalled power in the region. Along the way Paul established congregations throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia,

and Achaia, and several of his letters to these congregations have become part of the canon of the New Testament.

At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul's work among the Gentiles fostered rumors and anger among many Jews who were zealous for the Torah. They wrongly accused Paul of teaching Jews who lived in the Diaspora to abandon the Torah, and they mistakenly thought he had brought a Gentile into the Jewish section of the Temple courts. A riot erupted, and the Roman commander took Paul into custody for his safety. Paul was then transferred to Caesarea on the coast. He remained in custody for nearly two

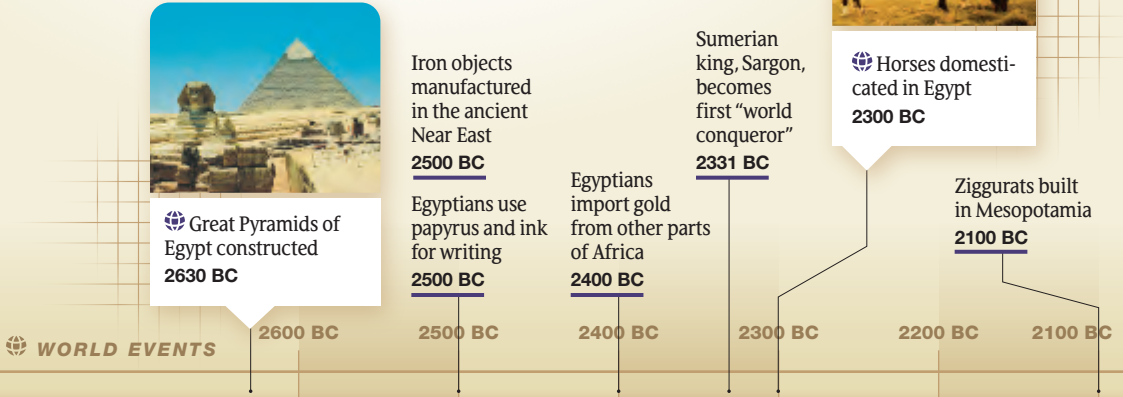
years until finally he invoked his right as a Roman citizen to appeal his case to Caesar himself. So Paul was sent under guard to Rome.

Paul's journey to Rome proved difficult, as Paul suffered shipwreck off the island of Malta near Sicily. Eventually Paul made it safely to Rome, however, and as he awaited trial in Rome under house arrest, he continued to minister to believers there and probably wrote several other letters of the New Testament. It is not certain exactly what happened to Paul after this, but it appears that he was soon released and embarked on at least one other journey before he was arrested again. Tradition holds that Paul was finally executed under the emperor Nero.

During these years, other changes were taking place among Jesus' followers as well. Apparently the apostle Peter moved to Rome, where he, too, suffered martyrdom under Nero. According to tradition, Barnabas's relative John Mark recorded Peter's stories and teachings from Jesus' life and ministry (the Gospel of Mark). Likewise, the apostle John moved to Ephesus (probably along with Mary, the mother of Jesus), where he served as a prominent leader for several congregations that had been established in western Asia Minor. John also recorded many stories and teachings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Eventually John was exiled to the island of Patmos (not far from Ephesus), where he recorded the revelation from Jesus concerning the end of the world. According to tradition, John died on Patmos. The Gospels of Matthew (another apostle) and Luke (a Gentile companion of Paul's) were also compiled from the testimonies of those who had been eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry.

COMPLETE BIBLICAL TIMELINE

Catch a glimpse of the whole sweep of biblical history. The ten historical eras outlined in the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, along with the books of the Bible you will find in each, are in the center bar. Significant world events are above the bar, and biblical events are below it.



In the Beginning

undated–2100 BC

GENESIS, undated–1805 BC

BIBLICAL EVENTS

undated
Creation

undated
Noah builds the ark



2166 BC
Abraham is born

2091 BC
Abraham travels to Canaan



▲ Early Accounts of Creation and the Flood

Several ancient civilizations wrote down their own stories about origins. These tablets from Babylon record a creation myth and a story about an ancient flood.



Stonehenge erected in England
estimated
2000 BC



Mexican Sun Pyramid built
1500 BC

Spoked wheels invented
estimated
1900 BC

Hammurabi of Babylon provides first written law code
estimated
1750 BC

First metal-working in South America
1440 BC

2000 BC

1900 BC

1800 BC

1700 BC

1600 BC

1500 BC

1400 BC

God's Chosen People

2100 BC–1800 BC

- **JOB**, around 1900 BC

The Birth of Israel

1800 BC–1406 BC

EXODUS, 1500–1445 BC

LEVITICUS, 1445–1444 BC

NUMBERS, 1445–1406 BC

DEUTERONOMY, 1406 BC

2066 BC
Isaac is born

1929 BC
Jacob flees to Haran

1876 BC
Jacob moves to Egypt

2006 BC
Jacob and Esau are born

1898 BC
Joseph sold into slavery

1805 BC
Joseph dies

1915 BC
Joseph is born

1885 BC
Joseph rules Egypt

1526 BC
Moses is born

1406 BC
Moses dies

1443 BC
Israel refuses to enter Canaan

1446 BC
The Exodus

around 1800–1446 BC
Slavery in Egypt



1445 BC
Ten Commandments given

1445 BC
The second Passover





King Tutankhamun is buried in Egypt amidst great treasure
1358 BC

Destruction of Troy during Trojan War
1183 BC

▼ *Trojan Horse*
Replica in Troy, Turkey

First Chinese dictionary
1200 BC



Silk fabrics manufactured in China
1250 BC

Water clock invented in Egypt
1400 BC

Palace of Knossos on island of Crete destroyed by earthquake
1380 BC

1400 BC

WORLD EVENTS

1300 BC

1200 BC

The Promised Land

1406 BC–1050 BC

JOSHUA, 1406–1376 BC

JUDGES, 1376–1100 BC



BIBLICAL EVENTS

1376 BC
Judges begin to rule in Israel

Israel Stele 1213 BC ▲
This monument honoring Pharaoh Merneptah is the earliest evidence for the existence of the nation of Israel outside the Bible.

1162 BC
Gideon becomes Israel's judge

1406 BC
Joshua leads Israel into Canaan



1020 BC
Philistines land on coast of Canaan



1209 BC
Deborah becomes Israel's judge





Mayans settle in the Yucatan peninsula
1000 BC



Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* written down
800 BC

Celts invade Britain
900 BC

Evidence of highly developed metal and stone sculptures in Africa
850 BC

Founding of Carthage
814 BC

Native Americans in California build wood-reed houses
1000 BC

Gold vessels and jewelry popular in Northern Europe
950 BC

1100 BC

1000 BC

900 BC

800 BC

United Kingdom

1050 BC–930 BC

1 SAMUEL,
1105–1010 BC

2 SAMUEL &
1 CHRONICLES,
1010–970 BC

RUTH,
around
1100 BC

SONG OF SOLOMON
& ECCLESIASTES,
around 950 BC

Divided Kingdom

930 BC–586 BC

1 KINGS, 970–853 BC

2 CHRONICLES, 970–538 BC

2 KINGS, 853–561 BC

1105 BC
Samuel is born

1050 BC
Saul becomes king

1075 BC
Samuel becomes Israel's final judge

1025 BC
David anointed as king

1020 BC
David defeats Goliath



1010 BC
David becomes king in Judah

997 BC
David sins with Bathsheba

1003 BC
David becomes king over all Israel

970 BC
Solomon becomes king

930 BC
Israel divides into two nations

967 BC
Solomon begins building the Temple

960 BC
The Temple is completed



885 BC
Omri begins to rule in Israel

910 BC
Asa begins to rule in Judah


875 BC
Elijah begins his ministry

853 BC
Ahab dies in battle

848 BC
Elisha's ministry begins

835 BC
Joash begins to rule in Judah



 First known Olympics occurs
776 BC

Earliest musical notation in Greece
750 BC

First known lock and key in the palace in Assyria
710 BC

Shedu ▼
Assyrian statue, limestone, 8th century BC

Legendary date for founding of Rome
753 BC

False teeth invented in Italy
700 BC



800 BC

 **WORLD EVENTS**

750 BC

700 BC

Divided Kingdom

930 BC–586 BC

2 CHRONICLES, 970–538 BC

2 KINGS, 853–561 BC

JONAH, 793–753 BC

MICAH, 742–687 BC

AMOS, 760–750 BC

ISAIAH, 740–681 BC

HOSEA, 753–715 BC

 **BIBLICAL EVENTS**

793 BC
 Jonah begins his ministry



760 BC
Amos begins his ministry

722 BC
Assyria destroys Samaria

701 BC
Sennacherib taunts Hezekiah

740 BC
 Isaiah begins his ministry





Japan founded as a nation
660 BC

Soldering of iron invented
650 BC

650 BC

Horse racing first held at 33rd Olympics
648 BC

648 BC

Nineveh destroyed
612 BC

The Temple of Artemis is constructed in Ephesus
600 BC

600 BC

Pythagoras, Greek philosopher and mathematician, is born
582 BC

Greek astronomer Thales predicts an eclipse
585 BC

600 BC



Aesop writes his fables
560 BC

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, is born in India
563 BC

563 BC

Confucius is born in China
551 BC

550 BC

Cyrus the Great conquers the Medes, founding the Persian Empire
550 BC

Horseback postal service in the Persian Empire
540 BC

Babylon overthrown by Cyrus of Persia
539 BC

539 BC

Exile

586 BC–538 BC

2 CHRONICLES, 970–538 BC

2 KINGS, 853–561 BC

ZEPHANIAH, 640–621 BC

JEREMIAH, 627–585 BC

HABAKKUK, 612–589 BC

NAHUM, 663–654 BC

DANIEL, 605–536 BC

EZEKIEL, 597–571 BC

LAMENTATIONS, 586 BC;
OBADIAH, around 586 BC

627 BC
Jeremiah begins his ministry

622 BC
Law scroll found in the Temple



605 BC
First captivity; Daniel taken to Babylon

597 BC
Second captivity; Ezekiel taken to Babylon

609 BC
Necho kills Josiah in battle

573 BC
Ezekiel's vision of a restored temple

586 BC
Babylon destroys Jerusalem



553 BC
Daniel's first vision

562 BC
King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon dies

538 BC
Daniel prays for his people

539 BC
Daniel thrown to the lions



Earliest copies of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*
500 BC



The Parthenon is built in Athens, Greece
448 BC

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, is born
460 BC

Greeks repel Persia in the Battle of Marathon
490 BC

Socrates, famous philosopher, is born
469 BC

The Golden Age begins in Athens, Greece
457 BC

Plato, famous philosopher, is born
429 BC

Socrates condemned to death
399 BC

Aristotle is born
384 BC

Plato writes *The Republic*
370 BC

Alexander the Great defeats the Persian Empire
330 BC

Romans build first paved road, the "Appian Way"
312 BC

Polo played as a sport in Persia
525 BC

Rome becomes a republic
509 BC

500 BC

450 BC

400 BC

350 BC

300 BC

WORLD EVENTS

Return & Diaspora

538 BC–6 BC

EZRA, 538–450 BC

- HAGGAI, 520 BC
- ZECHARIAH, 520–518 BC

MALACHI, 430s BC

ESTHER, 483–473 BC

NEHEMIAH, 446–432 BC

BIBLICAL EVENTS

538 BC
Cyrus allows exiles to return to Jerusalem

520 BC
Haggai and Zechariah serve as prophets

473 BC
Feast of Purim originates

458 BC
Ezra leads another group of returning exiles to Jerusalem

445 BC
Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem

538 BC
Zerubbabel leads 50,000 people back to Jerusalem

515 BC
Second temple completed in Jerusalem



479 BC
Esther becomes queen of Persia





Great Wall of China built
215 BC



Cleopatra becomes last independent Egyptian ruler
51 BC

Romans make Herod the Great king of Judaea
37 BC

Cleopatra and Marc Antony commit suicide
30 BC

Herod the Great begins remodeling temple in Jerusalem
20 BC

Sumo wrestling in Japan
23 BC

Julius Caesar becomes dictator for life, assassinated 2 years later
46 BC

Romans conquer England
55 BC

Julius Caesar, first emperor of Rome, is born
100 BC

First Chinese ships reach east coast of India
102 BC

Judas Maccabeus begins a revolt against Antiochus IV
167 BC

Antiochus IV plunders Jerusalem Temple
169 BC

Romans conquer Sicily
241 BC

250 BC

200 BC

150 BC

100 BC

50 BC

AD 1

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD



around 255 BC
Hebrew Old Testament begins to be translated into Greek (Septuagint)

20? BC
Mary, Jesus' mother, is born

▲ The Septuagint

Jesus and the apostles apparently referred to the Old Testament in translation quite often. This 4th century AD manuscript is particularly well preserved.



Saddles first used in Europe
AD 1

Judaea becomes a Roman province
AD 6

Zealots in Judaea rebel against Rome
AD 7

Tiberius succeeds Caesar Augustus as Roman emperor
AD 14



London is founded
AD 43

Caligula becomes the Roman emperor
AD 37

Herod Agrippa appointed king of Judaea
AD 40

Claudius becomes the Roman emperor
AD 41

AD 1

AD 10

AD 20
WORLD EVENTS

AD 30

AD 40

Jesus the Messiah 6 BC–AD 30

MATTHEW, 6 BC–AD 30

LUKE, 6 BC–AD 30

MARK, AD 26–30

JOHN, AD 26–30

The Messiah's People AD 30–present

ACTS, AD 30–60

BIBLICAL EVENTS

4 BC
Herod the Great dies

AD 5?
Paul is born

6 BC
Jesus is born



AD 6
Jesus visits temple as a boy

AD 26
John the Baptist begins his ministry

AD 27
Jesus begins his ministry

AD 29
John the Baptist is beheaded

AD 35
Saul comes to faith on the Damascus road

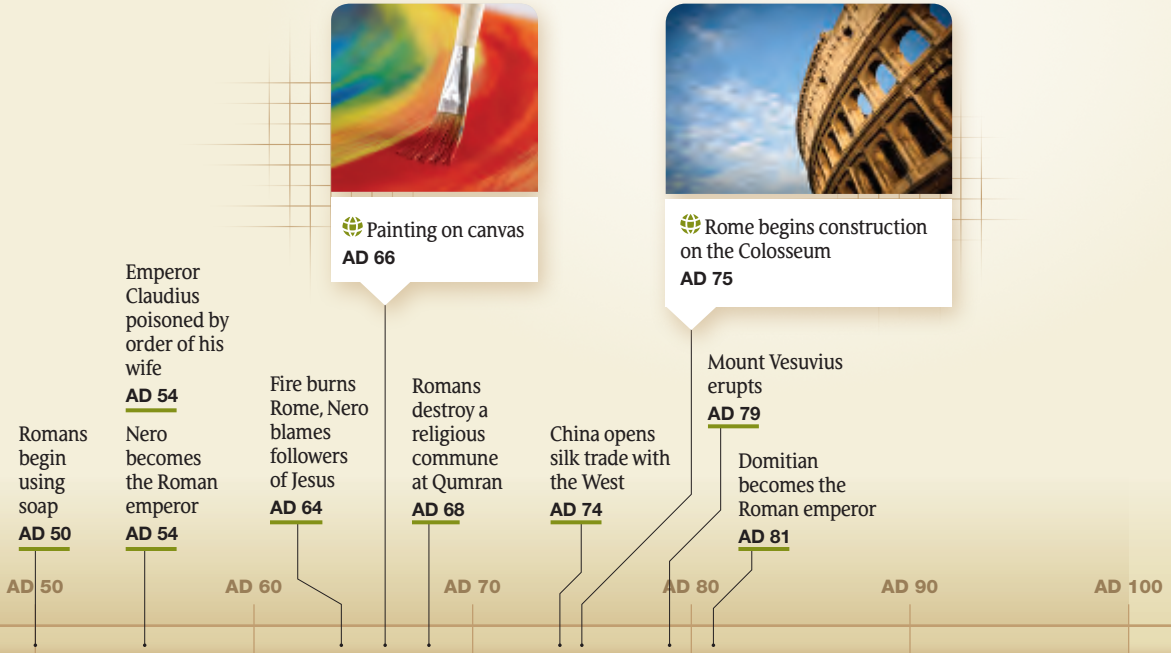
AD 30
Jesus is crucified



AD 30
The Holy Spirit descends on Pentecost

AD 40
Cornelius comes to faith

AD 46
Paul begins his first missionary journey



Painting on canvas
AD 66



Rome begins construction on the Colosseum
AD 75

- 1 COR, AD 53
- 2 COR & ROMANS, AD 54
- PHIL, AD 61
- 1 TIM & TITUS, AD 62
- 1 JOHN, *between AD 80–90*
- 2 & 3 JOHN, *around AD 90*
- REVELATION, AD 95
- JAMES, AD 48
- GAL, AD 49
- 1 & 2 THES, AD 50
- COL, PHLM, & EPH, AD 60
- 2 TIM & 1 & 2 PETER, AD 64
- HEBREWS & JUDE, *around AD 66*

AD 51
Paul begins his third missionary journey

AD 49
The Jerusalem Council

AD 57
Paul in prison in Caesarea

AD 59
Paul's voyage to Rome



AD 62
Paul is released from prison in Rome

AD 64
Paul martyred

AD 70
Rome destroys Jerusalem

AD 73
Jewish people commit mass suicide at Masada while under Roman attack

▲ **Masada**
After Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, a small group of Jewish nationalists dug in at the rugged fortress of Masada, where they remained for three years until the Romans' siege finally broke through the stronghold.

A NOTE TO READERS

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential lit-

erary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of

stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in worship than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek a *denarius*, the payment for a full day’s labor.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting

time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.
- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because

they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.

- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the Jewish leaders,” where appropriate.
- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have

rendered it: "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it." At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: "He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him." We have rendered it: "If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead."

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, "Father") have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as "justification" and "sanctification," which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as "made right with God" and "made holy."

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it "Israel" when it refers to the nation and "Jacob" when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: "The names 'Jacob'

and 'Israel' are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation."

The Rendering of Divine Names

In the Old Testament, all appearances of 'el, 'elohim, or 'eloah have been translated "God," except where the context demands the translation "god(s)." We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as "the LORD," utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name 'adonai, which we render "Lord." When 'adonai and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it "Sovereign LORD." When 'elohim and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it "LORD God." When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it "LORD God." When YHWH appears with the term tseba'oth, we have rendered it "LORD of Heaven's Armies" to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the Gospels and Acts, the Greek word *christos* has normally been translated as "Messiah" when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed (which is consistently the case for the Epistles and Revelation), *christos* has been translated as "Christ." The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated "Lord," except that it is translated "LORD" wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with "Hebrew," "Aramaic," or "Greek," identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal "breaking of bread" (from the Greek) as "the Lord's Supper" to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to "the Lord's Supper," which reads: "Greek *the breaking of bread*."
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word "Or." These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also

provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”

- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

Cross-References

There are a number of different cross-referencing tools that appear in New Living Translation Bibles, and each offers a different level of help. All straight-text Bibles have the standard set of textual footnotes that include

cross-references connecting New Testament texts to their related Old Testament sources. (See more on this above.)

Many NLT Bibles include an additional concise cross-reference system that places key cross-references at the ends of paragraphs, linking them to the associated verse or verses with a cross symbol within each paragraph. This space-efficient system, while not being obtrusive, offers many important key connections.

Larger study editions include a full-column cross-reference system, which allows space for a more comprehensive listing of cross-references. In this larger system, symbols differentiate between various kinds of cross-references. The parallel marker (//) designates a cross-referenced passage that is parallel in nature to the passage at hand. The asterisk (*) designates a cross-reference whose connection involves a direct quote from the other testament. Standard cross-references in this system appear unmarked.

In some study editions, we utilize an expanded full-column cross-reference system that has been enhanced by adding a system of Hebrew and Greek word studies. This tool, which takes 100 of the most significant Hebrew words in the Old Testament and 100 Greek words from the New Testament, creates a chain reference which points to key instances of these words so they can be studied in context. In the cross-reference system, each word is attached to a modified Strong’s number, which points to a helpful key-word glossary at the back of the Bible.

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

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Old
Testament

In the Beginning

EVERY STORY has a beginning. The Bible begins with God. At the very beginning of this story, God created the universe and put everything in order, forming all of the planets, stars, and galaxies and setting them in motion. On earth, he created abundant varieties of living creatures. And he made the crown of his creation in his own image, his vice-regents: humans.

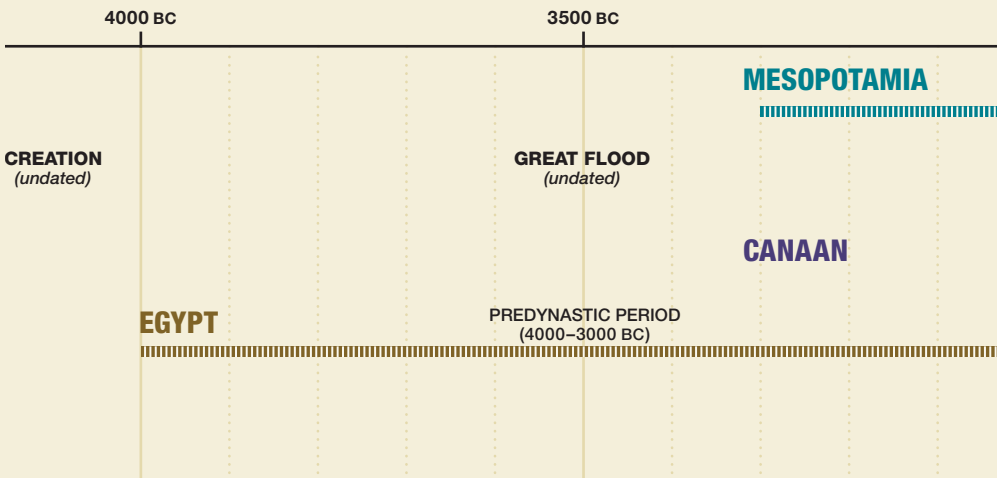
Creation isn't the only beginning recorded in the Bible, though. There is also the more tragic story of the beginning of sin and death. Adam and Eve, the humans whom God placed over his creation, chose to disobey him and shattered its perfection. This tragedy soon led to others, such as Cain murdering his brother Abel in a jealous rage. And ultimately, sin became so rampant and pervasive that God decided to

begin once again. He chose Noah, the only righteous man left on earth, to be the patriarch of a fresh beginning for humanity. But even Noah was vulnerable to sin, and his descendants showed that the sin problem was still very real and in need of a solution.

How would God continue his rescue plan for humanity? Would he need to begin again after the tower of Babel?



TIMELINE



BOOKS

■ GENESIS

DATES

FROM:
Undated
TO:
2100 BC

THEMES

- Creation
- Sin
- Redemption

PEOPLE & CULTURE

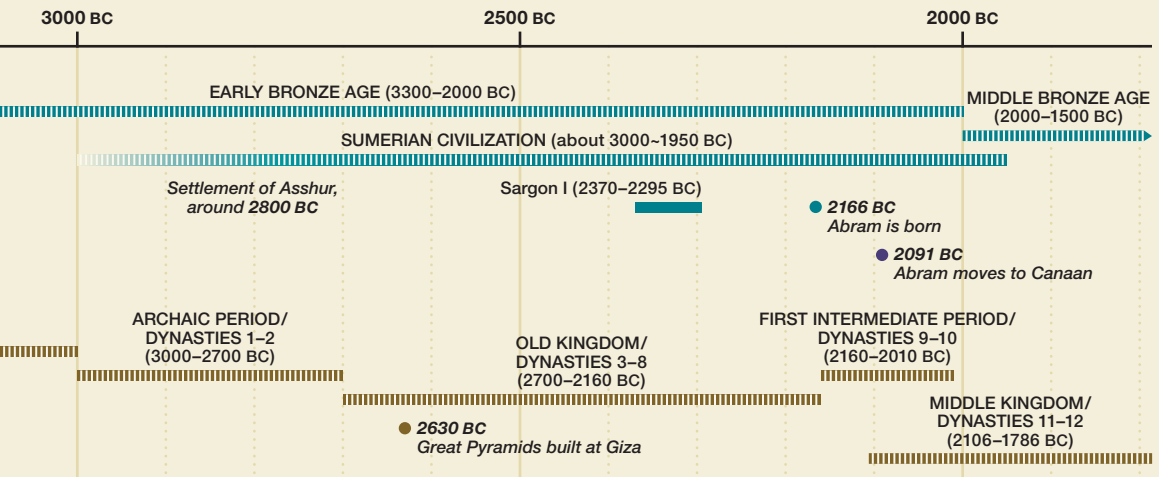
■ **Adam and Eve.** God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden to rule on his behalf. They worked hard at cultivating the ground and managing the affairs of the Garden, and they enjoyed communion with God there. But they chose to disobey God's one command, and through them sin entered the world. They were banished from the Garden, and their fellowship with God was broken. But God immediately set into motion his plan to bring humanity back into fellowship with him—this is the story of the entire Bible.

■ **Noah.** By the time of Noah, sin and wickedness were so rampant that God was actually sorry he had ever created humans (Gen 6:7). But Noah was a righteous man, and God chose to save him from the destruction that was planned for the rest of humanity. Noah and his family became a new beginning for humanity.

■ **Language and Culture.** After Noah's sons populated the earth again, there was a unified language and culture throughout the world. But this unity led to pride and a sense that humans didn't need God. As a result, God caused them to be divided by different languages and to be scattered around the world. Different cultures began to emerge from the different language groups and regions.



Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, by Wenzel Peter



MAP

1 Garden of Eden God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when he made them in his image. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly where Eden was located, except for a few clues that are difficult to decipher in Genesis 2:10-14.

2 Mountains of Ararat Noah's boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, in modern-day Turkey (Gen

8:4). From here his sons and their descendants spread out to build new nations.

3 Babel The tower of Babel was built in the fertile area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in modern-day Iraq.



MEGATHEMES

■ **Beginnings.** Here we find the beginnings of the universe, the earth, humanity, sin, and God's plan of salvation. Genesis teaches us that the earth is well-made and good; people are special to God and unique; God creates and sustains all life; and God deals with sin swiftly and with justice and compassion.

■ **Sin.** When people choose to disobey God's plan for living, they are choosing to sin. And sin ruins people's lives. Genesis shows that living God's way can be rewarding and makes life fulfilling.

■ **Promises.** God has promised to help and protect his people. He made a covenant with Noah that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood and gave a wonderful sign for us to remember his promise: the rainbow. God always keeps his promises.

BOOKS IN THIS SECTION



GENESIS


AUTHOR: Moses

AUDIENCE: The people of Israel

PURPOSE: To record God's creation of the world and his desire to have people worship him

DATE WRITTEN: Approximately 1450–1410 B.C.

WHERE WRITTEN: In the wilderness during Israel's wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula



*And God saw that the light was good.
Then he separated the light from the darkness.*
Genesis 1:4

A. The Beginning of Creation

We sometimes wonder how our world came to be. But here we find the answer. God created the earth and everything in it, and made humans like himself. Although we may not understand the complexity of just how he did it, it is clear that God did create all life. This shows not only God's authority over humanity, but his deep love for all creation.

The Account of Creation

GENESIS 1:1–2:4a

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then

he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate

Gen 1:1 Or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .*

Gen 1:1 The simple statement "God created the heavens and the earth" is one of the most challenging concepts confronting the modern mind. The vast galaxy we live in is spinning at the incredible speed of 490,000 miles per hour. But even at this breakneck speed, our galaxy still needs 200 million years to make one rotation. And there are over one billion other galaxies just like ours in the universe.

Some scientists say that the number of stars in creation is equal to all the grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. Yet this complex sea of spinning stars functions with remarkable order and efficiency. To say that the universe "just happened" or "evolved" requires more faith than to believe that God is behind these amazing statistics. God truly did create a wonderful universe.

God did not *need* to create the universe; he *chose* to create it. Why? God is love, and love is best expressed toward something or someone else—so God created the world and people as an expression of his love. We should avoid reducing God's creation to merely scientific terms. Remember that God created the universe because of love.

Gen 1:1ff The creation story teaches us much about God and ourselves. First, we learn about God: (1) He is creative; (2) as the Creator, he is distinct from his creation; (3) he is eternal and in control of the world. We also learn about ourselves: (1) Since God chose to create us, we are valuable in his eyes; (2) we are more important than the animals. (See Gen 1:28 for more on our role in the created order.)

Gen 1:1ff Just how did God create the earth? This is still a subject of great debate. Some say that with a sudden explosion, the universe appeared. Others say God started the process and then the universe evolved over billions of years. Almost every ancient religion has its own story to explain how the earth came to be. And almost every scientist has an opinion on the origin of the universe. But only the Bible shows one supreme God creating the earth out of his great love and giving all people a special place in it. We may never know exactly how God created



ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

The Bible does not discuss the subject of evolution, but its worldview assumes God created the world. The biblical view of creation is not in conflict with science; rather, it is in conflict with any worldview that starts without a creator.

Equally committed and sincere believers in Jesus have struggled with the subject of beginnings and come to **differing conclusions**. This is to be expected because the evidence is very old and quite fragmented, due to the ravages of the ages. Polarizations and black-and-white thinking should be avoided. Students of the Bible must be careful not to make the Bible say what it doesn't say, and students of science must not make science say what it doesn't say.

The most important aspect of the continuing discussion is not the process of creation, but the origin of creation. **The world is not a product of blind chance and probability; God created it.**

The Bible not only tells us that the world was created by God, but more importantly, it tells us who this God is. It reveals God's personality, his character, and his plan for his creation. It also reveals God's deepest desire—to relate to and fellowship with the people he created. God took the ultimate step toward fellowship with us through his historic visit to this planet in the person of his Son, Messiah Jesus. **We can know in a very personal way this God who created the universe.**

The book of Genesis begins with "God created the heavens and the earth." The heavens and the earth are here. We are here. God created all that we see and experience. Here we begin the most exciting and fulfilling journey imaginable.

the earth, but the Bible tells us that God did create it. That fact alone gives worth and dignity to all people.

Gen 1:2 Who created God? To ask that question is to assume there was another creator before God. At some time, however, we are forced to stop asking that question and realize that there has to be something that has always existed. God is that infinite Being who has always been and who was created by no one. This is difficult to understand because finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite. For example, we can try to think of the highest number, but we can't do it. Likewise, we must not limit the infinite God by our finite understanding.

Gen 1:2 The statement "the earth was formless and empty" provides the setting for the creation narrative that follows. During

the second and third days of creation, God gave form to the universe; during days four through six, God filled the earth with living beings. The "darkness" was dispelled on the first day, when God created light.

Gen 1:2 The image of the Spirit of God hovering over the surface of the water is similar to a mother bird caring for and protecting its young (see Deut 32:11–12; Isa 31:5). God's Spirit was actively involved in the creation of the world (see Job 33:4; Ps 104:30). God's care and protection are still active.

Gen 1:3–2:7 How long did it take God to create the world? There are two basic views about the days of creation: (1) Each day was a literal 24-hour period; (2) each day represents an indefinite period of time (even millions of years).

the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the

smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

The Bible does not say how long these days were. The real question, however, is not how long God took, but how he did it. God created the earth in an orderly fashion (he did not make plants before light), and he created men and women as unique beings capable of communication with him. No other part of creation can claim that remarkable

privilege. It is not important how long it took God to create the world, whether a few days or a few billion years, but that he created it just the way he wanted it.

Gen 1:6 The “space between the waters” was a separation between the sea and the mists of the skies.

Gen 1:25 God saw that his work was good. People sometimes feel guilty for feeling good about an accomplishment. This need not be so. Just as God felt good about his work, we can be pleased with our work when it is well-done. However, we should not feel good about our work if God would not be pleased with it. What are you doing that pleases both you and God?

Animals

Animals are mentioned throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Animals figured into many important biblical events, including the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, the ten plagues in Egypt, and the life of Messiah Jesus. The people of both the Old and New Testaments lived close to the land and were well acquainted with various animals, which explains why the Scripture writers and Jesus himself frequently used animals as object lessons.

Present-day biologists classify animals based on internal and external structures, but in the creation account animals are classified by habitat. Thus, Genesis 1 speaks of water and air animals (Gen 1:20-21); cattle or domesticated animals—that is, animals that live with humans (Gen 1:24); animals that scurry along the ground (Gen 1:24); and wild animals (Gen 1:24). When God made animals, they became living souls (having *nephesh*—the Hebrew word translated “life” in Gen 1:20, 30). The same word is used in Genesis 2:7 to describe the human being God made; that is, the man became a living soul (*nephesh*). Both animals and humans are *nephesh*—that is, they are living souls. Human beings are different from animals in the sense that we have “spirit” (*ruach*) and we bear the image of God (Gen 1:27).



► **GENESIS 1:1–2:4a (cont.)**

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all

Gn 1:26a Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. **Gn 1:26b** As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*. **Gn 1:27** Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.



ADAM

In Hebrew, Adam’s name is the word for “human.” After creating Adam, God announced for the first time that something in creation was “not good”—Adam’s lack of human companionship (Gen 2:18). God created us to be in community with other people, not alone. So God presented Adam with the ideal companion, Eve, and placed them together in a perfect environment. (The expression *Gan Eden*, “Garden of Eden,” is still used in Hebrew to refer to heaven.) • Adam and Eve had both freedom and responsibility in the garden, with the authority to tend and oversee it. Their relationships with God and one another were marked by complete unity, innocence, and honesty. But that innocence was short lived. One tree in the garden was off-limits, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve both knew that the tree’s fruit was not to be eaten, but they both chose to disobey. • In that moment of rebellion something immense, glorious, and free was shattered . . . God’s perfect creation. As with a broken plate-glass window, the thousands of fragments couldn’t be regathered. Adam, the first representative of the human race, began his life in a perfect world, yet left a legacy of brokenness that would affect the entire human race. • However, God already had a plan in motion to restore his perfect creation, not by piecing together the fragments of the old, but by sending Jesus, the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45). Jesus’ sinless life and death made it possible for God to offer forgiveness to all who receive it by faith. As we walk with the Messiah, we enter into the intimacy with God for which we were created. And we look forward to a renewed world where all beauty will be restored and all brokenness healed.

Strengths and accomplishments

- First zoologist—named the animals
- First landscape architect, placed in the garden to care for it
- Father of the human race
- First person made in the image of God, and the first human to share an intimate personal relationship with God

Weaknesses and mistakes

- Avoided responsibility and blamed others; chose to hide rather than to confront; made excuses rather than admitting the truth
- Greatest mistake: together with Eve, brought sin into the world

Lessons from his life

- The human race, however broken, still bears the image of God
- God allows us to choose to love and trust him, even at the risk of our choosing not to
- We should not blame others for our bad choices
- We cannot hide from God

Vital statistics

- Where: Garden of Eden
- Occupation: Caretaker, gardener, farmer
- Relatives: Wife: Eve. Sons: Cain, Abel, Seth. Numerous other children. The only man who never had an earthly mother or father.

Key verses

“It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it” (Gen 3:12). “Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life” (1 Cor 15:22).

Gen 1:26 Why does God use the plural form, “Let *us* make human beings in *our* image”? One view says this is a reference to the Trinity—God the Father, Messiah Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit—all of whom are God. Another view is that the plural wording is used to denote majesty; kings traditionally used the plural form in speaking of themselves. The grammar doesn’t decide the matter for us, but in either case it is God who created humans in his image, and God has revealed himself to us as a Trinity clearly through the whole of the Scriptures.

Gen 1:26 In what ways are we made in God’s image? God obviously did not create us exactly like himself because God has no physical body. Instead, we are a reflection of God’s glory. Some feel that the image of God can be found in one or more of the uniquely human capacities for reason, creativity, speech, or self-determination. More likely, the image of God is something that describes our entire being as humans, not just one aspect. God made humans to be in a special relationship with him and to reign over creation as his ambassadors and administrators on earth. We ought to reflect his character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness.

Knowing that we are made in God’s image provides a solid basis for self-worth. Human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness, or public acclaim. Instead, it is based on being made in God’s image. Because we bear God’s image, we can feel positive about ourselves. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities he has given us. Knowing that you are a person of worth helps you love God, know him personally, and make a valuable contribution to those around you.

Gen 1:27 God made both man and woman in his image. Neither one is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning the Bible places both man and woman at the pinnacle of God’s creation. Neither gender is exalted over the other nor depreciated.

Gen 1:28 To “reign over” something is to have absolute authority and control over it. God has ultimate rule over the earth, and he exercises his authority with loving care. When God delegated some of his authority to the human race, he expected us to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share our planet. We must not be careless

Adam’s story is told in Genesis 1:26–5:5. He is also mentioned in Luke 3:38; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13–14.

the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

Gn 2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3.

2:1 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

B. The Beginning of Humanity

Learning about our ancestors often helps us understand ourselves. The stories of Adam and Eve in the Garden, followed by the tragic story of their two sons Cain and Abel, explain the sin and suffering in our world and help us to live our lives in reliance on God and his promises.

1. ADAM AND EVE

Adam and Eve, our first ancestors, were the climax of God’s creation—the very reason God made the world. But they didn’t always live the way God intended. Through their mistakes, we can learn important lessons about the way God wants us to live. Adam and Eve teach us much about the nature of sin and its consequences.

The Man and Woman in the Garden

GENESIS 2:4b-25

WHEN THE LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground

Gn 2:6 Or *mist*.

and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from

DAYS OF CREATION

First Day	Light (so there was light and darkness)
Second Day	Sky and water (waters separated)
Third Day	Land and seas (waters gathered); vegetation
Fourth Day	Sun, moon, and stars (to govern the day and the night and to mark seasons, days, and years)
Fifth Day	Fish and birds (to fill the waters and the sky)
Sixth Day	Animals (to fill the earth) Man and woman (to care for the earth and to commune with God)
Seventh Day	God rested and declared all he had made to be very good

and wasteful as we fulfill this charge. God was careful how he made this earth. We must not be careless about how we take care of it.

Gen 1:31 God saw that all he had created was excellent in every way. You are part of God’s creation, and he is pleased with how he made you. If at times you feel worthless, remember that God made you for a good reason. You are valuable to him.

Gen 2:2-3 We live in an action-oriented world! There always seems to be something to do and no time to rest. Yet God demon-

strated that rest is appropriate and right. If God himself rested from his work, we should not be surprised that we also need rest.

Jesus demonstrated this principle when he and his disciples left in a boat to get away from the crowds (see Mark 6:31-32). Our times of rest refresh us for times of service.

Gen 2:3 That God blessed the seventh day means that he set it apart for holy use. The Ten Commandments emphasize this distinction by commanding the observance of the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11).

Gen 2:7 “From the dust of the ground” implies that there is nothing fancy about the chemical elements making up our bodies. The body is a lifeless shell until God brings it to life with his “breath of life.” When God removes his life-giving breath, our bodies once again return to dust. Our life and worth, therefore, come from God’s Spirit. Many boast of their achievements and abilities as though they were the originators of their own strengths. Others feel worthless because their abilities do not stand out. In reality, our worth comes not from our achievements but from the God of the universe, who chooses to give us the mysterious and miraculous gift of life. Value life, as he does.

Gen 2:9, 16-17 Were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil real trees? Two views are often expressed: (1) *The trees were real, but symbolic.* Eternal life with God was pictured as eating from the tree of life. (2) *The trees were real, possessing special properties.* By eating the fruit from the tree of life, Adam and Eve could have had eternal life, enjoying a permanent relationship as God’s children.

In either case, Adam and Eve’s sin separated them from the tree of life and thus kept them from obtaining eternal life. Interestingly,

► **GENESIS 2:4b-25 (cont.)**

the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

Gn 2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. **Gn 2:21** Or *took a part of the man's side*.

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

the tree of life again appears in a description in Revelation 22 of people enjoying eternal life with God.

Gen 2:15-17 God gave Adam responsibility for the garden and told him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Rather than physically preventing him from eating, God gave Adam a choice and, thus, the possibility of choosing wrongly. God still gives us choices, and we, too, often choose wrongly. These wrong choices may cause us pain, but they can help us learn and grow and make better choices in the future. Living with the consequences of our choices teaches us to think and choose more carefully.

Gen 2:16-17 Why would God place a tree in the garden and then forbid Adam to eat from it? God wanted Adam to obey, but God gave Adam the freedom to choose. Without choice, Adam would have been like a prisoner, and his obedience would have been hollow. The two trees provided an exercise in choice with rewards for choosing to obey and sad consequences for choosing to disobey. When you are faced with a choice, always choose to obey God.

Gen 2:18-24 God's creative work was not complete until he made woman. He could have made her from the dust of the ground, as he had made man. But God chose to make her from the man's flesh and bone. In so doing, he illustrated for us that in marriage man and woman symbolically are united into one. This is a mystical union of the couple's hearts and lives. Throughout the Bible, God treats this special partnership seriously. If you are married or planning to be married, are you willing to keep the commitment that makes the two of you one? The goal in marriage should be more than friendship; it should be oneness.

Gen 2:21-23 God forms and equips men and women for various tasks, but all these tasks lead to the same goal—honoring God.



WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Gen 2:18-24	Marriage is God's idea
Gen 24:58-60	Commitment is essential to a successful marriage
Prov 5:18	Marriage holds times of great joy
Song 4:9-10	Romance is important
Mal 2:14-15	Marriage creates the best environment for raising children
Matt 5:32	Unfaithfulness breaks the bond of trust, the foundation of all relationships
Matt 19:6	Marriage is permanent
Rom 7:2-3	Only death should dissolve marriage
Eph 5:21-33	Marriage is based on the principled practice of love, not on feelings
Eph 5:23-32	Marriage is a living symbol of Messiah Jesus and the church
Heb 13:4	Marriage is good and honorable

There is no room for thinking that one gender is superior to the other.

Gen 2:24 God gave marriage as a gift to Adam and Eve. They were created perfect for each other. Marriage was not just for convenience, nor was it brought about by any particular culture. It was instituted by God and has three basic aspects: (1) The man leaves his parents and, in a public act, promises himself to his wife; (2) the man and woman are joined together by taking responsibility for each other's welfare and by loving each other above all others; (3) the two are united into one in the intimacy and commitment of sexual union that is reserved for marriage. Strong marriages include all three of these aspects.

Gen 2:25 Have you ever noticed how a little child can run naked through a room full of strangers without embarrassment? He is not aware of his nakedness, just as Adam and Eve were not embarrassed in their innocence.

But after Adam and Eve sinned, shame and awkwardness followed, creating barriers between themselves and God. We often experience these same barriers in marriage. Ideally a husband and wife have no barriers, feeling no embarrassment in exposing themselves to each other or to God. But like Adam and Eve we put on fig leaves (barriers) because we have areas we don't want our spouse, or God, to know about (Gen 3:7). Then we hide, just as Adam and Eve hid from God. In marriage, lack of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a breakdown of physical intimacy. In the same way, when we fail to expose our secret thoughts to God, we break our lines of communication with him.

Gen 3:1 Disguised as a shrewd serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve. At one time, Satan had been a glorious angel. But in pride, he rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. As a created being, Satan has definite limitations. Although he is trying to tempt

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

The Man and Woman Sin

GENESIS 3:1-19

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

²⁶“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. ²⁷“It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

²⁸“You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ²⁹“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

³⁰The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took

everyone away from God, he will not be the final victor. In Genesis 3:14-15, God promises that Satan will be crushed by one of the woman’s offspring, the Messiah.

Gen 3:1-6 Why does Satan tempt us? Temptation is Satan’s invitation to give in to his kind of life and give up on God’s kind of life. Satan tempted Eve and succeeded in getting her to sin. Ever since then, he’s been busy trying to get people to sin. He even tempted Jesus (Matt 4:1-11), but Jesus did not sin!

How could Eve have resisted temptation? By following the same guidelines we can follow. First, we must realize that *being tempted* is not a sin. We have not sinned until we *give in* to the temptation. Second, to resist temptation, we must pray for strength to resist, run from it (sometimes literally), and say no when confronted with what we know is wrong. James 1:12 tells of the blessings and rewards for those who don’t give in when tempted.

Gen 3:1-6 The serpent, Satan, tempted Eve by getting her to doubt God’s goodness. He implied that God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share his knowledge of good and evil. Satan made Eve forget all that God had given her and, instead, focus on what God had forbidden. We fall into trouble, too, when we dwell on what God forbids rather than on the countless blessings and promises God has given us. The next time you are feeling sorry for yourself because of what you don’t have, consider all that you *do* have and thank God. Then your doubts won’t lead you into sin.


Gen 3:5 Adam and Eve got what they wanted: an intimate knowledge of both good and evil. But they got it by disobeying God, and the results were disastrous. Sometimes we have the illusion that freedom is doing anything we want. But God says that true freedom comes from obedience and knowing what *not* to do. The restrictions he gives us are for our good, helping us avoid evil. We have the freedom to walk in front of a speeding car, but we don’t need to be hit to realize it would be foolish to do so. Don’t listen to Satan’s temptations. You don’t have to do evil to gain more experience and learn more about life.

Gen 3:5 Satan used a sincere motive to tempt Eve: “You will be like God.” It wasn’t wrong of Eve to want to be like God. To become more like God is humanity’s highest goal. It is what we are supposed to do. But

Creation Stories

Several ancient civilizations wrote down their own accounts of how the world was created. The best known of these extra-biblical creation myths is a Babylonian adaptation of the Sumerian story called *Enuma Elish*. The gods Tiamat and Apsu existed from the beginning, but after other gods were born Apsu tried to do away with them. One of the gods, Ea, killed Apsu; then Tiamat was herself killed by Ea’s son Marduk, the god of Babylon in whose honor the poem was composed. Marduk used the two halves of Tiamat’s body to create the foundation for both heaven and earth. He then set in order the stars, sun, and moon. Lastly, to free the gods from menial tasks, with Ea’s help he created mankind from clay mingled with the blood of Kingu, the rebel god who had led Tiamat’s forces. Other creation stories are found in Babylonian records. The Epic of Atrahasis describes the creation of man as a solution to relieve the gods of the work of cultivating the land.

In contrast to these stories from the surrounding cultures, Israel’s creation story shows that God is completely in control. He is not one of many gods, and his creation of humanity was not a matter of convenience but an act of love. God created humans to rule his creation and have relationship with him, not simply to do the hard work that he didn’t want to do.



Satan misled Eve concerning the right way to accomplish this goal. He told her that she could become more like God by defying God’s authority, by taking God’s place and deciding for herself what was best for her life. In effect, he told her to become her own god.

To become like God is not the same as trying to become God. Rather, it is to reflect his characteristics and to recognize his authority over our lives. Like Eve, we often have a worthy goal but try to achieve it the wrong way. We act like a political candidate who pays off an election judge to be “voted” into office; serving the people is no longer his highest goal.

Self-exaltation leads to rebellion against God. As soon as we begin to leave God out of our plans, we are placing ourselves above him. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

Gen 3:6 Satan tried to make Eve think that sin is good, pleasant, and desirable. A knowledge of both good and evil seemed harmless to her. People usually choose wrong things because they have become convinced that those things are good, at least for themselves.

Our sins do not always appear ugly to us, and the pleasant sins are the hardest to avoid. So prepare yourself for the attractive temptations that may come your way. We cannot always prevent temptation, but there is always a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13). Use God’s Word and God’s people to help you stand against it.

Gen 3:6-7 Notice what Eve did: She looked, she took, she ate, and she gave. The battle is often lost at the first look. Temptation often begins by simply seeing something you want. Are you struggling with temptation because you have not learned that looking is the first step toward sin? You would win over temptation more often if you followed Paul’s advice to run from those things that produce evil thoughts (2 Tim 2:22).

Gen 3:6-7 One of the realities of sin is that its effects spread. After Eve sinned, she involved Adam in her wrongdoing. When we do something wrong, often we try to relieve our guilt by involving someone else. Like toxic waste spilled into a river, sin swiftly spreads. Recognize and confess your sin to God before you are tempted to pollute those around you.

► **GENESIS 3:1-19 (cont.)**

some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Gn 3:8 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

Gen 3:7-8 After sinning, Adam and Eve felt guilt and embarrassment over their nakedness. Their guilty feelings made them try to hide from God. A guilty conscience is a warning signal God has placed inside of you that goes off when you've done wrong. The worst step you can take is to try to stifle or eliminate those guilty feelings without eliminating the cause. That would be like using a painkiller but not treating the disease that is causing the pain. Be glad those guilty feelings are there. They make you aware of your sin so you can ask God's forgiveness and then correct your wrongdoing.

Gen 3:8 The thought of two humans covered with fig leaves trying to hide from the all-seeing, all-knowing God is humorous. How could they be so silly as to think they could actually hide? Yet we do the same, acting as though God doesn't know what we're doing. Have the courage to share all you do and think with him. And don't try to hide—it can't be done. Honesty will strengthen your relationship with God.

Gen 3:8-9 These verses show God's desire to have fellowship with us. They also show why we are afraid to have fellowship with him. Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard him approaching. God wanted to be with them, but because of their sin, they were afraid to show themselves. Sin had broken their close relationship with God, just as it has broken ours. But Messiah Jesus, God's Son, opens the way for us to renew our fellowship with him. God longs to be with us. He actively offers us his unconditional love. Our natural response is fear because we feel we can't live up to his standards. But understanding that he loves us, regardless of our faults, can help remove that dread.

Gen 3:11-13 Adam and Eve failed to heed God's warning recorded in Genesis 2:16-17. They did not understand the reasons for his command, so they chose to act in another way that looked better to them. All of God's commands are for our own good, but we may not always understand the reasons behind them. People who trust God will obey because God asks them to, whether or not they understand why God commands it.

EVE In Hebrew, Eve's name means "life." Eve enters the story as the one who completes the picture of creation and brings to humanity what was lacking. Adam needed human companionship, and together they were greater than either could have been alone. • Yet when Satan approached Eve in the Garden of Eden, he questioned her contentment. How could she be happy when she was not allowed to eat from the forbidden fruit tree? Satan tempted Eve to shift her focus from all that God had given her to the one thing he had withheld. And Eve was willing to believe Satan rather than God, with disastrous effects for the human race. Eve was typical of us all, and we consistently show we are her descendants by repeating her mistakes. Our desires, like Eve's, can be quite easily manipulated. • Yet Eve is still known as the bringer of life. Throughout history she has been viewed in parallel to Mary (or Miriam), the mother of Jesus. The offspring (or "seed") promised to Eve in Genesis 3:15 was born through Mary in Bethlehem; and through Jesus' death, new life is offered to rescue everyone caught in Eve's legacy.

Strengths and accomplishments

- First wife and mother
- Created in God's image, she shared a special relationship with God as well as with her husband with whom she had coresponsibility over creation

Weaknesses and mistakes

- Believed Satan rather than God
- Did not seek a "reality check" from God
- Tempted Adam to share her sin
- When confronted, blamed others

Lessons from her life

- Women bear the image of God fully
- Strong marriages are built on commitment, companionship, and absence of shame (Gen 2:24-25)
- We are tempted to sin when our focus moves from what God has given us to what he has withheld

Vital statistics

- Where: Garden of Eden
- Occupation: Wife, companion, co-manager of Eden
- Relatives: Husband: Adam. Sons: Cain, Abel, Seth. Numerous other children.

Key verse

"I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15).

Eve's story is told in Genesis 2:18–4:26. Her death is not mentioned in Scripture.

Gen 3:11-13 When God asked Adam about his sin, Adam blamed Eve. Then Eve blamed the serpent. How easy it is to excuse our sins by blaming someone else or our circumstances. But God knows

the truth, and he holds each of us responsible for what we do (see Gen 3:14-19). Admit your wrong attitudes and actions to God. Don't try to get away with sin by placing blame.

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic
and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵And I will cause hostility between you and
the woman,
and between your offspring and her
offspring.

He will strike* your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.*”

¹⁷And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate
from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.
All your life you will struggle to scratch
a living from it.

¹⁸It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

GENESIS 3:20-24

Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Gn 3:15 Or *bruise*; also in 3:15b. **Gn 3:16** Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.* **Gn 3:20** *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “to give life.” **Gn 3:22** Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.



SATAN'S PLAN AGAINST US

Doubt	Makes you question God's Word and his goodness
Discouragement	Makes you look at your problems rather than at God
Diversion	Makes the wrong things seem attractive so that you will want them more than the right things
Defeat	Makes you feel like a failure so that you don't even try
Delay	Makes you put off doing something so that it never gets done

Gn 3:14ff Adam and Eve chose their course of action (disobedience), and then God chose his. As a holy God, he could only respond in a way consistent with his perfect moral nature. He could not allow sin to go unchecked; he had to punish it. If the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin seem extreme, remember that their sin set in motion the world's tendency toward disobeying God. That is why we sin today. Every human being ever born, with the exception of Jesus, has inherited the sinful nature of Adam and Eve (Rom 5:12-21). Adam and Eve's punishment reflects how seriously God views sin of any kind.

Gn 3:14-19 God's creation was good and beautiful. Adam and Eve experienced the Fall as death, a break in their relationship with God and his creation. But the Lord had a plan to redeem and restore all. The Fall had fatally

scarred all humanity, yet God would heal all through a seed, the offspring of a woman—Emmanuel, “God with us”—one day to be born the Messiah Jesus.

Gn 3:15 Satan is God's enemy and ours. In Hebrew, his name means “adversary.” The Lord curses him, declaring his plan to defeat this adversary. The seed, the offspring of a woman, would deal a lethal head blow to the serpent while being wounded in the conflict. Such a child would require a woman, a family, a tribe, and a nation. So God chose a people for that purpose—to deliver the messianic redeemer to all humankind. This seed is the one who, according to God's plan, would defeat the adversary (Rom 16:20).

Gn 3:17-19 Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall from God's gracious presence affected all creation, including the environment. Years ago people thought nothing of

polluting streams and rivers with chemical waste and garbage. The amount dumped seemed so insignificant, so small compared to these large water sources. Now we know that just two or three parts per million of certain chemicals can damage human health. Sin in our lives is similar to pollution in streams. Even small amounts are deadly, and the consequences reach far beyond ourselves.

Gn 3:22-24 Life in the Garden of Eden was perfect, and if Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they could have lived there forever. But after disobeying, Adam and Eve no longer deserved paradise, and God told them to leave. If they had continued to live in the garden and eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever. But eternal life in a state of sin would mean forever trying to hide from God. Like Adam and Eve, all of us have sinned and are separated from fellowship with God. But we do not have to stay separated. And God is also preparing a new earth as an eternal paradise for his people (see Rev 21–22).

Gn 3:24 This is how Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God: (1) They became convinced their way was better than God's and acted on that choice; (2) they became self-conscious and hid; and (3) they tried to excuse and defend themselves. To build a relationship with God we must reverse those steps: (1) We must drop our excuses and self-defenses; (2) we must stop trying to hide from God; (3) we must become convinced that God's way is better than our way.

Understanding Sin

WHAT IS SIN?

It's important for believers in Jesus to have a clear understanding of sin and how it affects us and our world. Otherwise, how can we fully comprehend our need to be saved and what we are being saved from? And how will we be able to explain that need to others? Many see *sin* as an irrelevant term that religious people use to push a heavy, outdated sense of morality up a hill of self-righteousness. For others, the word evokes fear of punishment and a painful sense of never being good enough.

The Bible offers a comprehensive and timeless understanding of sin that is relevant to all people, across every culture. That understanding begins in Genesis 3 and is progressively clarified throughout the Bible.

■ **The Origin of Sin.** Sin began with the very first human beings. Adam and Eve heard God's command to avoid a particular fruit tree in the garden, and they understood his warning about the consequences of disobeying. Yet when the serpent told Eve that she had been misinformed and that the forbidden fruit would make her like God, Eve believed the serpent rather than God. In her desire to be like God, she rebelled against him, eating the fruit and encouraging her husband to do likewise—which he did.

■ **The Essence of Sin.** There was nothing inherently immoral about the fruit. It was the distrust of God and the disregard for his protective limits that made eating it a sin. Sin *sometimes* finds expression in acts of immorality, but it *always* defies or dismisses God's integrity, authority, and in many cases, his existence. Sin is more than breaking a rule; the essence of sin is rejecting God's *right* to rule. Many people get sidetracked arguing over what is or isn't a sin. It's often easier to help people understand sin by confessing how we, at times, have rejected God's right to rule in our lives. Chances are they will appreciate our honesty and recognize that attitude in their own hearts. From there we can describe the cause, consequences, and solution to sin.

■ **The Cause of Sin.** God made human beings in his image and gave us authority over all other living things (Genesis 1:26-28) because he wants us to be like him, within his wise boundaries. But like Adam

and Eve, when we are not satisfied to be like God in the ways that he created us to be, our good desire to be like him is poisoned by a sinful desire to take his place.

■ The Consequences of Sin

Sin separates us from God. Like Adam and Eve, when we reject God's commands, it's because we have denied his authority. And when we deny God's authority, we grow to fear and distrust him, which amounts to a denial of his goodness—and that's just the start of our denying who God is. Our denial of who God is makes a relationship with him impossible. And our inclination to usurp God's place is evil and destructive. God cannot allow evil to go unpunished, and separating himself from sinners is part of that holy and just punishment.

Sin shatters our identity. Sin makes us forget that our identity is inseparably bound up in who God created us to be. Trying to find our identity apart from our creator opens an endless, aching need for the very God we have rejected, sentencing us to continually search for ways to fill that longing. It's like trying to put together a 10,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without a picture of what it should look like—and with half the pieces missing.

Sin produces fear of judgment and rejection. This fear results in our hiding from God and others, and in our blaming and distrust of others. Ironically, once the human race chose to distrust God, we became untrustworthy ourselves—caught in a cycle of being blamed and hurt by others, then blaming and hurting them in return. We can still see fragments of God's image in one another, but we also feel the sharp and broken edges caused by sin's impact.

■ **The Solution to Sin.** God loves us and offers a way of redemption that breaks the toxic cycle of sin. We see his plan begin to unfold in Genesis, and it continues throughout the Bible, finding its fulfillment in the redeeming work of Jesus, the Messiah. He took the punishment for us; and when we trust him, he renews our minds so that we can see God, ourselves, and others as we were always meant to. God's act of redemption transforms our desire to run from him into a desire to run to him and frees us to live and thrive as people who know we are forgiven and loved.

GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE FIRST SIN

■ **Pursuing the sinners.** Though Adam and Eve wished to hide from God, he called out to them and gave them the opportunity to admit what they had done.

■ **Pronouncing consequences.** God meted out punishment, first to the serpent as the instigator of the first sin, then to Eve who succumbed to sin and encouraged her husband to do likewise, and then to Adam for joining his wife in disobedience. But why curse the ground that had no part in the sin? The destructive effects of sin had to be fully experienced in order for people to fully realize their need for redemption. Sin not only touched the hearts of the man and woman; it also ruined the perfect environment God had made for them to live in.

■ **Providing a covering.** God replaced the inadequate covering of fig leaves with clothing made from animal skins. Sadly, animals had to die in order for sinners to be adequately covered. Some see this act as a foreshadowing of the animal sacrifices God prescribed in Leviticus, in which he accepted the death of sacrificial animals as a temporary substitute in place of the sinner.

■ **Promising redemption.** God's provision did not simply include proper clothing. In Genesis 3:15 we find the first hint of God's provision of a redeemer

to undo the effects of sin. The substitutionary atonement of the Levitical sacrifices was temporary because an animal could not fully pay for the punishment deserved by a human; only a human can do that. But in order to attain permanent redemption for all, such a person would have to be perfect and without sin. Otherwise, that person's death would address only their own punishment. Genesis 3:15, often referred to as the first messianic prophecy, is where God first promises to permanently conquer the evil one and everything he represents.

This verse points to the woman's offspring (literally, her "seed") as the means for accomplishing God's judgment on the serpent. In the context of Genesis and the rest of the Bible, the prediction pertains to an ongoing conflict not merely between snakes and humans but between Satan (the embodiment of ultimate evil) and humanity. Just as Genesis sets the stage for everything that follows in the Bible, this verse sets the stage for the coming of someone who would inflict a death blow on Satan and on evil. It is too early in the Bible for this "seed" to be called the Messiah; that title would come later. But it is noteworthy that the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) and the later Targums (paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible in Aramaic) seem to have understood this verse to be speaking about the coming Messiah.

Are All People Sinful by Nature?

TRADITIONAL JEWISH VIEW

No, each person has a *yetzer hatov* (good inclination) and a *yetzer hara* (bad inclination). The fact that everyone sins is not seen as inevitable or connected to the sin of Adam and Eve. The idea that human beings are sinful by nature is viewed by many Jewish people as an abdication of responsibility and a denial of human dignity.

CHRISTIAN / MESSIANIC JEWISH VIEW

Yes, the first sin corrupted the "spiritual DNA" of the human race, so that even the best of us still think, talk, and act in ways that reject God's rightful rule. Yet, people are still responsible for their sin. And because all people are made in God's image, Scripture affirms human dignity. Ultimately, God will fully restore that image in those who receive his redemption.