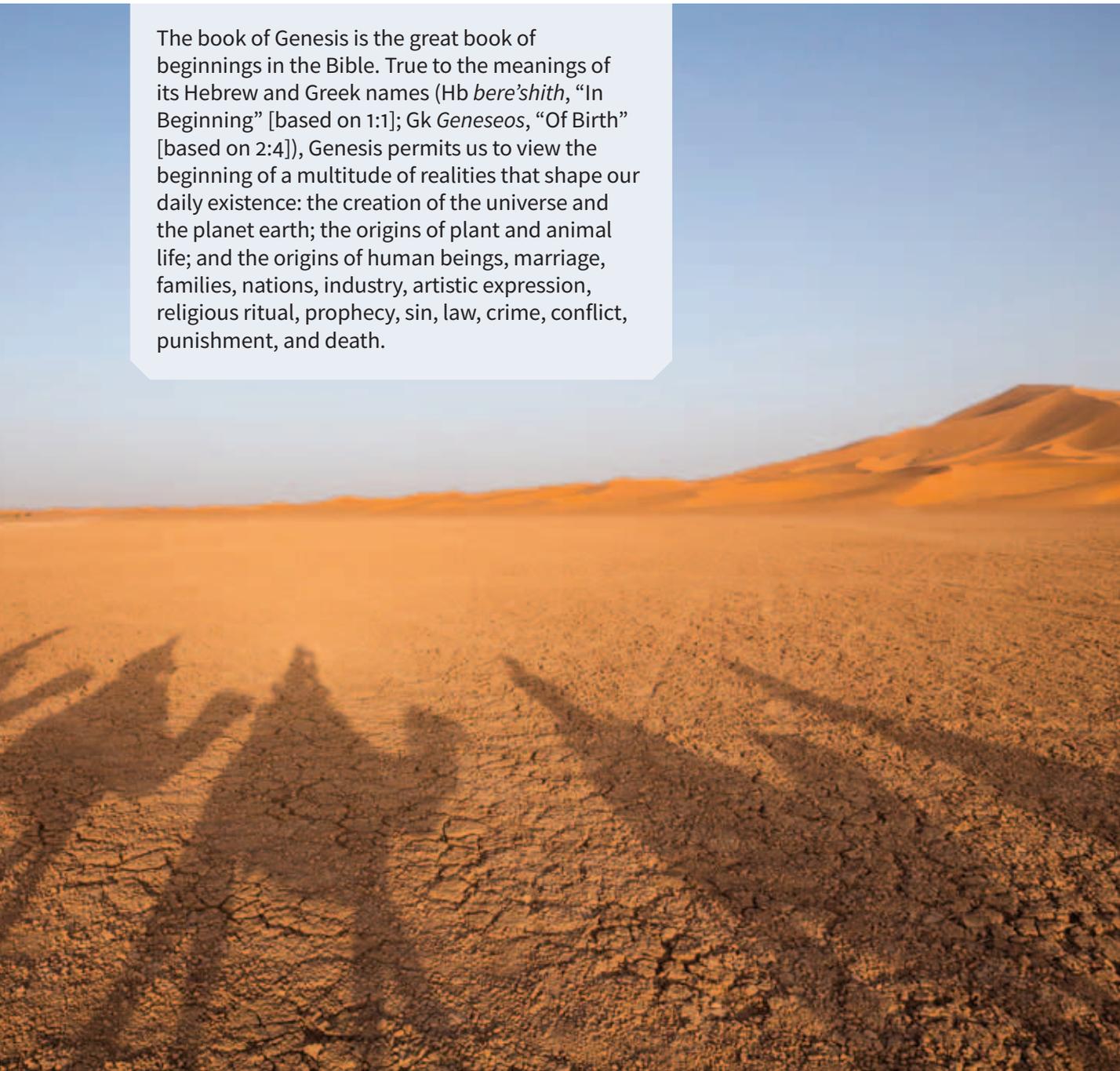


# INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb *bere'shith*, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk *Geneseos*, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.



A caravan of camels casts a long shadow in the desert.

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING**

**AUTHOR:** Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah’s author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11,13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19,26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17,45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of “Dan” (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

**BACKGROUND:** The Torah (a Hebrew term for “law” or “instruction”) was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the “primeval history,” showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the “patriarchal history,” focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God’s plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham’s descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

**MESSAGE AND PURPOSE**

**CREATION:** God is the sovereign Lord and Creator of all things. God created everything out of nothing. No preexistent material existed. He is the Creator, not a

craftsman. This indicates that he has infinite power and perfect control over everything. He is separate from the created order, and no part of creation is to be considered an extension of God. All that God created is good, because he is a good and majestic God. God is Lord, maintaining sovereignty and involvement with his creation. God’s control over human history is so complete that even the worst of human deeds can be turned to serve his benevolent purposes (50:20).

**HUMAN LIFE:** Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, unique from the rest of creation, to have fellowship with him. Humans are a paradox. On the one hand, people are the capstone of all God’s creation, created in God’s image (1:26-27) and possessing Godlike authority over all the created order within their realm (1:28-29; 9:1-3). On the other hand, they are sinners—beings who have used their God-given resources and abilities in ways that violate God’s laws (2:17; 3:6) and hurt other people (3:8-11; 6:5,11-12). Even so, during their lifetime God expects people to follow his laws (4:7), and he blesses those who live according to his ways (6:8-9; 39:2,21). God wants to work through individuals to bring a blessing to every human life (18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Nevertheless, Genesis teaches that because of sin all human beings must die (2:17; 3:19; 5:5,8,11). Since all human life is created in the image of God, no person or class of humans is superior to others. Humanity was created to live in community. The most fundamental unit of community is the family: a husband (male) and wife (female) with children.

**SIN:** Evil and sin did not originate with God. Adam and Eve were created innocent and with the capacity to make choices. Sin entered the world at a specific place and time in history. Adam and Eve chose freely to disobey God, fell from innocence, and lost their freedom. Their sinful nature has passed to every other human being. Sin resulted in death, both physical and spiritual. Sin has led to a world of pain and struggle.

**COVENANT:** Genesis is a narrative of relationships, and certainly relationships grounded in covenants with God.

2200 BC		2000 BC	
Job 2100?–1900?	Abraham 2166–1991	Isaac 2066–1886	Jacob 2006–1859
<b>11TH DYNASTY OF EGYPT 2134–1991</b>	<b>3RD DYNASTY OF UR 2113–2006</b>	<b>12TH DYNASTY OF EGYPT 1991–1786</b>	
Earliest pottery in South America <b>2200</b>	Construction of Ziggurat at Ur in Sumer <b>2100</b>	Contraceptives are developed in Egypt. <b>2000</b>	Chinese create first zoo, Park of Intelligence. <b>2000</b>
Abraham moves from Haran to Canaan. <b>2091</b>	Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah <b>2085</b>	Babylonians and Egyptians divide days into hours, minutes, and seconds. <b>2000</b>	Mesopotamians learn to solve quadratic equations. <b>2000</b>
God’s covenant with Abraham <b>2081?</b>	Ishmael born <b>2080?</b>	Code of medical ethics, Mesopotamia <b>2000</b>	Courier systems of communication are developed in both China and Egypt. <b>2000</b>

These covenants provide a unifying principle for understanding the whole of Scripture and define the relationship between God and man. The heart of that relationship is found in the phrase, “They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Jr 32:38; cp. Gn 17:7-8; Ex 6:6-7; Lv 26:12; Dt 4:20; Jr 11:4; Ezk 11:20). God’s covenant with Abraham is a major event both in Genesis and throughout the Bible. God called Abraham out of Ur to go to Canaan, promising to make him a great nation that in turn would bless all nations (Gn 12:1-3). God repeats his oath in Genesis 22:18, adding further that it would be through Abraham’s offspring (Hb zera’ “seed”) that all nations would someday be blessed. Paul applies the singular noun *seed* as a reference to Christ (Gl 3:16). It is through Christ, Abraham’s prophesied descendant, that the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant would come to every nation.

### CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God’s gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God’s original purpose for humanity.

Genesis provides the foundation from which we understand God’s covenant with Israel that was established with the giving of the law. For the Israelite community, the stories of the origins of humanity, sin, and the covenant relationship with God helped them understand why God gave them the law.

### STRUCTURE

Genesis is chiefly a narrative. From a narrative standpoint, God is the only true hero of the Bible, and the book of Genesis has the distinct privilege of introducing him. God is the first subject of a verb in the book and is mentioned more frequently than any other character in the Bible. The content of the first eleven chapters is distinct from the patriarchal stories in chapters 12–50. The primary literary device is the catchphrase “these are the family records.” The phrase is broader in meaning than simply “generation,” and refers more to a narrative ac-

count. This was a common practice in ancient Near East writings. This phrase also serves as a link between the key person in the previous narrative and the one anticipated in the next section. Genesis could be described as historical genealogy, which ties together creation and human history in one continuum.

### Outline

- I. Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)
  - A. Creator and creation (1:1-2)
  - B. Six days of creation (1:3-31)
  - C. Seventh day—day of consecration (2:1-3)
- II. The Human Family In and Outside the Garden (2:4–4:26)
  - A. The man and woman in the garden (2:4-25)
  - B. The man and woman expelled from the garden (3:1-24)
  - C. Adam and Eve’s family outside the garden (4:1-26)
- III. Adam’s Family Line (5:1–6:8)
  - A. Introduction: Creation and blessing (5:1-2)
  - B. “Image of God” from Adam to Noah (5:3-32)
  - C. Conclusion: Procreation and perversion (6:1-8)
- IV. Noah and His Family (6:9–9:29)
  - A. Righteous Noah and the corrupt world (6:9-12)
  - B. Coming judgment but the ark of promise (6:13–7:10)
  - C. Worldwide flood of judgment (7:11-24)
  - D. God’s remembrance and rescue of Noah (8:1-14)
  - E. Exiting the ark (8:15-19)
  - F. Worship and the word of promise (8:20-22)
  - G. God’s covenant with the new world (9:1-17)
  - H. Noah’s sons and future blessing (9:18-29)
- V. The Nations and the Tower of Babylon (10:1–11:26)
  - A. Table of Nations (10:1-32)
  - B. Tower of Babylon (11:1-9)
  - C. Family line of Abram (11:10-26)
- VI. Father Abraham (11:27–25:11)
  - A. Abram’s beginnings (11:27-32)

1900 BC

Benjamin is born; Rachel dies. **1900**  
 Potter’s wheel is introduced to Crete. **1900**  
 Use of the sail in the Aegean **1900**  
 Egyptian town of El Lahun gives evidence of town planning with streets at right angles. **1900**  
 Mesopotamian mathematicians discover what later came to be called the Pythagorean theorem. **1900**

1800 BC

Joseph 1915-1805

Joseph sold into Egypt **1898**  
 Khnumhotep II, an architect of Pharaoh Amenemhet II, develops encryption. **1900**  
 Musical theory, Mesopotamia **1800**  
 Multiplication tables, Mesopotamia **1800**  
 Babylonians develop catalog of stars and planets. **1800**  
 Book of the Dead, Egypt **1800**  
 Horses are introduced in Egypt. **1800**  
 Wooden plows, Scandinavia **1800**

- B. The promissory call and Abram's obedience (12:1-9)
- C. Abram and Sarai in Egypt: Blessing begins (12:10-13:1)
- D. Abram and Lot part: Promises recalled (13:2-18)
- E. Abram rescues Lot: Abram's faithfulness (14:1-24)
- F. Covenant promises confirmed (15:1-21)
- G. Abram's firstborn son, Ishmael (16:1-16)
- H. Covenant sign of circumcision (17:1-27)
- I. Divine judgment and mercy (18:1-19:38)
- J. Abraham and Sarah in Gerar: Promises preserved (20:1-18)
- K. Abraham's promised son: The birth of Isaac (21:1-21)
- L. Treaty with Abimelech (21:22-34)
- M. Abraham's test (22:1-19)
- N. Family line of Rebekah (22:20-24)
- O. Sarah's burial site (23:1-20)
- P. A wife for Isaac (24:1-67)
- Q. Abraham's death and burial (25:1-11)
- VII. Ishmael's Family Line (25:12-18)
- VIII. Isaac's Family: Jacob and Esau (25:19-35:29)
  - A. Struggle at birth and birthright (25:19-34)
  - B. Isaac's deception and strife with the Philistines (26:1-35)
  - C. Stolen blessing and flight to Paddan-aram (27:1-28:9)
  - D. Promise of blessing at Bethel (28:10-22)
  - E. Laban deceives Jacob (29:1-30)
  - F. Birth of Jacob's children (29:31-30:24)
  - G. Birth of Jacob's herds (30:25-43)
  - H. Jacob deceives Laban (31:1-55)
  - I. Struggle for blessing at Peniel (32:1-32)
  - J. Restored gift and return to Shechem (33:1-20)
  - K. Dinah, deception, and strife with the Hivites (34:1-31)
  - L. Blessing and struggle at birth (35:1-29)
- IX. Esau's Family (36:1-8)
- X. Esau, Father of the Edomites (36:9-37:1)
- XI. Jacob's Family: Joseph and His Brothers (37:2-50:26)
  - A. The early days of Joseph (37:2-36)
  - B. Judah and Tamar (38:1-30)
  - C. Joseph in Egypt (39:1-23)
  - D. Joseph, savior of Egypt (40:1-41:57)
  - E. The brothers' journeys to Egypt (42:1-43:34)
  - F. Joseph tests the brothers (44:1-34)
  - G. Joseph reveals his identity (45:1-28)
  - H. Jacob's migration to Egypt (46:1-27)
  - I. Joseph, savior of the family (46:28-47:12)
  - J. Joseph's administration in Egypt (47:13-31)
  - K. Jacob's blessings (48:1-49:28)
  - L. The death and burial of Jacob (49:29-50:14)
  - M. The final days of Joseph (50:15-26)

## THE CREATION

**1** In the beginning<sup>a</sup> God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>A,B</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty,<sup>c</sup> darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.<sup>d</sup> <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,”<sup>e</sup> and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.”<sup>f</sup> <sup>7</sup> So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse.<sup>g</sup> And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God

<sup>a</sup>11 Ps 90:2 102  
12 Is 40:21 Jn 11:3  
Eph 3:21  
<sup>b</sup>Neh 9:6 Is 40:12-14  
43:7 Jr 10:12-16 Am  
4:13 Rm 1:25 1Co 11  
9 Col 1:16 Rv 4:11  
<sup>c</sup>12 Jr 4:23  
<sup>d</sup>Jb 26:13 33:4 Ps 33  
6 104:30  
<sup>e</sup>13 2Co 4:6  
<sup>f</sup>16 Is 44:24 Jr 10:12  
<sup>g</sup>17 Ps 148:4  
<sup>h</sup>19 Jb 38:8-11 Ps  
33:7 136:6 Jr 5:22  
2Pt 3:5  
<sup>i</sup>11 Ps 65:9-13  
104:14

called the expanse “sky.”<sup>B</sup> Evening came and then morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place,” and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land “earth,” and the gathering of the water he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.”<sup>h</sup> And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> Evening came and then morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from

<sup>A</sup>1:1 Or *created the universe* <sup>B</sup>1:8 Or *“heavens.”*

**1:1** This opening verse of the Bible, seven words in the Hebrew, establishes seven key truths upon which the rest of the Bible is based.

First, God exists. The essential first step in pleasing God is acknowledging his existence (Heb 11:6). Second, God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes (Heb 1:10-12). Third, God is the main character in the Bible. He is the subject of the first verb in the Bible (in fact, he is the subject of more verbs than any other character) and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible. Fourth, as Creator, God has done what no human could ever do; in its active form the Hebrew verb *bara'*, meaning “to create,” never has a human subject. Thus *bara'* signifies a work that is uniquely God’s. Fifth, God is mysterious; though this particular Hebrew word for God is plural, the verb form of which “God” is the subject is singular. This is perhaps a subtle allusion to God’s Trinitarian nature: He is three divine persons in one divine essence. Sixth, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He does not just modify preexisting matter but calls matter into being out of nothing (Ps 33:6,9; Heb 11:3). Seventh, God is not dependent on the universe, but the universe is totally dependent on God (Heb 1:3).

**1:2** Bible translations since the time of the Septuagint, the translation of the OT into Greek (ca 175 BC), have rendered the first Hebrew verb in this verse as **was**. However, in an effort to explain the origins of evil and/or find biblical evidence for an old earth, some Bible scholars have suggested that this verb should be translated as “became.” Citing portions of Is 14:12-21 and Ezk 28:12-19, they believe a time gap, possibly a vast one, exists between the first two verses of the Bible, during which Satan led a rebellion in heaven against God. This allows interpreters to suggest that the early earth became **formless and empty** because Satan’s rebellion marred God’s good creation. However, the construction of this sentence in the original Hebrew favors the traditional translation (“was” rather than “became”).

The sense of v. 2 is that God created the earth “formless and empty” as an unfinished and unfilled state. Working through an orderly process over a period of six days, God formed (days 1-3) and filled (days 4-6) his created handiwork. The “forming” was accomplished by means of three acts of separating or sorting various elements of creation from one another. The “filling” was carried out through five acts of populating the newly created domains. **Watery depths**, a single word in Hebrew, suggests an original state of creation that was shapeless as liquid water. The Hebrew verb translated **was hovering**, used also in Dt 32:11, suggests that the Spirit of God was watching over his creation just as a bird watches over its young.

**1:3** A foundational teaching of the Bible is that God speaks and does so with universe-changing authority. The command in this verse is just two words in Hebrew.

**1:4** Another basic truth of the Bible is that **God saw**; this means he is fully aware of his creation. Later writers directly declared that God is aware of events occurring throughout the earth (2Ch 16:9; Zch 4:10). The term **good**, used here for the first of seven times in this chapter to evaluate God’s creative work, can be used to express both high quality and moral excellence. The physical universe is a good place because God made it. God found satisfaction in his labor. This is the first instance where **God separated** the twin realms of light and darkness, day and night. God’s activity in the material world parallels the role he also performs in the moral universe, that of the righteous Judge distinguishing between those who live in moral light and those who do not (1Th 5:5).

**1:5** In ancient Israel, the act of naming an object, place, or person indicated that you held control over it (35:10; 41:45; Nm 32:42; Dt 3:14; Jos 19:47; 2Kg 23:34; 24:17). When God named the light and the darkness, he asserted his lordship and control over all of time. **There was an evening**. In ancient Israelite and modern Jewish tradition, sundown is the transition point from one day to the next.

Scholars differ over the meaning of “day” in the phrases “one day . . . the second day,” etc. Some argue for twenty-four-hour periods, but other options are possible, especially since (1) there was at first no sun by which to distinguish twenty-four-hour periods, (2) “day” means the period of daylight in 1:5a, and (3) “day” refers to the whole creation period in 2:4 (“at the time” is lit “on the day”). Consequently, some scholars understand the “days” of creation as extended periods of uncertain length or as a rhetorical device by which the account of creation is structured.

**1:6** Based on a verb that can refer to covering something with a thin sheet of metal (Nm 16:39; Is 40:19), the noun **expanse** always refers to the vast spread of the open sky.

**1:7** God’s second act of separation was to divide atmospheric water from terrestrial water. Thus he began the process of giving form to the material world. The clause **it was so**, found six times in this chapter, emphasizes God’s absolute power over creation.

**1:8** **Sky** can refer to the earth’s atmospheric envelope (v. 20), outer space (v. 15), or “heaven,” the spiritual realm where God lives (Ps 11:4).

**1:9** God’s third and final act of separation created oceans and continents.

**1:10** In his third and final act of naming, God demonstrated his authority over all of the earth. This contrasts with what Israel’s polytheistic neighbors believed about the range of divine powers. Their gods were not all-powerful, but instead exercised authority over a limited territory. The God of Gn 1 holds dominion over everything at all times and in all places.

**1:11-13** In preparation for the introduction of animal and human life, God provided an abundant supply of food. The consistent biblical teaching is that “like begets like” (Lk 6:44; Jms 3:12); Gn 1:11-12 establishes that principle for plant life. While five of the six days contain at least one act of creation evaluated as **good**, only the third and sixth days have this statement more than once.

**1:14-15** The events of day four complement those of day one, filling the day and night with finished forms of light. The various **lights**, or

the night. They will serve as signs<sup>a</sup> for seasons<sup>A</sup> and for days and years.<sup>b</sup> <sup>15</sup> They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars.<sup>c</sup> <sup>17</sup> God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth,<sup>18</sup> to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.<sup>d</sup> And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, “Let the water swarm with<sup>e</sup> living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the large sea-creatures<sup>c</sup> and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water,<sup>e</sup> according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them: “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the

<sup>a</sup>1:14 Jr 10:2  
<sup>b</sup>Ps 104:19  
<sup>c</sup>1:16 Dt 4:19 Ps 136:7-9 Is 40:26  
<sup>d</sup>1:18 Jr 31:35  
<sup>e</sup>1:21 Ps 104:25-28  
<sup>f</sup>1:22 Gn 8:17-9:1  
<sup>g</sup>1:26 Gn 3:22-11:7  
<sup>h</sup>Gn 5:13-9:6 Rm 8:29 1Co 11:7-15:49  
<sup>i</sup>2Co 3:18 4:4 Eph 4:24 Col 1:15 Jms 3:9  
<sup>j</sup>Gn 9:2 Ps 8:6-8  
<sup>k</sup>Jms 3:7  
<sup>l</sup>1:27 Gn 5:2 Mt 19:4 Mk 10:6  
<sup>m</sup>1:28 Gn 9:17

earth.”<sup>f</sup> <sup>23</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us<sup>g</sup> make man<sup>d</sup> in<sup>e</sup> our image, according to our likeness.” They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth,<sup>f</sup> and the creatures that crawl<sup>g</sup> on the earth.”<sup>i</sup>

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image; he created him in<sup>h</sup> the image of God; he created them male and female.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth,<sup>k</sup> and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky,

<sup>A</sup>1:14 Or for the appointed times <sup>B</sup>1:20 Lit with swarms of <sup>C</sup>1:21 Or created sea monsters <sup>D</sup>1:26 Or human beings; Hb 'adam, also in v.27 <sup>E</sup>1:26 Or as <sup>F</sup>1:26 Syr reads sky, and over every animal of the land <sup>G</sup>1:26 Or surry <sup>H</sup>1:27 Or man as his own image; he created him as

“light-giving objects,” were worshiped as gods in the cultures that surrounded ancient Israel. In Genesis, however, the sun, moon, and stars are portrayed as servants of God that would fulfill three roles: separating the newly created realms of **day** and **night**; marking time so that those who worshiped the Creator could keep their festivals in each of the **seasons** (cp. Lv 23:4,44); and providing **light on the earth**. **1:16-19** Compared to the elaborate worship that all the other ancient nations give to the sun, moon, and stars, the simplicity of God’s creative word is striking. They are purely inanimate objects created and ruled by God.

**1:20** The fifth day’s events complement those of day two, filling the newly formed heavenly domains above and the watery regions below.

**1:21** The reuse of the verb **created** (Hb *bara'*; cp. v. 1) emphasizes God’s authority over the **large sea-creatures**. This point was especially significant to the ancient Israelites, whose neighbors worshiped Rahab, a mythical sea monster.

**1:22-23** The first of three blessings God pronounced in the creation narrative occurred when **God blessed** the water animals and birds. This blessing is similar to the one for people, but lacks the commands to “subdue” and “rule” (v. 28).

**1:24-25** The term **living creatures** in vv. 20 and 24 is the same as is translated “living being” in 2:7. The sixth day is for creating land creatures, including people. The three groups of animals are domesticated livestock, crawlers, and wild animals.

**1:26** God’s use of plural pronouns (us . . . our . . . our) to refer to himself has raised many questions

(3:22; 11:7; Is 6:8). At least five different suggestions have been put forward to explain them: they may be references to (1) the Trinity; (2) God and his angels; (3) God and creation; (4) God’s majesty as expressed by a literary device known as the “plural of majesty”; or (5) a polytheistic view of God. Since the Bible teaches elsewhere that there is only one God (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29; 1Co 8:4), the fifth option is not tenable.

The two Hebrew words translated as **image** and **likeness** are often understood as having the same meaning. But some interpreters suggest that “image” refers to the ability to reason, with “likeness” referring to the spiritual dimension. What exactly is the “image” of God? Since the Bible teaches that God is Spirit (Jn 4:24), many commentators believe it refers to the non-material aspects of a person—our moral sensibilities, intellectual

abilities, will, and emotions. Based on God’s commands in Gn 1:28, others have suggested that it consists of the role humans are to play on earth—their rulership over the planet and its resources, and secondarily the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that enable them to fulfill that role. The NT teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (1Co 15:49; 1Jn 3:2).

**1:27** The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chap. 1, as shown by the fact that **created** is repeated three times. The verb *created* (Hb *bara'*) is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term **man** (Hb *'adam*) is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males (7:21); all people, both male and female, are created **in the image of God** (cp. Jms 3:9). It should not be concluded that God is both male and

female. Christians are generally agreed that God does not have a literal physical body. He is in no way limited by space but is everywhere fully present (Ps 139:7-10; Ac 17:28). Therefore, he cannot be said to be literally either male or female, or both. People are the only beings that are created in the image of God (Gn 9:3-6). The Bible never lumps people into the category of animals. Instead, it separates the creation of people from all other beings and attributes the most privileged roles in creation to humans alone.

**1:28** In this the longest of the five blessings found in the account of creation, **God** gave humanity five different commands. Implicit in the first three commands is God’s blessing on the institu-

## yom

Hebrew pronunciation	[YOHM]
CSB translation	day, time
Uses in Genesis	152
Uses in the OT	2,301
Focus passage	Genesis 1:5,8,13-14,16,18-19,23,31

**Yom** means *day*, the Hebrew *day* lasting from one evening to the next (Gn 1:5). *Yom* describes a *working day* (Ex 20:9) or *day of the month* (Zch 1:7). It indicates a *time* (Pr 24:10) or *occasion* (Nm 10:10). *In the day* often appears as *when* (Zch 8:9). The plural can represent *age* (Jb 32:7), *lifetime* (Jos 24:31), or *reign* (Is 1:1). The plural denotes a *number of days* (Neh 1:4), a *time period* (Lv 25:8), *some time* (Gn 40:4), a *year* (Lv 25:29), or *years* (Ex 2:11). With the definite article *yom* suggests *today* (Dt 4:39), *now* (Neh 1:6), *whenever* (1Sm 1:4), *one day* (Jb 1:6), or *by day* (Neh 4:22). *Yom* could characterize a particular event such as the *day of Jezreel* (Hs 1:11). Similarly, the *Day/day of Yahweh*, or the *LORD*, is a *time* or *day* that belongs to the *LORD* in a special way (Zph 1:14).

and every creature that crawls<sup>a</sup> on the earth.”<sup>29</sup> God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,<sup>a</sup> <sup>30</sup> for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given<sup>b</sup> every green plant for food.”<sup>b</sup> And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. <sup>c</sup> Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

**2** So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.<sup>d</sup> <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested<sup>d</sup> on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.<sup>e</sup> <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested<sup>f</sup> from all his work of creation.<sup>e,g</sup>

#### MAN AND WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

<sup>4</sup> These are the records<sup>h</sup> of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time<sup>f</sup> that the LORD God made the earth and

<sup>a</sup>1:29 Gn 9:3 Ps 104:14-15 136:25 145:15-16  
<sup>b</sup>1:30 Ps 147:9  
<sup>c</sup>1:31 1Tm 4:4  
<sup>d</sup>2:1 Neh 9:6 Ps 33:6 Is 34:4 45:12  
<sup>e</sup>2:2 Ex 20:8-11 31:17 Dt 5:12-14 Heb 4:4  
<sup>f</sup>2:3 Ex 31:17  
<sup>g</sup>Ex 20:11 31:17 Ps 121:2  
<sup>h</sup>2:4 Gn 5:1 6:9 10:1 11:10 27:25 12:19 36:19 37:2  
<sup>i</sup>2:5 Gn 1:11-12  
<sup>j</sup>2:7 Gn 3:19 23:18 27:Ps 103:14 Ec 12:7 1Co 15:47  
<sup>k</sup>Gn 7:22 Jb 33:4 Is 2:22 1Co 15:45  
<sup>l</sup>2:8 Gn 13:10 Is 51:3 Ezk 28:13 31:8 J1:2  
<sup>m</sup>2:9 Gn 3:22 Rv 2:7 22:21 4  
<sup>n</sup>Pr 3:18  
<sup>o</sup>2:11 Gn 10:7 29:25 18:15m 15:7

the heavens,<sup>5</sup> no shrub of the field<sup>i</sup> had yet grown on the land,<sup>6</sup> and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. <sup>6</sup> But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground<sup>j</sup> and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils,<sup>k</sup> and the man became a living being.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,<sup>m</sup> and there he placed the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden,<sup>n</sup> as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>10</sup> A river went<sup>h</sup> out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers.<sup>i</sup> <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah,<sup>j,p</sup> where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> Gold from that land is pure;<sup>k</sup> bdellium<sup>l</sup> and onyx<sup>m</sup> are also there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is

<sup>a</sup>1:28 Or and all scurrying animals <sup>b</sup>1:30 I have given added for clarity <sup>c</sup>2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read sixth <sup>d</sup>2:2 Or ceased, also in v.3 <sup>e</sup>2:3 Lit work that God created to make <sup>f</sup>2:4 Lit creation on the day <sup>g</sup>2:5 Or earth <sup>h</sup>2:10 Or goes <sup>i</sup>2:10 Lit became four heads <sup>j</sup>2:11 Or of the Havilah <sup>k</sup>2:12 Lit good <sup>l</sup>2:12 A yellowish, transparent gum resin <sup>m</sup>2:12 Identity of this precious stone uncertain

tions of marriage and the family. The final two commands, to **subdue** the earth and **rule** the animal kingdom, express God’s blessing on the use of the planet’s renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Of course, only the wise use of these resources permits people to fulfill God’s command to fill the earth. A similar command to the survivors of the flood is shorter, having only the first three verbs in it (9:1).

**1:29-30** The repeated use of Hebrew *kol*, “all, every, entire,” in vv. 29-30 shows that the point is to emphasize God’s abundant and generous provision for all his creatures, rather than to specify what they were or were not supposed to eat. While **seed** and **fruit** are listed here, Kenneth Mathews explains, “God’s dietary standards for mankind specifically include meat in the postdiluvian world” (Gn 9:3).

**1:31** This is the seventh, final, and most elaborate use of the word **good** in the account of the seven days of creation in that it adds **very** to good.

**2:1** This verse serves as a complement to 1:1. Together, the two set the first six days of creation apart from the sacred seventh day.

**2:2** This is the first use of the number seven in the Bible, a number that will play an especially significant role in the religious and social life of ancient Israel (4:15; 7:2-4,10; 21:28-31; 29:18-20). On the seventh day God **rested**, thus setting an example for people—who are made in his image—to follow (Ex 20:8-11; Dt 5:12-14). Though God rested **from all his work that he had done**, this is not to say that God has abandoned the universe. In the NT Jesus affirmed that God is still at work in the world,

even on the Sabbath (Jn 5:16-17). Also, God’s “rest” does not imply that he was tired. It literally means “cease” and implies only that his creative work was complete.

**2:3** This is the only instance during the creation process when God **blessed** a unit of time. The term **holy** is applied in the Bible to something set aside for service to God.

**2:4** The Hebrew word *toledoth*, translated here as **records**, is used eleven times in the book of Genesis to introduce new units of material (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2). Here it introduces a detailed elaboration of some key aspects of the creation account that opens the book of Genesis (1:1-2:3). Special emphasis is placed on the events of day six. Verse 4 includes the first use of God’s personal name, rendered in English as **the LORD**, the most commonly used noun in the OT. The Hebrew spelling is transliterated as “YHWH,” a word Jews considered so sacred that they would not permit themselves to pronounce it. Its accurate pronunciation is thus unknown, though common suggestions include “Jehovah” and “Yahweh.”

**2:5** The **shrub of the field** and the **plant of the field** are not the same as the vegetation described in Gn 1:11-12 but are the plants that will make up the Garden of Eden.

**2:6** This source of water, a bountiful blessing that provided moisture for **all the ground** in the time of human innocence, later became a source of judgment on humanity’s sin (7:11).

**2:7** The Hebrew verb translated here as **formed** is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe the potter’s profession (Jr 18:4; Zch 11:13); God acts here as the divine potter, skillfully fashioning **man out of the dust from the**

**ground**. But the Bible makes it very clear that people are more than just material beings. It was only when God **breathed** into the man’s **nostrils** the **breath of life** that Adam became alive. God is Spirit (Jn 4:24); thus, when God breathed into him, Adam and all later humans became a unique mix of the physical and the spiritual. The Hebrew phrase translated as **living being** is used elsewhere in Genesis to describe other types of living beings (1:20,24,30; 9:12,15-16). Nevertheless, humans are considered to be in a class by themselves since they alone are made in God’s image.

**2:8** The location of **Eden** is unknown; suggestions include Armenia, Iraq, Africa, and Arabia. Changes in geography caused by the flood in Noah’s day (7:11) make it unlikely that Eden will ever be discovered. The Hebrew word *eden* literally means “pleasantness.”

**2:9** God’s concern for beauty is seen in the fact that the trees he caused to grow were **pleasing in appearance**. The Lord’s love of beauty will later be extended to Israel’s religion, which will make use of furnishings fashioned by expert craftsmen using expensive materials (Ex 25-40). Of course, God’s beautiful created works were also practical, being **good for food**.

**2:10** The abundance of the waters supplied in the garden of Eden is indicated by the fact that it served as the headwaters for **four rivers**.

**2:11** The location of the **Pishon** river is unknown. A land known as **Havilah** existed in the region of the Arabian peninsula at a later point in time (1Sm 15:7), but the pre-flood land may have represented a different locale.

**2:12** The gold and gems of Eden foreshadow the splendor of the tabernacle and temple

# THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GENESIS CREATION STORY

*Kenneth A. Mathews*

**W**hile there are many similarities between parts of Genesis and ancient Near Eastern (ANE) myths, there are also fundamental differences. These are seen especially in the significantly different views of the Creator and creation. Five features in particular distinguish the biblical creation account and perspective. So distinctive theologically is the biblical teaching from that of Israel's neighbors that it is best explained as the result of divine revelation, not the imagination or "religious genius" of the biblical author.

## THE IDENTITY OF GOD

The basic identity of God as revealed in Genesis is distinct from all other ANE conceptions. The Lord God did not have an origin and did not have a female counterpart. In fact, Genesis does not present any kind of theogony (origin of the gods). God simply always existed. The concept of fertility was a common explanation among the ancients for how the world was created. It was believed that gods and goddesses joined in sexual union and thus produced the world, just as man and woman can come together to create a child. Israel's God, however, was revealed to be asexual, neither male nor female. According to other ANE religions the world (or parts of it, like the sun) was a divine "Thou," whereas in Genesis the world was revealed to be an "it," a non-supernatural reality brought into existence by a supernatural God.

## NO RIVAL GODS

While polytheistic views dominated the ANE, Genesis revealed that God has no divine rivals. A common explanation for creation among the ancients was that an epic battle had raged between creator gods and anti-creation deities. Ultimately, the creator god overcame the anti-creation forces/gods, in some cases using the slain bodies of their enemies to make the stuff of the world. In Genesis there is no rival opposing the Creator. All creation obeyed the voice of God, as expressed in the recurring phrase, "and it was so" (1:7).

## CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

In Genesis the Creator by inherent authority as Sovereign Lord spoke creation into a functional, well-ordered existence. There was no eternal pre-created matter, such as was believed in the ancient myths. Genesis says God spoke all things into origination. This does not mean he uttered words that possessed inherent magical powers. Rather, the irrevocable power of God's creation words was grounded in the authority of God himself. Unlike the nature deities whose existence was limited to the world system, God existed before creation and above creation. Also, creation was not the emanation of divine person or power. It was separate from him, a new reality subject to his will.

## THE VALUE OF HUMANITY

In Genesis the Creator bestowed special value on humanity. Human beings in the ANE view were not indispensable to the operation of the world, whereas in Genesis they were essential as its chief caretakers. The Lord blessed humanity, assigning man and woman the responsibility to propagate and to rule over the earth (1:26-28). ANE myths explained the purpose of humanity as servants who met the servile interests of the gods. The Bible elevates the person and role of humans who were "crowned . . . with glory and honor" (Ps 8:5), made in the divine image. God prepared the resplendent Garden of Eden for humanity, giving humanity meaningful work and purpose (Gn 2:8-18). Also, Genesis presents the first humanity as individuals who were the progenitors of the human race.

## THE SABBATH

In Genesis the Creator provided the seventh day as a holy day of rest and celebration (2:1-3), which was later memorialized in Israel's Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11). The Sabbath was unique to Israel, not tied to the movement of the stars, such as in the ancient preoccupation with astrology. The Lord was revealed as Master of the material universe *and* of time. All creation was invited to join in the knowledge of God and in the worship of him as Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush.<sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris,<sup>a</sup> which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden,<sup>c</sup> <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding<sup>e</sup> to him.” <sup>19</sup> The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it.<sup>f</sup> And whatever the man called

a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man<sup>g</sup> no helper was found corresponding to him. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man,<sup>g</sup> and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>23</sup> And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one will be called “woman,”  
for she was taken from man.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they

<sup>a</sup>2:20 Or for Adam

and the priestly garments. They symbolize the presence of God and show Eden to function as the original temple of God.

**2:13** The locations of the **Gihon** river and **Cush** are unknown. A later Cush was located in the region of modern Ethiopia and Sudan (Est 1:1).

**2:14** The **Tigris** and **Euphrates** rivers, as well as **Assyria**, probably correspond to geographical features associated with modern Iraq.

**2:15** The Hebrew word translated as **placed** literally means, “caused to rest”; this pre-sin state of rest anticipates the rest (“relief”; 5:29) that again would come to humanity because of righteous Noah, as well as the rest God again would give Israel following its episode of calf worship (Ex 32:1-21; 33:14). As a being created in God’s image, Adam, like God, was to be a worker. Without the taint of sin, **work** was an undiluted blessing. The verb translated here as “work” literally means “serve.” Adam’s second task in the garden was to **watch over** it. The verb is used elsewhere to refer to the action of God toward his people (Ps 121:3-4) or the work of a military guard (Sg 5:7).

**2:16** The seriousness of God’s order is reflected in the fact that it is introduced by a two-verb phrase in Hebrew, rendered simply as **commanded** in the CSB. This formula was used frequently to express royal decrees (1Sm 18:22; 2Sm 18:5). God gave Adam both freedom and limits. The God-given freedoms vastly outnumbered the limitations. After all, Adam was **free to eat from any tree of the garden** except one.

**2:17** The only limit God placed on Adam was eating **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, which apparently imparted divine wisdom (3:22). Eating the forbidden fruit represented Adam’s rejection of God as the source of divine wisdom and his choice to pursue wisdom apart from God.

The penalty for disobedience was stated especially forcefully in the original language, with a two-verb construction, “dying you shall die” (**you will certainly die**). Death would certainly come to Adam and all humanity after him; but the death that God warned about would be more than physical (3:19). Besides severing the cord of life, sin would shatter the harmonious relationship that existed between Adam and his environment (3:17-18), his wife (3:16), and God. Although Adam and Eve did not die physically **on the day** they ate the fruit, they died spiritually, and all their descendants have been spiritually dead unless they are made alive by God’s Spirit. See Jn 5:24-25; Rm 6:13; 7:13,24; Eph 2:1-5; Col 2:13; 1Tm 5:6; 1Jn 3:14; Jd 12; Rv 3:1.

**2:18** The theme of God providing for Adam’s needs (see note at 2:9) is picked up again here, as God declared that Adam’s being alone is **not good**. God created the man with a need to relate to one **corresponding to him**, and now God will meet that need.

**2:19** Like man, animals were **formed out of the ground**, but they received neither the breath of life from God (v. 7) nor the image of God. By giving names to the animals, Adam showed that he ruled the animals and that he perceived the nature of each animal (see note at 1:5).

**2:20** Adam’s understanding of the nature of the animals he named only highlighted the differences that existed between him and the rest of God’s creatures: **no helper was found corresponding to him**.

**2:21** At what must have been a moment of loneliness in Adam’s life, God stepped in to create one who would perfectly meet Adam’s need. Because **God took one of his ribs** to use as his raw material, the woman would correspond perfectly—though not identically—to Adam. Like Adam, the woman possessed God’s image. The fact that she was not taken either from the man’s head or his foot may suggest that the woman was not to rule over the man (1Co 11:3), nor was the man to oppress the woman (1Pt 3:7).

**2:22-23** Adam’s first recorded words express his delight with God’s handiwork and his recognition of the unique suitability of God’s last recorded acts in the creation accounts. As with no other work of divine craftsmanship, this one was singularly suited for the man, being **bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh**. Adam expresses dominion by choosing a name for God’s final created being, but the name he chose suggests that he viewed her as his equal. The Hebrew term *’ishshah*, **woman**, identifies her as the feminine complement to *’ish*, the man.

**2:24** God’s timeless design for marriage is declared here. The **one flesh** relationship certainly involves sexual union, but also includes a husband and wife

## ’ishshah

Hebrew pronunciation	[eesh SHAH]
CSB translation	woman
Uses in Genesis	152
Uses in the OT	781
Focus passage	Genesis 2:22-25

**’ishshah** may not be related to a Hebrew word for *man* in Gn 2:22-25 that looks and sounds like it (*’iysh*). *’ishshah* resembles a word for *woman* in several Semitic languages, and may derive from a verb meaning “be weak” that could also lie behind *’enosh*, “man” (Jb 25:4,6). The phrase “born of woman” (Jb 14:1) points to mankind’s weaknesses. *’ishshah* has two basic meanings, *woman* and *wife*. Both ideas are present in the word’s first occurrences (Gn 2:22-25). *’ishshah* connotes *fiancée* or *bride* (Dt 22:24; 24:5). It signifies *woman* without implying marriage (Ec 7:28). It may be untranslated when describing female bodily functions (Gn 31:35). Sometimes *’ishshah* describes a kind of *woman*, like a prophetess (Jdg 4:4). Fearful soldiers are compared to *women* (Nah 3:13). *’ishshah* functions as a feminine distributive meaning *each*, referring to women (Ru 1:8), animals, or even things. “Each to each” appears as *together* (Ex 26:5).

become one flesh.<sup>a</sup> <sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

**THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL**

**3** Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. <sup>3</sup> But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”<sup>c</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman.<sup>d</sup> <sup>5</sup> “In fact, God knows that when<sup>e</sup> you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God,<sup>8</sup> knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.<sup>e</sup> <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were

<sup>a</sup>2:24 Mt 2:15 Mt 19:5 Mk 10:7-8 1Co 6:16 Eph 5:31  
<sup>b</sup>3:1 Mt 10:16 2Co 11:3 Rv 12:9 20:2  
<sup>c</sup>3:3 Gn 2:17  
<sup>d</sup>3:4 Jn 8:44  
<sup>e</sup>3:6 1Tm 2:14 Jms 1:14-15 1Jn 2:16  
<sup>f</sup>3:8 Jb 34:22-23  
<sup>g</sup>3:12 Jb 31:33 Pr 28:13  
<sup>h</sup>3:13 Rm 7:11 2Co 11:3 1Tm 2:14

opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

**SIN’S CONSEQUENCES**

<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,<sup>c</sup> and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>9</sup> So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard you<sup>g</sup> in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

<sup>11</sup> Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

<sup>12</sup> The man replied,<sup>g</sup> “The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

<sup>13</sup> So the LORD God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?”

And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”<sup>h</sup>

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent:

<sup>a</sup>3:5 Lit on the day <sup>b</sup>3:5 Or gods, or divine beings <sup>c</sup>3:8 Lit at the wind of the day <sup>d</sup>3:10 Lit the sound of you

coming together in spiritual, mental, and emotional harmony.

**2:25** Because the devastating effects of sin had not yet ravaged nature or humanity, there was no need for clothing. Adam and Eve could live without the barriers needed to shield them from their environment and each other without a sense of shame. Later, in the time of the patriarchs and kings, clothing was associated with dignity. Accordingly, prisoners of war were not permitted to wear any clothing, slaves wore very little clothing, and higher social classes wore more clothing than anyone else in society.

**3:1** Though we know the serpent was an instrument of Satan (Rm 16:20; Rv 12:9; 20:2), it was just a created being. Its description as cunning suggests it offered a wisdom not based on the fear of God. It tried to take Eve’s focus off the abundance of God’s provision.

**3:2-3** The woman’s claim that God said, **You must not . . . touch the tree, or you will die**, goes beyond anything recorded in God’s instructions to Adam. Therefore it seems that Adam had given his wife an additional command beyond what God said, or else Eve herself exaggerated the command as Satan tempted her to view God as selfish and overly restrictive. If Adam added to God’s command, he almost certainly had a good motive—after all, if Eve never touched the tree, she certainly would not eat its fruit. However, the sad truth is that when people add to the word of God, they create confusion and trouble.

**3:4-5** The serpent, recognizing the woman’s confusion, found a point of attack. Knowing that the woman would **not die** by merely touching the fruit, he boldly contradicted what she had reported to be God’s command. He then skillfully lied (Jn 8:44) by distorting God’s word (Mt 4:6), implying that God had prohibited people from eating the fruit only to keep them from becoming as knowledgeable as he. The woman was now fully deceived (1Tm 2:14).

**3:6** Since the woman did not die when she touched the fruit—in contradiction to what she had thought God said (v. 3)—she ate it. Though Adam was **with her** at the time, he did nothing to stop her. Perhaps he wanted to eat

of it as much as the woman did, but fearing the consequences, used his wife as a “guinea pig” to make sure it would not cause instant death.

**3:7-8** As the serpent had indicated, **the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew**, but instead of producing godlike power, the knowledge brought only a sense of human inadequacy, fear, and shame.

**3:9** God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin (Lk 19:10); in him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners. The all-knowing God asked Adam, **Where are you?** for Adam’s benefit, to encourage Adam to face his sin.

**3:10** When Adam heard God, he **was afraid**. Rather than walking with God as righteous men of later generations would do (Enoch, 5:22; Noah, 6:9), Adam hid from him.

**3:11** Through the use of two direct questions God brought Adam to accountability for his sin. God does not overlook sin, but he can be gently firm in confronting it.

**3:12** Adam answered neither of God’s questions; instead, he sought to shift the blame for his sin first to **the woman**, and then to God.

**3:13** The woman passed the blame to **the serpent** and admitted that prior to eating, she was **deceived** (1Tm 2:14).

**nachash**

Hebrew pronunciation [nah KHASH]  
 CSB translation serpent, snake  
 Uses in Genesis 6  
 Uses in the OT 31  
 Focus passage Genesis 3:1-2,4,13-14

Although **nachash** is the most prevalent of eight OT terms for snake (Nm 21:6), the usage is broader than that. The **nachash** in Gn 3:1,14 was the shrewdest animal and did not crawl on its belly before the curse. The **nachash** Leviathan was a sea monster (Is 27:1), and there were other sea serpents (Am 9:3). Associated with **nachash** are slithering motion (Pr 30:19), flying (Is 14:29), sudden attack (Gn 49:17), poisonous venom (Ps 58:4), sharp bite (Ps 140:3), hissing (Jr 46:22), eggs (Is 14:29), and licking of dust (Gn 3:14; Mc 7:17). Five times **nachash** occurs with words meaning “viper.” The Middle East has large desert areas that are habitats for serpents. The serpent of Genesis 3, an enemy of man linked with evil, is particularly identified with Satan in Rv 12:9, where he is also called a “dragon,” based on the Greek *drakōn*, which can mean “serpent.”

Because you have done this,  
you are cursed more than any livestock  
and more than any wild animal.  
You will move on your belly  
and eat dust all the days of your life.<sup>a</sup>

- 15 I will put hostility between you  
and the woman,  
and between your offspring  
and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.<sup>b</sup>

- 16 He said to the woman:  
I will intensify your labor pains;  
you will bear children with painful  
effort.<sup>c</sup>  
Your desire<sup>d</sup> will be  
for your husband,  
yet he will rule over you.

- 17 And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':  
The ground is cursed because of you.<sup>e</sup>  
You will eat from it by means of  
painful labor<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:14 Is 65:25 Mc 7:17  
<sup>b</sup>3:15 Heb 2:14 1Jn 3:8  
<sup>c</sup>3:16 Jn 16:21 1Tm 2:15  
<sup>d</sup>Gn 4:7  
<sup>e</sup>3:17 Gn 5:29 Rm 8:20-22 Heb 6:8  
<sup>f</sup>3:18 Gn 2:5  
<sup>g</sup>3:19 Ps 90:3 104:29 Ec 12:7  
<sup>h</sup>3:22 Gn 2:9 Rv 2:7  
<sup>i</sup>3:24 Ex 25:18-22 Ps 104:4 Ezk 10:1-20 Heb 1:7

- all the days of your life.  
18 It will produce thorns and thistles  
for you,  
and you will eat the plants  
of the field.<sup>f</sup>  
19 You will eat bread<sup>g</sup> by the sweat  
of your brow  
until you return to the ground,<sup>g</sup>  
since you were taken from it.  
For you are dust,  
and you will return to dust.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The man named his wife Eve<sup>c</sup> because she was the mother of all the living. <sup>21</sup>The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever."<sup>h</sup> <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:17 Lit it through pain <sup>b</sup>3:19 Or food <sup>c</sup>3:20 Lit Living, or Life

**3:14** Though accountability began with God's confrontation of Adam, judgment began with the **serpent**. Because of the serpent's key role (being used of Satan) in bringing sin into the human experience, it would be permanently consigned to the position of ultimate shame, under the foot. Just as conquered kings were made to lie on the ground under the foot of their conquerors (Jos 10:24), so now the serpent would live under the feet of humanity.

**3:15** Hostility between the first woman and the serpent would be passed on to future generations. This verse is known in Christendom as the *protoevangelium*, or "first good news," because it is the first foretelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Using an emphatic Hebrew construction, God announced here that a male descendant—**He**—would someday deal the serpent (meaning Satan) a fatal blow. The NT writers understood Jesus Christ to have fulfilled this prophecy (Heb 2:14; 1Jn 3:8). In an extended sense, the NT also indicates that God would work through the church—those indwelt by the Spirit of Christ—to destroy the works of the devil (Rm 16:20). The assertion that the snake would only strike his opponent's **heel** (as opposed to **head**) suggests that the devil will be defeated in the ensuing struggle (Rv 2:2,7-10).

**3:16** Even though the woman had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, she was still held accountable for her act. Notably, however, the word *cursed* is not contained in God's words to her (vv. 14,16). Two penalties were imposed; both struck at the heart of a woman's roles in life. More than would have been the case had sin not entered creation, bearing children would add to the sum of **pain-**

**ful effort** in the universe (God said he would **intensify**, not originate, woman's **labor pains**). Marriage would also be marred; though the woman's **desire** would be for her **husband**, sin would mar God's plan for marriage and create tormenting inequality and subjugation. The latter is a description of the ravaging effect of sin on a husband-wife relationship, not a prescription for abusing one's wife. The NT teaches that marriage should reflect the relationship of Christ with the church (Eph 5:24-25) and be characterized by a husband's understanding of and respect for his wife (1Pt 3:7).

**3:17** Because Adam **listened** to and obeyed his wife in preference to what God **commanded** (2:17), a curse would strike at the heart of a fundamental relationship in his life as well. Adam's relationship with the ground would now be damaged by sin. **All the days** of his life he would experience **painful labor** (cp. the woman's labor pains, v. 16) as he worked to bring forth the fruit of the earth. Because of sin, all creation is **cursed** and longs for its day of deliverance (Rm 8:19-22).

**3:18** Prior to the first couple's sins God is only recorded as having put trees in the garden (2:8-9); now there would also be **thorns and thistles**. Prior to sin, humanity had only to reach up to get food; now they would have to bend their backs to gather **plants of the field**.

**3:19** The simple plucking of fruit in order to **eat** food (lit "**bread**") would now be replaced by backbreaking labor and the **sweat** of the **brow**. Working daily in the soil, Adam would be continually reminded that he was **dust** and that he would **return to dust**.

**3:20** The new name Adam gave his wife emphasizes the woman's life-giving role that

counteracts the curse of sin, which is death. Yet the divine order calls for a reciprocity exhibited in male servant leadership and female submission, both of which are modeled in Jesus himself.

**3:21** By making **clothing from skins**, the **LORD God** graciously provided for humanity's need in a way superior to what Adam and Eve had done with fig leaves. The use of animal skins anticipates the OT system of animal sacrifices (Lv 1; 3-7; Nm 15:1-31). In the NT, the apostle Paul spoke of a day when God would clothe his people with immortality (1Co 15:53-54; 2Co 5:4), thus providing the complete undoing of the curse of humanity's sin.

**3:22** Because of sin, people now knew **good and evil** experientially. Since the gift of life was directly tied to obedience, man's sin meant that the penalty of death must be enforced. Expulsion was at the same time an act of mercy. Banning the humans from the **tree of life** allowed for their redemption rather than for them to live a life of perpetual sin in an unredeemed condition.

**3:23** As the Hebrew text ironically expresses it, the **LORD God sent Adam from the garden** so that he would not send forth ("reach out"; v. 22) his hand for the garden's fruit.

**3:24** Following their sin, the first couple went **east**, a direction associated with departure from God in numerous biblical examples. Other instances of eastward movement in Genesis include Cain's journeys after judgment (4:16), humanity's migration toward Babylon (11:2), and the migration of Keturah's sons (25:6). **Cherubim** are used as an artistic motif in the tabernacle (Ex 25:18-22; 26:1) and are also mentioned in Ezk 10 and 11. The ironies

**CAIN MURDERS ABEL**

**4** The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”<sup>a</sup> **2** She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground.<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD.<sup>a</sup> **4** And Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.<sup>b</sup> The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,<sup>c</sup> **5** but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.<sup>b</sup>

**6** Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious?<sup>d</sup> And why do you look despondent?<sup>c</sup> **7** If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”<sup>e</sup>

**8** Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>d</sup> And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.<sup>f</sup>

**9** Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

<sup>a</sup>4:3 Ex 23 19 34 26 Neh 10 35  
<sup>a</sup>4:4 Ex 13 12 Nm 18 17 Pr 3 9  
<sup>c</sup>Heb 11 4  
<sup>a</sup>4:6 Jnh 4 4  
<sup>a</sup>4:7 Gn 3 16  
<sup>b</sup>4:8 Mt 23 35 Lk 11 51 1 Jn 3 12-15 Jd 11 51  
<sup>a</sup>4:10 Nm 35 33 Dt 211-9 Heb 12 24 Rv 6 9-10  
<sup>a</sup>4:12 Dt 28 16-18 Is 26 21  
<sup>a</sup>4:14 Nm 35 26-27  
<sup>a</sup>4:15 Ex 9 4 Ezk 9 4 6 Rv 13 16-17

**10** Then he said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!<sup>g</sup> **11** So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed.<sup>e</sup> **12** If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”<sup>h</sup>

**13** But Cain answered the LORD, “My punishment<sup>f</sup> is too great to bear!<sup>14</sup> Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me.”<sup>i</sup>

**15** Then the LORD replied to him, “In that case,<sup>6</sup> whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.”<sup>h</sup> And he placed a mark<sup>j</sup> on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him.<sup>16</sup> Then Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

**THE LINE OF CAIN**

**17** Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. **18** Irad was born

<sup>a</sup>4:1 Lit the Lord <sup>b</sup>4:5 Lit and his face fell <sup>c</sup>4:6 Lit why has your face fallen <sup>d</sup>4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits “Let’s go out to the field.” <sup>e</sup>4:11 Lit blood from your hand <sup>f</sup>4:13 Or sin <sup>g</sup>4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read “Not so!” <sup>h</sup>4:15 Or suffer severely

continue as the man who was once commanded to “watch over” the garden (Gn 2:15) is now banned from the garden.

**4:1** Adam and Eve now begin to fulfill God’s original command to them, to “be fruitful” and “multiply” (1:28). **Eve**, whose name means “life,” now becomes the life-giver. Eve knew that the child was more than the result of her and her husband’s love; he came into being **with the LORD’s help**. A wordplay in the Hebrew suggests that the name **Cain** (*qayin*) came from the verb *had* (*qaniti*) in Eve’s comment, **I have had a male child**.

**4:2** The name **Abel** means “breath”; the term is used elsewhere in the OT to refer to that which passes away quickly and is insubstantial (Ps 62:10; Ec 1:2).

**4:3** Cain’s sacrifice marks the first mention of **an offering to the LORD** in the Bible. The Hebrew term used here suggests a freewill gift given to an authority.

**4:4-5** Ironically, the first recorded offering given to God was also the first one rejected by him. Since grain offerings were authorized in the law of Moses, the fact that Cain’s offering was of vegetation rather than an animal is not why **God did not have regard** for it. Cain’s **furious** reaction suggests that the offering was rejected because of sin in his heart, not the nature of his offering. See note at vv. 6-7.

**4:6-7** The Bible makes it clear that God had rejected Cain’s offering because of Cain’s wicked lifestyle (1Jn 3:12). The animal-like description of sin as **crouching** is reused in 49:9 to describe a lion. The parallel use of **desire** in

this verse and 3:16 suggests that sin wishes to be as intimate with humanity as a woman is with her husband. The only way to avoid this is to be its master, not its companion.

**4:8** In a move that demonstrates premeditation, Cain led Abel **to the field** and **attacked** him in a place where there were no human witnesses. Though the blood of animals had been shed prior to this (v. 4), Cain’s killing of his brother brought about the first death of a human. The curse of human death pronounced against Adam (2:17; 3:19) had now been realized.

**4:9** God’s use of questions with guilty sinners continues here (v. 6; cp. 3:9-13). By claiming he did not know where his brother was, Cain added lying to his sin of murder. God once made Adam a guardian (Hb *shamar*) of the garden (2:15). Cain now asked if he was to be his **brother’s guardian** (Hb *shamar*). The Bible’s answer to Cain’s question is yes (Lv 19:18; Mt 22:39; Gl 5:14).

**4:10** Unlike his father Adam (3:12), Cain never confessed his guilt, even though God directly confronted him with his sin. Though Abel never spoke in the preceding narrative, his **blood** now cried out **from the ground**.

**4:11** God’s judgment began with a curse whose wording in the Hebrew parallels the curse placed on the snake. This is particularly fitting since both were liars and murderers (Jn 8:44). It is possible to translate God’s statement here as “You are more cursed than the ground.” The curse against a murderer is repeated in the law of Moses (Dt 27:24).

**4:12** Cain’s punishment destroyed his live-

lihood as a farmer and turned him into a **restless wanderer**.

**4:13** Cain’s response has several possible English renderings. The CSB—which reflects the unrepentant attitude Cain showed earlier—expresses Cain’s anguish, but no remorse. The Septuagint and Martin Luther translated it as, “My sin is too great to be forgiven,” while early rabbis took it as a question: “Is my sin too great to forgive?” In view of Cain’s previous and later actions, the CSB’s translation seems best.

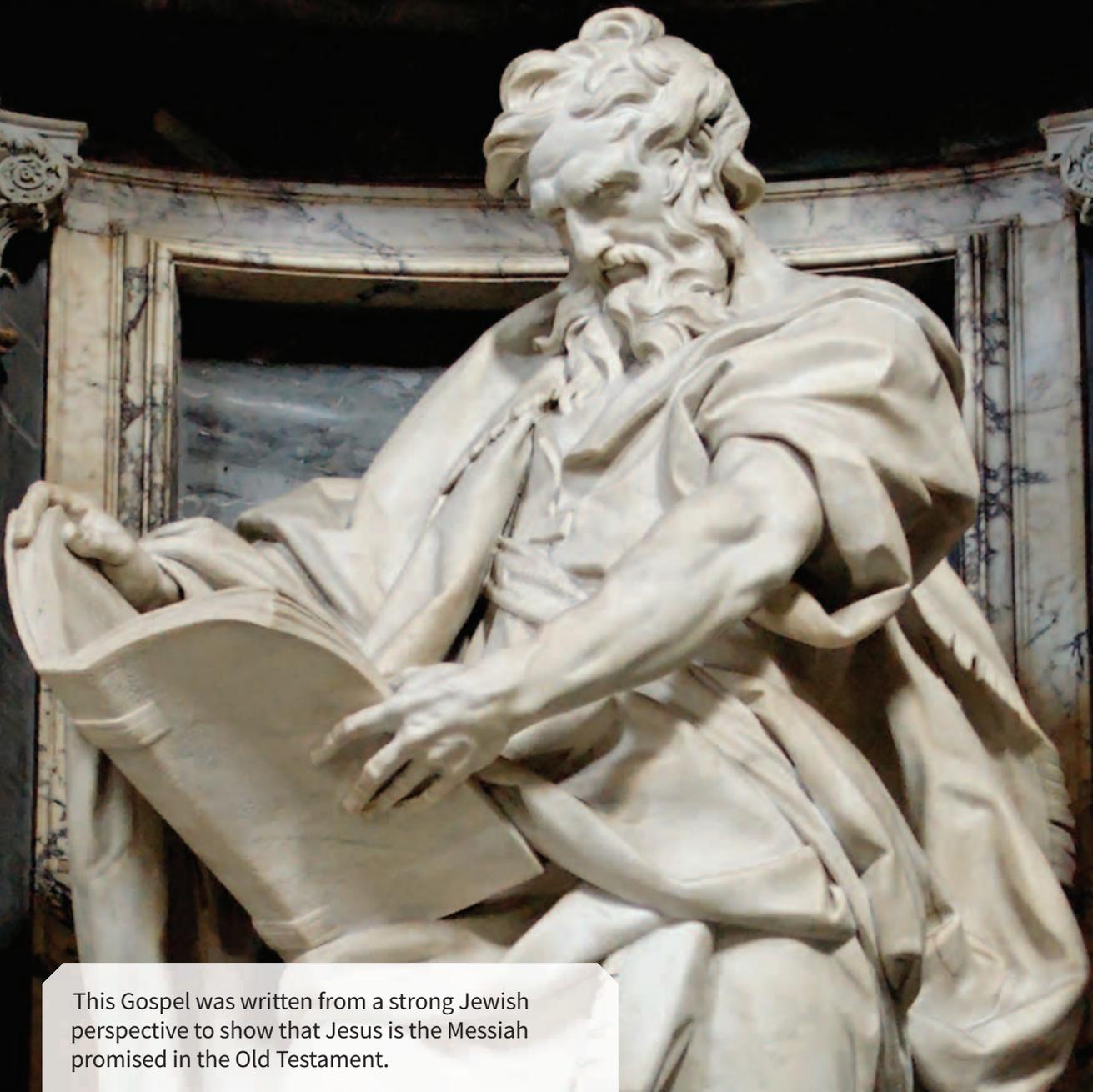
**4:14** Just as his father Adam had been driven out (Hb *garash*) of the garden, Cain noted that God was **banishing** (Hb *garash*) him **from the face of the earth**. Since he would **hide** (or possibly, “be hidden”) from God’s protective **presence**, he feared that other descendants of Adam and Eve (5:4) would **kill** him to avenge Abel’s murder.

**4:15** True to his compassionate and forgiving nature (Ex 34:6-7), God made two provisions for Cain to protect him despite his sin.

**4:16** Cain’s departure **from the LORD’s presence** was both physical and spiritual (Jnh 1:3,10). *Nod* means “wandering.” **The land of Nod** is never mentioned again in the Bible. Perhaps the phrase simply referred to any location in which Cain resided. The notation that Cain departed to live **east of Eden** identifies him with other sinners who also moved east (see note at 3:24).

**4:17** The parallel tracks of Adam’s and Cain’s lives—sin, judgment by God, banishment, and eastward movement—continue with the notation that after these things **Cain was intimate**

# INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW



This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING**

**AUTHOR:** The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection. Many early church fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaeus, and Origen) acknowledged Matthew as the author. Papias also contended that Matthew first wrote in Hebrew, implying that this Gospel was later translated into Greek.

Many modern scholars dispute these traditional claims. For instance, against Papias they argue that this Gospel was not originally written in Hebrew since the Greek of Matthew does not appear to be a translation. They further argue that if the early church, following Papias's opinion, was wrong about the original language, they were likely incorrect about the author as well. However, the excellent Greek of Matthew could have been produced by a skilled translator of an original Hebrew text. Furthermore, there are many hints of Hebraic influence in this Gospel (see notes at 1:17,21; 2:22-23). Finally, since Hebrew quickly ceased to be the dominant language of early Christians as the church expanded into Gentile territories, requiring the Gospel to circulate in a Greek translation, the absence of ancient Hebrew texts of Matthew is not surprising.

Even if Papias was wrong about the original language of the Gospel of Matthew, this does not imply that he and other early church leaders were wrong to identify Matthew as the author of this Gospel. In fact the early church unanimously affirmed that the Gospel of Matthew was authored by the apostle Matthew. It would require impressive evidence to overturn this early consensus.

Clues from the Gospel itself support its ascription to Matthew. First, both Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 identify the tax collector whom Jesus called to be his disciple as "Levi." This Gospel, however, identifies Levi as "Matthew." Matthew, a Hebrew name meaning "gift of God," appears to be the apostolic name that Jesus gave

to Levi after he chose to follow Christ, much as Simon was named "Peter" by Jesus after his confession of faith (16:18). The use of "Matthew" in this Gospel may be Matthew's personal touch, a self-reference that gives us a clue about authorship.

**BACKGROUND:** Determining the date of composition of Matthew's Gospel depends largely on the relationship of the Gospels to one another. Most scholars believe that Matthew utilized Mark's Gospel in writing his own gospel. If this is correct, Matthew's Gospel must postdate Mark's. However, the date of Mark's Gospel is also shrouded in mystery. Irenaeus (ca AD 180) seems to claim that Mark wrote his Gospel after Peter's death in the mid-60s. However, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote only twenty years after Irenaeus, claimed that Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter was still alive. Given the ambiguity of the historical evidence, a decision must be based on other factors.

The date of composition for Mark is best inferred from the date of Luke and Acts. The abrupt ending of Acts which left Paul under house arrest in Rome implies that Acts was written before Paul's release. Since one of the major themes of Acts is the legality of Christianity in the Roman Empire, one would have expected Luke to mention Paul's release by the emperor if it had already occurred. This evidence dates Acts to the early 60s. Luke and Acts were two volumes of a single work, as the prologues to these books demonstrate. Luke was written before Acts. Given the amount of research that Luke invested in the book and the travel that eyewitness interviews probably required, a date in the late 50s is reasonable. If Luke used Mark in writing his own Gospel, as seems likely, by implication Mark was written some time before the late 50s, perhaps the early to mid-50s. Thus, despite Matthew's dependence on Mark, Matthew may have been written any time beginning in the mid-50s once Mark was completed. The earliest historical evidence is consistent with this opinion, since Irenaeus (ca AD 180) claimed that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome (early AD 60s).

2200–1800 BC

From Abraham to David

Abraham **2166–1991**  
 Isaac **2066–1886**  
 Jacob **2006–1859**  
 Joseph **1915–1805**

1526–1000 BC

Moses **1526–1406**  
 Exodus **1446**  
 Joshua **1490?–1380?**  
 Destruction of Jericho **1406**  
 Judges **1380?–1060?**  
 Ruth **1175?–1125?**  
 Samuel **1105?–1025?**  
 Saul **1080?–1010**

1000–586 BC

From David to the Babylonian Exile

David **1050?–970**  
 Solomon **990?–931**  
 Rehoboam **971?–913**  
 Jeroboam **971–909**  
 Fall of the northern kingdom **722**  
 Fall of the southern kingdom **586**

**MESSAGE AND PURPOSE**

Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in order to preserve written eyewitness testimony about the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes certain theological truths. First, Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited King of God's people. Second, Jesus is the new Abraham, the founder of a new spiritual Israel consisting of all people who choose to follow him. This new Israel will consist of both Jews and Gentiles. Third, Jesus is the new Moses, the deliverer and instructor of God's people. Fourth, Jesus is the Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God who fulfills the promises of the OT.

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE**

As the first book in the NT, the Gospel of Matthew serves as a gateway between the two testaments. Of the NT books, and certainly of the four Gospels, Matthew has the strongest connections to the OT. Matthew gave us God's entire plan from Genesis to Revelation. Matthew looked back and referred to Hebrew prophecies about sixty times ("was fulfilled" and "so that what was spoken . . . might be fulfilled")! He also looked forward by dealing not only with Messiah's coming and his ministry, but also his future plan for his church and kingdom.

**STRUCTURE**

Matthew divided his Gospel into three major sections. He introduced new major sections with the words "from then on Jesus began to" (4:17; 16:21). These transitional statements divide the Gospel into the introduction (1:1–4:16), body (4:17–16:20), and conclusion (16:21–28:20). Matthew also divided his Gospel into five major blocks of teaching, each of which concludes with a summary statement (8:1; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Some scholars believe these five major discourses were meant to correspond to the five books of Moses and to confirm Jesus's identity as the new Moses.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Birth and Infancy of Jesus (1:1–2:23)
  - A. Genealogy (1:1-17)
  - B. Birth narratives (1:18–2:18)
- II. Beginning of Jesus's Ministry in Galilee (3:1–4:25)
  - A. Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)
  - B. Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)
  - C. Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)
  - D. Summary of Galilean ministry (4:12-25)
- III. Discourse One: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)
  - A. The Beatitudes (5:1-12)
  - B. Character of kingdom righteousness (5:13-48)
  - C. Practice of kingdom righteousness (6:1–7:12)
  - D. Choice of the kingdom (7:13-27)
  - E. Manner of Jesus's teaching (7:28-29)
- IV. Jesus's First Miracles (8:1–9:38)
  - A. A series of miracles (8:1–9:8)
  - B. The kingdom and the old order (9:9-17)
  - C. More miracles (9:18-38)
- V. Discourse Two: Ministry of Jesus's Disciples (10:1–42)
  - A. The preachers and their mission (10:1-15)
  - B. The response to be expected (10:16-42)
- VI. Responses to Jesus's Ministry (11:1–12:50)
  - A. The kingdom and John the Baptist (11:1-15)
  - B. Challenge to the present generation (11:16-30)
  - C. Opposition to the kingdom (12:1-45)
  - D. Fellowship in the kingdom (12:46-50)
- VII. Discourse Three: Parables about the Kingdom (13:1–58)
  - A. Parable of the Sower (13:1-9)
  - B. The parable method explained (13:10-23)
  - C. Other parables (13:24-52)
  - D. Response to Jesus's parables (13:53-58)
- VIII. Close of Jesus's Ministry in Galilee (14:1–17:27)
  - A. Crisis of opposition (14:1–15:20)
  - B. Withdrawal to the north (15:21-39)
  - C. Further conflict (16:1-12)
  - D. Crisis of faith (16:13-20)
  - E. Preparation of Jesus's disciples for his death (16:21–17:27)
- IX. Discourse Four: Character of Jesus's Disciples (18:1–35)
  - A. Humility (18:1-20)
  - B. Forgiveness (18:21-35)

586–63 BC

**From the exile to the Messiah**Babylonian Exile **586–538**Temple completed **515**Greeks thwart Persian expansion into Europe with victories at Plataea and Mycale. **479**Jerusalem's walls completed **445**Alexander the Great invades Persia. **334**Greek control of Palestine **323–167**Years of Jewish independence **167–63**Roman dominance begins. **63**

5 BC–AD 33

**Messiah**Jesus's birth **Winter 5 BC**Herod the Great's death **4 BC**John the Baptist's ministry begins **AD 29**Jesus's ministry begins **AD 29**Jesus's final week **March 28–April 3, AD 33**Jesus's resurrection **April 5, AD 33**Jesus's ascension **May 14, AD 33**Feast of Pentecost **May 24, AD 33**

- X. Jesus's Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem (19:1–20:34)
  - A. Teachings on the way to Jerusalem (19:1–20:28)
  - B. Healing at Jericho (20:29-34)
- XI. Jesus's Ministry in Jerusalem (21:1–23:39)
  - A. Events in Jerusalem (21:1-22)
  - B. Controversies with the Jews (21:23–22:46)
  - C. Denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)
- XII. Discourse Five: Olivet Discourse (24:1–25:46)
  - A. Prophecy of the coming of the kingdom (24:1-35)
  - B. Exhortations to readiness (24:36–25:30)
  - C. Judgment of the nations (25:31-46)
- XIII. Betrayal, Crucifixion, and Burial (26:1–27:66)
  - A. The plot to betray Jesus (26:1-16)
  - B. The Last Supper (26:17-30)
  - C. Events in Gethsemane (26:31-56)
  - D. The trials (26:57–27:26)
  - E. Crucifixion and burial (27:27-66)
- XIV. Resurrection and Commission (28:1-20)
  - A. Women and the angel at the tomb (28:1-10)
  - B. False witness of the guards (28:11-15)
  - C. Jesus's Great Commission (28:16-20)

## THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

**1** An<sup>a</sup> account<sup>b</sup> of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David,<sup>c</sup> the Son of Abraham:<sup>d</sup>

## FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- <sup>2</sup> Abraham fathered<sup>A</sup> Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,<sup>e</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,<sup>f</sup>
- <sup>4</sup> Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- <sup>5</sup> Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,<sup>g</sup>
- <sup>6</sup> and Jesse fathered King David.

## FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon<sup>B</sup> by Uriah's wife,<sup>h</sup>
- <sup>7</sup> Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,<sup>c</sup>
  - <sup>8</sup> Asa<sup>c</sup> fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,<sup>D</sup> Joram fathered Uzziah,<sup>i</sup>
  - <sup>9</sup> Uzziah fathered Jotham,

<sup>a</sup>1:1-6 Ru 4:18-22; 2Sm 7:12-16; 1Ch 2:1-15; Lk 3:32-34  
<sup>b</sup>1:1 Mk 12:26; Lk 3:4; Ac 1:20; Php 4:3; Rv 3:5  
<sup>c</sup>Ps 89:3; Is 9:6; Lk 1:32,69  
<sup>d</sup>Gn 22:18; Mt 9:7; Rm 1:3; Gl 3:16  
<sup>e</sup>1:2 Gn 29:35; Ps 14:7; 105:9; Mt 8:11; 22:32; Jms 2:21  
<sup>f</sup>1:3 Gn 38:29-30; 46:12; Lk 3:33  
<sup>g</sup>1:5 Ru 1:4; 2:1; Lk 3:32  
<sup>h</sup>1:6 1Sm 16:1; 17:12; 2Sm 11:27; 12:24  
<sup>i</sup>1:7-8 1Kg 11:43; 14:31; 15:8,24; 22:50; 2Kg 14:21  
<sup>j</sup>1:9-10 2Kg 15:5,38; 16:20; 20:21; 21:18,24  
<sup>k</sup>1:11 2Kg 24:6,14; Is 5:13; Jr 27:20; Ezk 1:1; Mt 1:17  
<sup>l</sup>1:12-13 Gn 10:10; 1Ch 3:17; Lk 3:27,30  
<sup>m</sup>1:16 Mt 27:17,22; Lk 2:11; Jn 1:45; 4:25  
<sup>n</sup>1:17 2Kg 24:14; Jr 27:20; Dn 9:25-26; Mk 8:29; Ac 2:31,36,38

Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon,<sup>E</sup> Amon fathered Josiah,<sup>f</sup> and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.<sup>k</sup>

## FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- <sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
- <sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,<sup>l</sup>
- <sup>14</sup> Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,
- <sup>15</sup> Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,
- <sup>16</sup> and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>A</sup>1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 <sup>B</sup>1:6 Other mss add *King* <sup>C</sup>1:7,8 Other mss read *Asaph* <sup>D</sup>1:8 = Jehoram <sup>E</sup>1:10 Other mss read *Amos*

**1:1** The title of this genealogy introduces several important themes in Matthew. Jesus is identified as the **Christ**, Messiah, the King anointed by God to rule over his people. This is reiterated by identifying Jesus as **Son of David** (v. 20; 2:2; 9:27; 12:3,23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15). OT prophecies like 2Sm 7:16 and Is 9:2-7 foretold that Messiah (the “anointed one”) would be a descendant of King David. Jesus’s Davidic lineage shows that he meets this qualification. Though the genealogy is otherwise arranged in chronological order, Matthew shifted “Son of David” ahead of **Son of Abraham** to lay emphasis on the royal title.

The title “Son of Abraham” implies that just as Abraham was the father of national Israel, Jesus will be the founder of a new spiritual Israel. The phrase **an account of the genealogy of Jesus** is unusual. OT genealogies are consistently named after the earliest ancestor in the lineage because the Jews considered that person to be most significant since everyone else derived from them. That Matthew names his genealogy after Jesus, the final descendant in the lineage, implies that Jesus is more important than anyone who preceded him.

**1:2-6** Matthew mentioned four women in his genealogy, all of them Gentiles. **Tamar** was a Canaanite. **Rahab** was from Jericho. **Ruth**

was a Moabitess. **Uriah’s wife** Bathsheba was probably a Hittite. The mention of these women signals God’s intention to include Gentiles and women in his redemptive plan. Several kings are named also, but only David is explicitly given the title **King**. This highlights that the Son of David (Jesus) will likewise be a kingly figure.

**1:7-16** Matthew’s genealogy agrees with the genealogies of 1Ch 1-3 and Lk 3:23-38 from the generation of Abraham down to David. After David, Matthew’s genealogy agrees with that of 1 Chronicles except for a few intentional gaps, but departs significantly from Luke’s. Some interpreters argue from this that one or both of the NT genealogies is inaccurate. However, Jews in David’s line carefully preserved their genealogies because they knew from the OT prophecies that one of their descendants would be the Messiah. David’s descendants also had the privilege of providing firewood for the altar in Jerusalem (*m. Ta’an.* 4:5). Naturally, they kept careful records to demonstrate their Davidic descent and preserve their privileges. Evidence in Josephus (*Life* 1) and rabbinic texts suggests that genealogical archives were kept in public registers.

Scholars suggest several ways in which the genealogies of Matthew and Luke may be

harmonized. First, one may preserve the genealogy of Jesus through Mary and the other through Joseph. Second, the custom of levirate marriage resulted in a child having different biological and legal fathers. Perhaps one genealogy follows the biological line while the other follows the legal. Third, one genealogy may trace David’s legal descendants who would have reigned if the Davidic kingdom had continued, while the other lists descendants in Joseph’s specific line. A combination of these approaches is also possible.

In English, it is difficult to identify the antecedent of the first occurrence of the pronoun **who** in v. 16. However, in Matthew’s Greek, the pronoun is feminine. Thus, although the rest of the genealogy focuses on fathers and only rarely mentions mothers, Matthew identified a human mother but not a human father of Jesus, thus implying Jesus’s virginal conception.

**1:17** Matthew’s arrangement of Jesus’s genealogy into three sets of **fourteen generations** is probably an example of gematria, a system that assigns numerical value to letters of the alphabet (e.g., A = 1, B = 2, etc.) in order to communicate a subtle message. In Hebrew, the numerical value of the letters composing the name *David* is fourteen. Thus Matthew’s

## THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

<sup>18</sup> The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged<sup>a</sup> to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.<sup>a</sup> <sup>19</sup> So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man,<sup>b</sup> and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus,<sup>e</sup> because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>a</sup>1:18 Mt 12:46; Lk 1:27,35  
<sup>b</sup>1:19 Mt 13:17; Mk 10:12; Lk 2:36; 1Co 14:35; 2Co 11:2; Gl 4:27  
<sup>c</sup>Dt 22:20-24; 24:1-4; Mt 2:7; Lk 16:18; Jn 8:4-5  
<sup>d</sup>1:20 2Ch 1:1; Mt 13:49; 27:19; Jn 6:20; Rm 1:3  
<sup>e</sup>1:21 Lk 1:31; 2:21; Jn 10:25; 1Jn 2:12  
<sup>f</sup>Lk 2:11; Jn 1:29; Ac 4:12; 5:31; 13:23,38-39  
<sup>g</sup>1:22-23 Is 7:14; Mt 21:1-4; Lk 24:44; Rm 1:2-4  
<sup>h</sup>1:24 Mt 1:6; 13:49; Lk 1:1; 19:32; Jd 5  
<sup>i</sup>1:25 Gn 4:1,17; Ex 13:2; Jdg 11:39; 1Sm 1:19; Lk 2:7,21  
<sup>j</sup>2:1 Gn 25:6; 1Kg 4:30; Lk 1:5; 2:4-7

<sup>23</sup> See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,<sup>b</sup> which is translated “God is with us.”<sup>g</sup>

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her<sup>h</sup> <sup>25</sup> but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son.<sup>c</sup> And he named him Jesus.<sup>i</sup>

## WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem,<sup>j</sup> <sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?<sup>k</sup> For we saw his star at its rising<sup>l</sup> and have come to worship him.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>k</sup>2:2 Jr 23:5; 30:9; Zch 9:9; Mt 27:11; Lk 19:38; Jn 1:49  
<sup>l</sup>Nm 24:17; Rv 22:16

<sup>a</sup>1:18 Or  *betrothed*   <sup>b</sup>1:23 Is 7:14   <sup>c</sup>1:25 Other mss read  *to her firstborn son*   <sup>d</sup>2:2 Or  *to pay him homage*

artistic arrangement probably highlights Jesus’s Davidic lineage. If Matthew did intentionally use gematria, this supports the view that he originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, for the gematria functions in the Hebrew version of the genealogy but not the Greek.

**1:18** The words of **Jesus Christ** are in an emphatic position in the Greek text, implying that the circumstances of Jesus’s birth differed from those of everyone else in the genealogy. Although several of those people were conceived by miracles, they all had a human father. Only Jesus was born of a virgin. **Mary had been engaged to Joseph.** However, ancient Jewish engagement was as legally binding as marriage. The couple did not live together or engage in sexual intercourse. But the engagement could only be ended by divorce (thus, Joseph’s decision in 1:19). **Before they came together** means that Joseph and Mary had not yet had intercourse. Joseph thus assumed that Mary had been unfaithful. **Pregnant from the Holy Spirit** means that Mary’s pregnancy was a miracle performed by the Spirit, not that God assumed material form and physically impregnated her. This makes Jesus’s conception dramatically different from Greek myths that speak of children born to gods who lay with women.

**1:19** Joseph did not want to humiliate Mary publicly because he was a **righteous man**. His peers most likely expected him to expose her apparent sin, but true righteousness is characterized by compassion and mercy, an important theme for Matthew (5:6-7,21-26,38-48).

**1:20** God spoke to Joseph through dreams, just as he did to his OT namesake (Gn 37:1-11). The title **son of David** reminded Joseph of his royal lineage and

prepared him for the announcement of Messiah’s birth. On **conceived . . . from the Holy Spirit**, see note at v. 18.

**1:21** **Jesus** is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* which means “Yahweh saves.” The angel explained that Jesus’s name revealed his purpose: He would rescue sinners from the punishment they deserve. This salvation would be experienced by **his people**, identified as those who follow Jesus.

**1:22** **Spoken by the Lord through the prophet** implies that God was the ultimate author of the messages spoken and written by the prophets. The grammar that Matthew uses to introduce the quote from Is 7:14 (see Mt 1:23) suggests that the angel quoted this verse to Joseph during his announcement. Some interpreters argue that Matthew mishandled Is 7:14, but he seems to have handled it just as the angel did, which means his usage is backed by angelic authority.

## magos

<i>Greek pronunciation</i>	[MAH gahss]
<i>CSB translation</i>	<i>wise man</i>
<i>Uses in Matthew</i>	4
<i>Uses in the NT</i>	6
<i>Focus passage</i>	Matthew 2:1,7,16

In the Greek OT, **magos** occurs only in Dn 2:2,10 and describes a group of people possessing knowledge of Babylonian religion and magical arts, whom Nebuchadnezzar summoned to interpret his dream. In Mt 2:1,7,16, **magos** refers to those who have wisdom through investigation and interpretation of the movements of heavenly bodies (i.e., *wise men/astrologers*). It is likely (though not certain) these astrologers were from Babylon, since there they would have had contact with Jewish exiles and obtained an interest in the Jewish Messiah. The irony in the passage is difficult to miss: King Herod in Jerusalem attempted to slaughter baby Jesus born in nearby Bethlehem, while pagan devotees of a foreign religion recognized Messiah’s star, traveled a great distance to find him, presented him with valuable gifts, and paid homage to him. Elsewhere in the NT, **magos** refers to Elymas the *sorcerer* (Ac 13:6,8).

**1:23** The name **Immanuel** (God with us) implies Jesus’s deity. Mary’s virgin-born Son would be God himself living among his people. The Immanuel of Is 7:14 is to be identified with the person described in Is 9:2-7 and 11:1-9.

**1:24-25** These verses emphasize Joseph’s absolute obedience to the angel’s instructions, a prevalent theme in these early chapters (2:13-15,19-21). Joseph is a model of the obedience that should characterize Jesus’s disciples (5:19-20). **Did not have sexual relations with her** confirms again that **Jesus** was the product of a virginal conception.

**2:1** The **wise men** were magi. Eastern magi mixed Zoroastrianism with astrology and black magic. They are described in Dn 2:2,4-5,10, where they are associated with diviner-priests, mediums, and sorcerers. The term *magos* (sg of *magi*) appears only once in the NT. It describes the sorcerer whom Paul portrayed as “full of all kinds of deceit and trickery” and a “son of the devil and enemy of all that is right” (Ac 13:6-10). The magus of whom Paul spoke would have held beliefs that were similar to those of the wise men. Thus, the summons of the magi to visit Jesus demonstrates God’s intention to save Gentiles from their futile religions. As an adult, Jesus cast out demons and broke Satan’s grip on beleaguered people. Here we see that even in his infancy, Christ plundered Satan’s kingdom and set captives free. The **east** may refer to Babylonia or Persia. **King Herod** was actually a client king ruling under Roman authority. Though he was Idumean and not a Jew, the Roman Senate named him king of Judea in 40 BC. He was an able ruler but brutal and suspicious.

**2:2** The question posed by the wise men was an unintentional challenge to Herod’s reign. Jesus

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes<sup>a</sup> of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

<sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

**6 And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.**<sup>a, b</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”<sup>b, c</sup>

<sup>9</sup> After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were

<sup>a</sup>2:4 Mt 16:21; 20:18; 21:15; 27:41; Lk 9:22  
<sup>b</sup>2:6 2Sm 5:2; Mc 5:2; Jn 7:42; 21:16  
<sup>c</sup>2:7-8 Mk 5:6; Lk 1:7; Ac 13:6; Rv 1:16  
<sup>d</sup>2:11 Ps 72:10; Is 60:6; Mt 1:18; 12:46; Mk 5:6  
<sup>e</sup>2:12 Mt 27:19; Lk 2:26; Ac 10:22; Heb 8:5; 11:7  
<sup>f</sup>2:13 Mt 1:20; 13:49; Mk 11:18; Jms 4:7  
<sup>g</sup>2:15 Ex 4:22; Nm 24:8; Hs 11:1

overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.<sup>c</sup> Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>d</sup> <sup>12</sup> And being warned<sup>e</sup> in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

#### THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

<sup>13</sup> After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him.”<sup>f</sup> <sup>14</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. <sup>15</sup> He stayed there until Herod’s death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.**<sup>d, g</sup>

#### THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

<sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years

<sup>a</sup>2:6 Mc 5:2 <sup>b</sup>2:8 Or and pay him homage <sup>c</sup>2:11 Or they paid him homage <sup>d</sup>2:15 Hs 11:1

was **born king** in the sense that he was from David’s line and thus king by birthright. Herod, however, was neither a full Jew nor a descendant of David and thus was not genuinely qualified to reign as king. The word translated **star** can indicate many different astronomical phenomena, including comets, meteors, or planetary conjunctions. Matthew later (v.9) described the star as moving through the sky in order to point the magi to Jesus’s precise location. This indicates that it was no ordinary star. **At its rising** indicates that the star mysteriously appeared in the eastern sky to signal Messiah’s birth. The interest of the magi in astrology, a practice condemned in the Bible (Is 47:13-15), probably first directed their attention to the star. In another profound display of grace, God condescended to use the magi’s pagan superstitions to draw them to Jesus.

**2:3** Herod was **disturbed** by reports of the birth of a legitimate claimant to his throne. The people of **Jerusalem** were equally disturbed because they feared Herod’s paranoid and delusional rages. In the past he had killed even his favorite wife and sons in order to protect his rule.

**2:4** Herod summoned expert scribes to learn where the OT said **the Christ** would be born. To this point the star had guided the wise men near to Jesus, but now the witness of the Scriptures was necessary before God caused the star to reappear and pinpoint the exact location. Thus the value of biblical revelation was upheld even as new revelations unfolded.

**2:5-6** The “chief priests and scribes” (v. 3) knew Scripture well enough to identify **Bethlehem** as Christ’s birthplace (Mc 5:2; Jn 7:42), but nevertheless they later opposed

his teachings. Knowledge of Scripture does not guarantee that your heart is right with God. The priestly opposition to Jesus is foreshadowed here by the fact that they made no effort to go visit him even as the magi undertook the last leg of a long journey to do so. Micah 5:2 foretold that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of a king, a ruler who would **shepherd** . . . Israel. Although Micah said that the promised prince would “rule” over Israel, Matthew’s translation says that Messiah will “shepherd” Israel. Matthew likely chose this word to reflect Micah’s use in 5:4 and thus show that the entirety of Mc 5 applies to Jesus. This indicates that Jesus is eternal since Micah says, “His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times” (v. 2). Micah’s prophecy also said that the shepherd’s “greatness will extend to the ends of the earth” (v. 4).

**2:7-8** Herod questioned the magi about the **exact time** of the star’s appearance under the assumption that the star first appeared at the time of the child’s birth. On the basis of this date, he ordered the execution of all male children in Bethlehem two years of age and under (v. 16). This implies that the magi’s journey was lengthy and involved great sacrifice. Herod’s pretended desire to worship Messiah highlights his deceitfulness.

**2:9-12** In contrast to the stable in which Jesus was born (Lk 2), Jesus’s family now lived in a **house**. This shows that the magi visited Jesus after the visit of the shepherds described by Luke. The magi worshiped Jesus openly, as did many other people during his lifetime (8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17). Jesus’s reception of worship reinforces his identity as Immanuel, “God is with us” (1:23). **Gold**,

**frankincense, and myrrh** were costly gifts. The latter two are aromatic resins. Frankincense was used in making incense and perfume (see Ex 30:34-35). Myrrh was used as an ingredient in anointing oil (30:23-25), as a perfume (Ps 45:8), and in burial preparations (Jn 19:39).

**2:13-14** Again an angel visited Joseph in a **dream** warning him of Herod’s intent. Herod was a cruel and paranoid ruler. See note at 2:3. So it is not surprising that he would commit treachery against children due to a perceived threat (v. 16). Joseph promptly obeyed when he was told to **flee to Egypt**. See note at 1:24-25.

**2:15** That **what was spoken** had to be fulfilled indicates that the Bible is inspired by God and authoritative over history. In its original context, the calling of the son **out of Egypt** in Hs 11 is a reference to Israel’s exodus from Egypt, not young Messiah’s trip back home. Matthew understood this, but under the Spirit’s direction he recognized Jesus as the new Moses who will lead a new and climactic exodus. Just as Moses delivered his people from slavery to Pharaoh, Jesus will deliver people from slavery to Satan. Thus Matthew rightly regarded Hs 11:1 and other portions of the OT as foreshadows of Jesus and events in his life.

**2:16** Skeptics deny that Herod ever slaughtered the boys of Bethlehem since no extrabiblical source documents this horrific event. However, the murders are consistent with his documented dealings, such as his murdering his own family. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that Herod arranged for many Jewish nobles to be murdered upon his death in order to ensure that the land mourned his

## DIFFERENCES IN THE GOSPELS

Robert H. Stein

Serious readers of the Gospels notice various differences between them. One difference involves geographical arrangement. In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus visits Jerusalem only once during his entire ministry. For instance, all of the events in Mark 1:1–11:10 take place either in Galilee (1:1–8:21) or on the way to Jerusalem (8:22–11:10). Only from 11:11 forward is Jesus recorded as entering Jerusalem. The Gospel of John takes a different approach. John records Jesus visiting Jerusalem several times throughout his ministry (2:13–4:45; 5:1–47; 7:1–10:40; and 12:12–20:31), including an early temple cleansing (John 2:13–22). The Synoptics say nothing about an early temple cleansing, and John in turn says nothing about the later cleansing that the Synoptics recount (Mt 21:12–13; Mk 11:15–18; Lk 19:45–48). It seems the authors chose different ways of using geography as a tool for arranging their accounts of Jesus's life. Mark, whose Gospel likely predated and influenced Matthew and Luke, chose not to discuss any of Jesus's doings in Jerusalem until the climactic events beginning in 11:11. This literary approach builds a steady tension that finally explodes with Jesus's crucifixion in the sacred city. John, writing years after the Synoptics, took a different approach, sprinkling Jerusalem throughout his account.

Another literary consideration that helps account for differences among the Gospels is how the authors chose to group Jesus's teachings. Matthew is organized around alternating blocks of Stories of Jesus and Teachings of Jesus. Here is the arrangement: chapters 1–4 (S); 5–7 (T); 8–9 (S); 10 (T); 11–12 (S); 13 (T); 14–17 (S); 18 (T); 19–22 (S); 23–25 (T); 26–28 (S). Luke, on the other hand, places the teachings of Jesus in two large sections: 6:20–8:3; and 9:51–18:14. Different approaches such as this explain why the Gospel authors often place sayings of Jesus in different contexts, as for instance when Matthew records the Lord's Prayer early in Jesus's ministry (6:9–13) while Luke places it later (11:1–4). The Gospel writers arranged much of their material on topical and logical grounds rather than chronological. The earliest reference to any Gospel was made by Papias, a church father who in the first decade of the second century stated that Mark wrote accurately but *not in chronological order* the traditions he learned from Peter. Thus early readers noticed the differences between the Gospels, understood some of the basic causes of the differences, and did not regard them as problematic.

Another reason for differences involves the literary style of individual evangelists. In Matthew

8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 we have two accounts of Jesus healing a centurion's servant. In Luke the conversation takes place between Jesus and Jewish elders who speak on behalf of the centurion. In Matthew the conversation is directly between Jesus and the centurion. There is no conflict in these accounts when we realize that Matthew has abbreviated the story (103 words compared to 186 words in Luke). Matthew omitted material unessential to the story, and the elders (serving as go-betweens) are the least important element in the story. Thus, just as modern-day journalists report on meetings between heads of state without mentioning the go-betweens, Matthew makes no mention of the elders.

Furthermore, the evangelists understood themselves to be inspired interpreters, not mere stenographers of Jesus's acts and teachings. They felt free to clarify and add explanatory comments to the traditions they were recording. For example, whereas Matthew in 7:11 records Jesus as saying God the Father gives "good things" to those who ask, Luke has Jesus saying God gives "the Holy Spirit." In this case, Luke has done some interpretive extension: of all the good things God gives, the Holy Spirit is the best of them. Other examples of inspired editorial work include:

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

- In Matthew 3:17 the voice from heaven states, "This is my beloved Son."
- In Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22 the voice states, "You are my beloved Son."
- Explanation: In Mark and Luke, God's voice addresses Jesus. Matthew shifts the audience to the bystanders in order to make clear to his readers that God would have them know that Jesus is his Son. The overall meaning is unchanged.

### THE BEATITUDES

- In Matthew 5:3 the first beatitude reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . ."
- Luke 6:20 has, "Blessed are you who are poor . . ."
- Explanation: Matthew gives a "thought for thought" rather than "word for word" translation of the original. He adds "in spirit" to help his readers understand that in this context "poor" refers to spiritual humility. A similar usage of "poor" occurs in Psalm 86:1, where King David (who was financially wealthy) speaks of being "poor and needy."

old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men.<sup>a</sup> <sup>17</sup> Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup> **A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping,<sup>a</sup> and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.**<sup>b,d</sup>

#### THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

<sup>19</sup> After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>2:16 Is 59:7; Mk 10:34; Ac 13:6; 25:3; Rv 12:4  
<sup>b</sup>2:18 Gn 35:19; Jdg 4:5; Jr 31:15; Ac 8:2; 2Co 7:7  
<sup>c</sup>2:19 Mt 1:20; 13:49; Lk 1:11; Jd 5  
<sup>d</sup>2:22 Mt 17:22; Lk 1:5; Ac 27:29; Col 3:21; Heb 8:5  
<sup>e</sup>2:23 Mk 1:24; Lk 1:26; Jn 1:45-46

<sup>20</sup> saying, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead.” <sup>21</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee.<sup>d</sup> <sup>23</sup> Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>2:18 Other mss read *Ramah, lamentation, and weeping*, <sup>b</sup>2:18 Jr 31:15

passing (*Ant.* 17.167-69). Herod’s behavior is reminiscent of Pharaoh’s around the time of Moses’s birth (Ex 1:15-22). This and other striking similarities to Moses’s birth narrative strengthen Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as the new Moses whom God promised in Dt 18:15-19. Ancient Jews thought of Moses as a deliverer (Ac 7:25,35). By highlighting parallels between Moses and Jesus, Matthew shows that Jesus was the promised deliverer who would save his people from their sins (see notes at Mt 1:7-16 and 2:20-21). Herod killed all boys **two years old and under** in and around Bethlehem because the star had appeared to the magi two years previously, presumably at the moment of Jesus’s birth.

**2:17-18** Once again Matthew introduces a quotation in a way that implies that the OT author (Jeremiah in this case) was used by God to proclaim his message. This was the unquestioned view among religious Jews from the day of the prophets down to Jesus’s day. In v. 18 Matthew quotes Jr 31:15, which originally expressed the lament of mothers who grieved over sons who were sent into

exile. Matthew’s application here implies that Israel was again in exile, estranged from God, and in need of redemption. Since Jr 31 includes the weeping and then climaxes with the joyous promise that God would establish a new covenant with his people, one in which he would forgive their sins and write his law on their hearts, Matthew likely intends to call this to mind and apply it to the Bethlehem massacre and the coming of Jesus. Just as the weeping of mothers preceded the promise of the new covenant in Jr 31, so now the **weeping** of mothers preceded the establishment of the new covenant through Jesus (see note at 26:27-28).

**2:19** Since **Herod died** in 4 BC and since Jesus was born roughly two years before Herod ordered the massacre of the Bethlehem boys, it seems that Jesus was born in 5 or 6 BC. It also seems likely that the shameless Bethlehem massacre was one of Herod’s final acts.

**2:20-21** The angel’s words are almost identical to the words the Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 4:19, LXX). This allusion

to the Moses narrative again identifies Jesus as the new Moses (see notes at 2:15 and 2:16). Jesus, now perhaps three years old, returns from Egypt with his family.

**2:22-23 Archelaus**, son of Herod the Great, inherited his father’s violent traits. His rule over Judea signaled that the holy family should settle elsewhere, and so Joseph led his family to resettle in the obscure Galilean village of **Nazareth**, where Joseph and Mary had previously lived (Lk 1:26). Rather than a specific OT text, Matthew was probably referring to an OT theme, the prophecies that describe the Messiah as a “branch.” The term used for “branch” in Is 11:1 (*netser*) may be transliterated with the first three consonants (*nzr*) that compose the nouns “Nazareth” and “Nazarene.” This messianic prophecy is closely connected to others (Is 4:2; Jr 23:5; 33:15) that told of a righteous descendant of David whose wise and just rule would be empowered by the Spirit and who would bring salvation to Judah. Matthew thus saw Jesus’s hometown as a subtle clue to his identity as Messiah.

#### HOOR OF THE CRUCIFIXION

- In Mark 15:25 Jesus is crucified at “nine in the morning” (the third hour).
- In John 19:14 Jesus is crucified at “about noon” (the sixth hour).

#### PETER’S DENIAL OF CHRIST

- Mark tells his readers of Peter’s denial in Mk 14:53-54 and 14:66-72. Wedged between this two-part account is the story of Jesus’s trial.
- Luke completes the entire account of Peter’s denial before telling of Jesus’s trial.
- **Explanation:** Rather than a chronological discrepancy, these are two different ways of telling two separate stories. Mark follows

one of his favored stylistic techniques and “sandwiches” Jesus’s trial between the two halves of the story of Peter’s denial. Luke chooses to treat them separately.

We have avoided terms such as “discrepancy” and “contradiction” when discussing differences among the Gospels. When we seek to understand what the Evangelists are doing as interpreters of Jesus’s life, we often find that their different approaches help clarify and draw out implications from Jesus’s acts and teachings. This often entails sharing the stories of Jesus’s life in a topical or logical order, not chronological. In this light, alleged “discrepancies” and “contradictions” are seen as mere “differences.”

## THE HERALD OF THE CHRIST

**3** In those days John the Baptist came,<sup>a</sup> preaching in the wilderness of Judea<sup>b</sup> and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!”<sup>c</sup> <sup>3</sup> For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

**A voice of one crying out  
in the wilderness:  
Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight!<sup>A,d</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:1-12 Mk 1:3-8; Lk 3:2-17; Jn 1:6-8,19-28  
<sup>b</sup>3:1 Jos 15:61; Jdg 1:16  
<sup>c</sup>3:2 Dn 2:44; Mt 4:17; 6:10; 10:7; Mk 1:15; Lk 10:9; 11:20; 21:31  
<sup>d</sup>3:3 Is 40:3; Lk 1:17,76; Jn 1:23  
<sup>e</sup>3:5-6 Mt 23:37; Mk 1:5; Lk 3:3; Jn 15:22; Ac 19:18  
<sup>f</sup>3:7 Mt 16:1; 22:23; 23:15; Ac 4:1; 5:17; 23:6  
<sup>g</sup>Mt 12:34; 23:33; Rm 5:9; 1Th 1:10  
<sup>h</sup>3:8 Mt 3:10; 12:33; 13:8,26; 21:19,34,41,43; Mk 11:14  
<sup>i</sup>3:9 Lk 3:8; Jn 8:33,39; Ac 13:26; Rm 4:1  
<sup>j</sup>3:10 Mt 7:19; Lk 13:7,9; Jn 15:2,6  
<sup>k</sup>3:11 Mk 1:4,8; Jn 1:26; Ac 1:5

<sup>7</sup> When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees<sup>f</sup> coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?<sup>g</sup> <sup>8</sup> Therefore produce fruit<sup>h</sup> consistent with<sup>8</sup> repentance. <sup>9</sup> And don’t presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’<sup>i</sup> For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “I baptize you with<sup>c</sup> water for repentance,<sup>k</sup> but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove<sup>d</sup> his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.<sup>l</sup> <sup>12</sup> His winnowing shovel

<sup>l</sup>Is 4:4; Jn 1:33; Ac 2:3-4; 11:16; Ti 3:5

<sup>a</sup>3:3 Is 40:3 <sup>b</sup>3:8 Lit fruit worthy of <sup>c</sup>3:11 Or in <sup>d</sup>3:11 Or to carry

**3:1** In those days means “during the time of Jesus’s residence in Nazareth” rather than “during the reign of Archelaus.” After all, Archelaus reigned from 4 BC to AD 6, too early for **John the Baptist** to have begun his ministry since he would have been under age twelve. In OT usage, “in those days” often refers to a time of prophetic fulfillment (Is 10:20; Am 9:11; Zph 1:15; Zch 12:3-4). Matthew probably used the phrase in conjunction with his references to fulfilled prophecy to emphasize that God’s promises were being fulfilled through Jesus and John the Baptist, herald and predecessor of Messiah. The location of John’s ministry (**wilderness of Judea**) is reminiscent of the ministry of the prophet Elijah (1Kg 17:3; 19:3-18; 2Kg 2:1-12), whom many Jews believed would appear again to prepare the way for Messiah (Mt 17:10-13). Josephus described John’s ministry in a way that closely matches the Gospel accounts (*Ant.* 18.114-119).

**3:2** John’s message focused on repentance and the coming **kingdom of heaven**. Jesus emphasized the same thing from the outset of his ministry (see note at 4:17). The kingdom is defined as the rule that God exercises through the person, work, and teachings of Jesus. The call to **repent** means we must abandon sinful lifestyles and express sorrow for sins.

**3:3** Matthew’s application of Is 40:3 to John the Baptist tells us as much about Jesus as it does about John. After all, in its original context the prophecy spoke of one who prepared the way for the coming of the Lord, God himself. By using a text about the coming of the Lord to describe the coming of Jesus, Matthew proclaims that Jesus is divine.

**3:4** John’s **garment** was similar to Elijah’s (2Kg 1:8) and his ministry and lifestyle paralleled Elijah’s also, including his residence in the Judean wilderness, his austere diet, his call for Israel to repent, and his confrontation with an evil king and his wife. Jesus explained the significance of these parallels in Mt 11:14; 17:12-13.

**3:5-6** Although Jews required Gentiles to immerse themselves in water in order to convert from paganism to Judaism, John demanded that repentant Jews be **baptized** as well. This bold move implied that Jews did not belong to God merely by virtue of their descent from Abraham (see note at vv. 7-9). Like anyone else, ethnic Jews needed to repent in order to enter the coming kingdom. Unlike the repetitive ritual washings of other religious groups, John’s baptism appears to have been a one-time event associated with a permanent repentance and a transformed life.

**3:7-9** In Mt 2:4 the chief priests and scribes identified the place of Christ’s birth but made no effort to visit him. Their attention was on worldly power instead. That negative portrayal is now followed by John’s charge that the leading priests of the Jews were a **brood of vipers** (see 12:34; 23:33) fleeing from God’s **coming wrath**. The **Pharisees** were the largest and most important Jewish religious group. They controlled the synagogues and exercised great control over the population. The **Sadducees** were an aristocratic party of high priestly families. They had charge of the temple and accepted only the Pentateuch (first five books of the OT) as authoritative. John stressed that the coming kingdom would be accompanied by blessing for God’s people and by punishment for the unrepentant. John knew that the Pharisees and Sadducees had no intention of confessing their sins because they presumed that descent from Abraham guaranteed that they would escape God’s wrath. This belief was reflected in the Mishnah, which stated: “All Israel will have a share in the world to come.” John’s statement about raising up **children for Abraham from these stones** involves a wordplay in Aramaic. The word “child” (*ben*) sounds similar to the word “stone” (*eben*). A stone has no intrinsic value, yet Almighty God can transform worthless rock into a person and include him in his covenant people if he so chooses (Is 51:1-2). Consequently, descent from Abraham gave

the Jews no grounds for boasting. John’s warning foreshadows the incorporation of believing Gentiles into the people of God, an important theme in Matthew’s Gospel.

**3:10** Just as the owner of an orchard laid the **ax** to barren trees, so too God will punish those who fail to produce “fruit consistent with repentance” (v. 8). In the teachings of John and Jesus, **fruit** represents good works that result from a miraculous inner transformation (7:15-20; 12:33; 13:23). Later, the cursing of the fig tree and the parable of the wicked tenants illustrated the consequences of failing to produce good fruits (21:18-22,33-43).

**3:11** Removing the master’s **sandals** was a task so menial that Hebrew slave owners could not require it of Hebrew slaves. John, however, saw himself as unworthy to perform for Jesus the very task that slaves were spared from performing. John expressed this deep humility because Jesus was **more powerful** than he, and this greater power expressed itself through a new baptism that was vastly superior to John’s. John’s baptism was a public expression of **repentance**, but his baptism could not change a person’s heart. Jesus, however, baptized the repentant **with the Holy Spirit**, making them holy through inner transformation. Matthew’s quotation from Jr 31:15 in Mt 2:18 was probably intended to remind his readers of the promise of the new covenant (Jr 31:31-34). The reference to baptism with the Spirit recalls the related promise in Ezk 36:27 in which God declared, “I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.” This work of the Spirit was highlighted again at Jesus’s baptism (3:16). Jesus would have the power to transform human character in a way that John could not. Jesus would also baptize people with **fire**, a reference to divine judgment against unrepentant sinners.

**3:12** A **winnowing shovel** was used to toss grain into the air. The wind would blow the useless husks (called **chaff**) aside, while the heavier grain kernels fell to the threshing

is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out.”<sup>a</sup>

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.<sup>b</sup> <sup>14</sup> But John tried to stop him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?”

<sup>15</sup> Jesus answered him, “**Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then John allowed him to be baptized.

<sup>16</sup> When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens<sup>c</sup> suddenly opened for him,<sup>a</sup> and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.<sup>d</sup> <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:12 Is 30:24; Mt 13:30; Mk 9:43,48; Lk 3:17  
<sup>b</sup>3:13-17 Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:31-34  
<sup>c</sup>3:16 Mt 24:35; Lk 12:33; Ac 17:24; Eph 6:9; Rv 21:10  
<sup>d</sup>Is 11:2; Jn 1:32; Ac 7:56; 2Pt 1:17  
<sup>e</sup>3:17 Ps 2:7; Is 42:1; Lk 9:35; Jn 12:28  
<sup>f</sup>4:1-11 Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13  
<sup>g</sup>4:1 Jos 15:6; Jdg 1:16; Jn 1:6-7; Jms 1:54  
<sup>h</sup>4:2 Ex 34:28; 1Kg 19:8; Jn 9:4  
<sup>i</sup>4:3 Mk 3:11; 5:7; Lk 1:35; 4:41; Jn 1:34,49; Ac 9:20  
<sup>j</sup>4:4 Dt 8:3  
<sup>k</sup>4:5 Neh 11:1,18; Dn 9:24; Mt 27:53  
<sup>l</sup>4:6 Gn 16:7; Mt 13:49; Lk 1:11; Ac 5:19; Rv 14:6  
<sup>m</sup>Ps 91:11-12; 1Pt 2:8

### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

**4** Then<sup>f</sup> Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.<sup>g</sup> <sup>2</sup> After he had fasted forty days and forty nights,<sup>h</sup> he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> Then the tempter approached him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”<sup>i</sup>

<sup>4</sup> He answered, “**It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**”<sup>j,k</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,<sup>k</sup> <sup>6</sup> and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

**He will give his angels’ orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”<sup>c,m</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>3:16 Other mss omit *for him*    <sup>b</sup>4:4 Dt 8:3    <sup>c</sup>4:6 Ps 91:11-12

floor. The chaff would then be gathered up and burned. John’s parable thus described a coming divine judgment in which all people are sifted, with the result that Christ’s followers will be preserved by God, while the unrepentant are gathered for punishment. Though chaff is highly flammable and burns away quickly, possibly giving the impression that divine judgment is only temporary, John made clear that the fire that awaits the unrepentant will never go out. God’s punishment against unrepentant sinners is eternal.

**3:13** Apparently Jesus and his family still lived in Nazareth (in Galilee) at this time.

**3:14** John tried to stop him because he recognized Jesus’s superiority. By his protest John further identified Jesus as the one who would come after him (v. 11). John knew that he needed Jesus’s baptism, the baptism of the Spirit, but he also understood that sinless Jesus did not seek water baptism as an expression of repentance.

**3:15** Jesus explained that baptism was essential to his perfection. Jesus wished to please his Father by obeying the commands of the prophets (John was the greatest of the prophets, 11:9-13) and by identifying with God’s righteous cause among the people. If he had refused to participate in John’s baptism, Jesus would have seemed like a rebel rather than one who came to fulfill all righteousness.

**3:16** The opening of the heavens demonstrates that both the voice and the descending Spirit came from heaven and were divine. First-century Jews associated the dove with the Spirit since Gn 1:2 describes the Spirit as hovering over the primeval waters. The Hebrew verb translated “hover” is the same word used to describe a bird rapidly fluttering its wings. Consequently, both the Qumran Scrolls and the Talmud associated God’s Spirit in Gn 1:2 with the dove. The descent of the Spirit thus alludes to Gn 1 and identifies Jesus not only as one empowered by the Spirit but

also as one who brings new creation (2Co 5:17; Gl 6:15).

**3:17** The Father speaks directly only twice in Matthew—here at Jesus’s baptism and later at the transfiguration. On both occasions he identified Jesus as his Son and expressed approval of him (see 17:5). The Father’s words at Jesus’s baptism blend together two important OT texts: Ps 2:7 and Is 42:1. Psalm 2 was a song sung at the crowning of Israel’s kings. The Father’s application of this text to Jesus identified him as a divinely appointed King who would rule with divine authority and whose kingdom would extend to the ends of the earth (Ps 2:1-12). The allusion to Is 42 identified Jesus as the Servant, the messianic figure whom Is 53:5 promised would be “pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities.” Matthew 12:18-21 explicitly applies Is 42 to Jesus, and Mt 8:17 explicitly applies Is 53 to Jesus. With this OT background in mind, we see that the Father’s words identify Jesus as King and Savior.

**4:1-2** The temptation of Christ highlights numerous parallels between Jesus and OT Israel. Deuteronomy 8:2-3 says that the Lord led Israel into the wilderness to be tested for forty years. Similarly, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested for forty days. The three temptations Jesus faced parallel the tests Israel faced in the wilderness, and every Scripture that Jesus quoted in response to his temptations was drawn from God’s message to the Israelites about their wilderness test (Dt 6-8). Israel failed its tests, but Jesus passed his and in doing so “fulfilled all righteousness” (see Mt 3:15). Thus he is qualified to create a new spiritual Israel. Several features of Matthew confirm Jesus’s intention to gather a new people for God. He chose twelve disciples to parallel Israel’s twelve tribes. This was a conscious effort to identify his followers as the new Israel. The fact that Jesus was hungry shows that he was truly human as well as divine.

**4:3** The stones that littered the wilderness floor resembled small round loaves of bread in shape, size, and color. Interpreters disagree as to why it would have been wrong for Jesus to transform and eat the stones. Most suggest that he was tempted to exercise supernatural power rather than depend on God’s provision. Clues in the text suggest that the Spirit, who led Jesus into the wilderness, commanded this fast. Thus, breaking the fast prematurely would have been an act of disobedience, preventing Jesus from fulfilling every act of righteousness (3:15). Jesus aimed to end his fast when the test was over and no sooner. God would signal the end by providing food. Matthew 4:11 shows that at fast’s end, angels came and “began to serve” Jesus. The verb *serve* means “to serve as a table-waiter” and implies that the angels fed Jesus. During their wilderness wanderings, Israel failed to trust God to provide food and water. Jesus, the embodiment of the new Israel, had unwavering trust in God’s care. On Son of God, see note at 3:17.

**4:4** Jesus quoted Dt 8:3. His reference to every word that comes from the mouth of God recalls the OT theme that God’s words are not idle but are to be received as commands. Deuteronomy 8:1,6 emphasize the need to obey God’s commands, and Dt 8:1 teaches that man lives by following God’s commandments just as 8:3 says that man lives by what comes from God’s mouth (Dt 6:24). Thus the OT text that Jesus quoted teaches that obeying God is more important than being well-fed. Israel struggled to learn this truth (Ex 16:3; Nm 11:4-5). In contrast, Jesus hungered for righteousness more than bread and thirsted for obedience more than water. He urged his disciples to have the same priority (Mt 5:6).

**4:5-7** Satan quoted Ps 91:11-12 out of context, trying to convince Jesus that the Father would supernaturally protect him even if he gambled with his life. Jesus responded by quoting Dt 6:16 which refers to the time when Israel, an-

<sup>7</sup> Jesus told him, **"It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God."**<sup>A,a</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me."<sup>B</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus told him, **"Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."**<sup>D,b</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.<sup>C</sup>

#### MINISTRY IN GALILEE

<sup>12</sup> When he heard that John had been arrested,<sup>d</sup> he withdrew into Galilee.<sup>e</sup> <sup>13</sup> He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum<sup>f</sup> by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

<sup>14</sup> This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>15</sup> **Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.**

<sup>A</sup>4:7 Dt 6:16; 1Sm 7:3; 1Ch 21:1

<sup>B</sup>4:10 Dt 6:13; 1Ch 21:1

<sup>C</sup>4:11 Mt 26:53; Lk 22:43; Heb 1:14

<sup>D</sup>4:12 Mt 14:3; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:20; Jn 3:24

<sup>E</sup>Lk 4:14; Jn 1:43; 2:11

<sup>F</sup>4:13 Mk 1:21; 2:1; Lk 4:23; Jn 2:12; 4:46

<sup>G</sup>4:15-16 Is 9:1-2; 42:7; Lk 2:32

<sup>H</sup>4:17 Mt 3:2; 5:3, 10, 19-20; 7:21; 8:11; Mk 1:14

<sup>I</sup>4:18-22 Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:2-11; Jn 1:40-42

<sup>J</sup>4:18 Mt 15:29; Mk 7:31; Lk 5:1; Jn 6:1

<sup>16</sup> **The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.**<sup>E,F,G</sup>

<sup>17</sup> From then on Jesus began to preach, **"Repent, because the kingdom of heaven<sup>H</sup> has come near."**

#### THE FIRST DISCIPLES

<sup>18</sup> As<sup>I</sup> he was walking along the Sea of Galilee,<sup>J</sup> he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> **"Follow me,"** he told them, **"and I will make you fish for<sup>K</sup> people."** <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>21</sup> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

<sup>A</sup>4:7 Dt 6:16 <sup>B</sup>4:9 Or and pay me homage <sup>C</sup>4:10 Other mss read "Get behind me" <sup>D</sup>4:10 Dt 6:13 <sup>E</sup>4:16 Lit dawned on them <sup>F</sup>4:15-16 Is 9:1-2 <sup>G</sup>4:19 Or you fishers of

gry and thirsty, questioned God's presence until he miraculously produced a stream of water from a rock: "They tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'" (Ex 17:7). Had Jesus succumbed to Satan's temptation, it would indicate that his faith was frail and depended on God's miraculous action. Jumping from the **pinnacle of the temple** would test God by attempting to force him to perform a miracle.

Satan implied that God is trustworthy only when he rescues us from suffering and danger. Jesus knew better. God is trustworthy even when he allows us or even causes us to suffer. True faith recognizes this and perseveres through hard times. When Jesus suffered on the cross (27:41-44), those who tormented him used arguments similar to that of the devil: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." They even quoted Ps 22:8 to argue that Jesus would be rescued if God really loved him, much as Satan quoted Ps 91:11-12 to argue that God would rescue Jesus from a deadly fall if he were really God's Son. Again, Jesus knew better. He trusted God even through a brutal scourging, even when nails were driven through his limbs, and even when God let him suffer a horrible death.

**4:8-9** Although Satan exercises some authority over the world (Lk 4:6; Jn 12:31), the **kingdoms of the world** belong to God, and he promised to give them to his Son (Ps 2:8).

**4:10-11** Jesus responded to Satan by quoting from Dt 6:14 and 10:20. If Jesus had worshiped Satan in order to gain worldly power, it would have indicated that he valued creation more than the Creator and the kingdoms of the earth more than the kingdom of God. Jesus insisted that **only** God is worthy of **worship**.

After citing Dt 6:13, Jesus's reception of worship later in this Gospel (8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17) without rebuking the worshiper (cp. Ac 10:25-26; 14:11-15) strongly implies his deity. That the **angels came to serve** Jesus further implies his superior status.

**4:12** John the Baptist **had been arrested** because he dared to say that Herod Antipas's marriage to his brother's wife was immoral. As tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Lk 3:1), Herod did not have jurisdiction over Judea, the locale of Jesus's baptism and wilderness temptation. Thus Jesus fearlessly marched into the heart of Herod's territory when he heard of John's arrest. In Lk 13:31-33, the Pharisees urged Jesus to leave Galilee in order to escape arrest by Herod. Jesus replied by calling Herod "that fox" and insisted that he would travel to Jerusalem only because it was necessary for him to die there, not to flee Herod. Jesus caused kings to tremble (2:3; 14:1-2), but he himself feared no man.

**4:13** At this point Jesus made an important strategic move by shifting his headquarters from **Nazareth to Capernaum**. Nazareth was an obscure village, but Capernaum was a much larger fishing center on the shores of Lake Galilee. It boasted a tax collection station and a Roman garrison of at least a hundred soldiers. **By the sea** alludes to Isaiah's prophecies, which describe the area as "the way of the sea," an ancient trade route stretching from Damascus down to Caesarea Maritima on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. By the time of Christ, the Romans had built a stone road along the route, allowing caravans to travel from Syria and pass through Capernaum on the way to Caesarea. Since Capernaum was on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, it also pro-

vided easy access to every other city along the Galilean coast. Thus by choosing high-traffic Capernaum as his headquarters, Jesus was able to reach many Jews and Gentiles.

**4:14-16** Matthew's quotation of Is 9:1-2 highlights the international focus of Jesus's ministry by describing Galilee as **Galilee of the Gentiles**. Second Kings 15:29 and 17:24-27 show that after the Jews were deported from the northern kingdom of Israel, foreigners flooded into Galilee. For instance, reports from the geographer Strabo and first-century Jewish historian Josephus show that Egyptians, Arabians, Phoenicians, and Greeks lived in Galilee. The Apocrypha (1 Macc 5) says Galilee's population was largely Gentile and heathen. Jesus's move to Galilee and the strategically located city of Capernaum shows his intention to save Gentiles as well as Jews. Matthew's application of Is 9 also shows that Jesus was the great King called "Mighty God" who would reign from David's throne over a universal and eternal kingdom, liberate Gentile people from spiritual slavery, and bring peace and joy to the world (Is 9:3-7).

**4:17** On the significance of the words **from then on Jesus began to**, see "Structure" in the Introduction to Matthew. Jesus's message was identical to the message proclaimed by John the Baptist before his arrest. This identifies Jesus as the one who came after John (3:11) whom John had identified as the Lord God himself (Is 40:3; see note at Mt 3:3).

**4:18-22** Jesus's command, **Follow me**, urged the disciples not just to accompany him on his travels but to follow his example and emulate his character. Following Jesus involved significant sacrifice for **Simon . . . Andrew . . . James, and John**. They abandoned their careers as