

good
NEWS BIBLE

Good News Bible

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Contents

Books of the Bible in alphabetical order	<i>page</i>
Welcome to the Good News Bible	<i>iv</i>
Where do I begin?	<i>v</i>
What to bear in mind as you read	<i>vi</i>
Maps	<i>x</i>
	<i>xi</i>

OLD TESTAMENT

The Law	<i>page</i>		<i>page</i>		<i>page</i>
Genesis	3	Ezra	462	Minor Prophets	
Exodus	56	Nehemiah	473	Hosea	872
Leviticus	100	Esther	489	Joel	882
Numbers	130	Poetic Books		Amos	886
Deuteronomy	169	Job	500	Obadiah	893
Historical Books		Psalms	535	Jonah	895
Joshua	208	Proverbs	629	Micah	898
Judges	231	Ecclesiastes	654	Nahum	903
Ruth	259	Song of Songs	662	Habakkuk	906
1 Samuel	263	Lamentations	795	Zephaniah	909
2 Samuel	297	Major Prophets		Haggai	912
1 Kings	327	Isaiah	669	Zechariah	914
2 Kings	360	Jeremiah	731	Malachi	924
1 Chronicles	393	Ezekiel	802		
2 Chronicles	423	Daniel	855		

NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels	<i>page</i>		<i>page</i>		<i>page</i>
Matthew	3	Galatians	233	Hebrews	273
Mark	45	Ephesians	239	James	287
Luke	72	Philippians	245	1 Peter	292
John	116	Colossians	250	2 Peter	297
The Good News Spreads		1 Thessalonians	255	1 John	300
Acts	147	2 Thessalonians	259	2 John	305
Letters		1 Timothy	261	3 John	306
Romans	187	2 Timothy	266	Jude	307
1 Corinthians	205	Titus	269	Prophecy	
2 Corinthians	222	Philemon	271	Revelation	309

	<i>page</i>
Maps	329
Word list	335
Index	339

Books of the Bible in alphabetical order

			<i>page</i>				<i>page</i>
Acts	Acts	NT	147	Judges	Judg	OT	233
Amos	Amos	OT	886	Kings 1	1 Kgs	OT	327
Chronicles 1	1 Chr	OT	393	Kings 2	2 Kgs	OT	360
Chronicles 2	2 Chr	OT	425	Lamentations	Lam	OT	795
Colossians	Col	NT	250	Leviticus	Lev	OT	100
Corinthians 1	1 Cor	NT	205	Luke	Lk	NT	72
Corinthians 2	2 Cor	NT	222	Malachi	Mal	OT	924
Daniel	Dan	OT	855	Mark	Mk	NT	45
Deuteronomy	Deut	OT	169	Matthew	Mt	NT	3
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	OT	654	Micah	Mic	OT	898
Ephesians	Eph	NT	239	Nahum	Nah	OT	903
Esther	Esth	OT	491	Nehemiah	Neh	OT	473
Exodus	Ex	OT	56	Numbers	Num	OT	130
Ezekiel	Ezek	OT	802	Obadiah	Obad	OT	893
Ezra	Ezra	OT	462	Peter 1	1 Pet	NT	292
Galatians	Gal	NT	233	Peter 2	2 Pet	NT	297
Genesis	Gen	OT	3	Philemon	Phlm	NT	271
Habakkuk	Hab	OT	906	Philippians	Phil	NT	245
Haggai	Hag	OT	912	Proverbs	Prov	OT	629
Hebrews	Heb	NT	273	Psalms	Ps	OT	535
Hosea	Hos	OT	872	Revelation	Rev	NT	309
Isaiah	Is	OT	669	Romans	Rom	NT	187
James	Jas	NT	287	Ruth	Ruth	OT	259
Jeremiah	Jer	OT	731	Samuel 1	1 Sam	OT	263
Job	Job	OT	500	Samuel 2	2 Sam	OT	297
Joel	Joel	OT	882	Song of Songs	Song	OT	662
John	Jn	NT	300	Thessalonians 1	1 Thes	NT	255
John 1	1 Jn	NT	305	Thessalonians 2	2 Thes	NT	259
John 2	2 Jn	NT	306	Timothy 1	1 Tim	NT	261
John 3	3 Jn	NT	116	Timothy 2	2 Tim	NT	266
Jonah	Jon	OT	895	Titus	Tit	NT	269
Joshua	Josh	OT	208	Zechariah	Zech	OT	914
Jude	Jude	NT	307	Zephaniah	Zeph	OT	909

Other Abbreviations

Old Testament	OT
New Testament	NT
Septuagint	LXX

Welcome to the Good News Bible

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

What is the Bible?

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

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

How are the books ordered?

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

Why does the Bible have two sections?

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

The first section, called by Christians the Old Testament, contains the story of God's relationship with his people, now known as the Jews. This part of the Bible is seen as holy by Jews as well as by Christians and is known by a variety of names, including the Hebrew Scriptures.

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

Finding your way around the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where do I begin?

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

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

Reading a whole book at a time

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

1. Start with a Gospel (New Testament).

- Mark's Gospel is the shortest and is very easy to read (p. 45).
- You could try Luke's Gospel first (p. 72) and then, straight away, read Acts (p. 147). Acts was also written by Luke and goes on to tell the story of how the good news of Jesus spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

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

- Ruth (p. 259) and Jonah (p. 895) are both great stories and fun to read.
- 1 Samuel (p. 263) also has some interesting stories in it.
- Genesis (p. 3) has some of the best-known stories in the whole Bible.

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

- Philippians (p. 245), Ephesians (p. 239) and Colossians (p. 250) are all good places to start with Paul's letters.

Romans (p. 187) is the longest and most complicated of them all, so you may like to leave that until you have read some of his other letters.

- Don't just read Paul's letters. Try 1 Peter (p. 292) or James (p. 287), which were written by other early Christians.

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

- The Psalms (p. 535) have been used in Jewish and Christian worship for over 2,500 years. Read some of the Psalms: some of the most popular are 1, 23, 37, 40, 46, 62, 84, 117, 121 and 139.
- The book of Isaiah (p. 669) has some inspiring passages. Have a look at 9.2–7; 35.1–10; 40.1–31; 52.13–53.12 and 61.1–11

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

Reading some of the most famous passages in the Bible

Another way to read the Bible is to read the best-loved and best-known stories. Here are 100 of the most famous passages in the Bible. Look through them and decide which ones you would like to read.

.....
 From the Law collection

1. Creation and the fall
Genesis 1—3
2. Noah and the flood
Genesis 6.9—9.17
3. The tower of Babel
Genesis 11.1—9
4. The call of Abraham
Genesis 12.1—9 and 17.1—8
5. Three visitors to Abraham
Genesis 18.1—15
6. Joseph the dreamer
Genesis 37—45
7. The birth of Moses
Exodus 1.8—2.10
8. Moses and the burning bush
Exodus 3.1—15
9. The ten plagues
Exodus 7.6—11.10
10. Crossing the Red Sea
Exodus 13.17—14.31
11. Manna and quail
Exodus 16
12. Exploring Canaan
Numbers 13.1—14.12
13. Balaam's donkey
Numbers 22.21—38
14. The Ten Commandments
Deuteronomy 5.1—22

.....
 From the Historical books

15. Entering the Promised Land
Joshua 3
16. The fall of Jericho
Joshua 5.13—6.27
17. Deborah leads God's people
Judges 4—5
18. Gideon fights the Midianites
Judges 6—7
19. Samson and Delilah
Judges 16
20. Ruth and Naomi
Ruth 1—4
21. Israel asks for a king
1 Samuel 8
22. God chooses David as king
1 Samuel 16.1—13
23. David kills Goliath
1 Samuel 17
24. David becomes king
2 Samuel 5.1—12

25. David and Bathsheba
2 Samuel 11
26. Solomon and a wise judgement
1 Kings 3.16—28
27. Solomon builds God's temple
1 Kings 6
28. Elijah and the prophets of Baal
1 Kings 18.16—46
29. The still small voice
1 Kings 19
30. Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot
2 Kings 2.1—12
31. Judah is taken into exile in Babylon
2 Kings 24—25
32. The people are allowed to return
from exile
Ezra 1

.....
 From the Major Prophets

33. Isaiah's vision of God
Isaiah 6.1—8
34. Isaiah's prophecies about a Messiah
Isaiah 7.10—17
35. Isaiah's message of comfort
Isaiah 40.1—11
36. The suffering servant
Isaiah 52.13—53.12
37. Jeremiah and the potter's house
Jeremiah 18
38. Jeremiah and the new covenant
Jeremiah 31.1—34
39. Ezekiel's vision of a chariot
Ezekiel 1
40. Ezekiel's vision of dry bones
Ezekiel 37.1—14
41. Daniel and the fiery furnace
Daniel 3
42. Daniel and the lions' den
Daniel 6

.....
 From the Minor Prophets

43. Hosea is told to marry a prostitute
Hosea 1
44. Joel's vision of the future
Joel 2.28—32
45. Jonah
Jonah 1—4

What to bear in mind as you read

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Read the Bible with other people.

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

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

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

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

7. Ask questions.

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

8. Keep a notebook of your questions.

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

9. Don't worry about it.

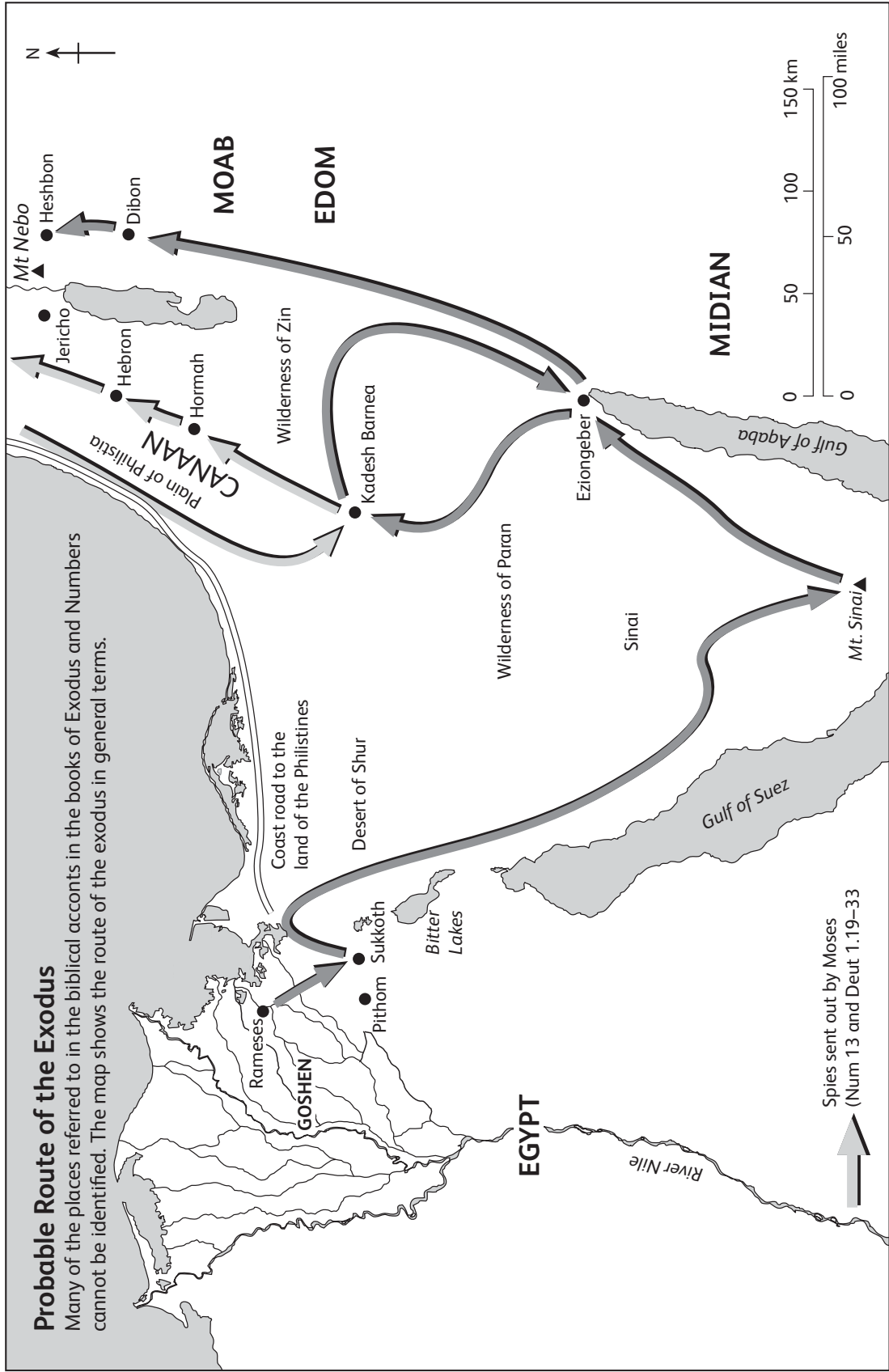
Many people find parts of the Bible difficult to understand. It was written a long time ago. It comes from a different culture. If you find something difficult, move on. Focus on the parts you do understand and not the parts you don't.

10. Do keep going.

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

Probable Route of the Exodus

Many of the places referred to in the biblical accounts in the books of Exodus and Numbers cannot be identified. The map shows the route of the exodus in general terms.



GENESIS

The start of all things

What's it about? Genesis is all about beginnings: the beginnings of time, the beginnings of the universe, the beginnings of God's people ... and the beginnings of his people going their own way.

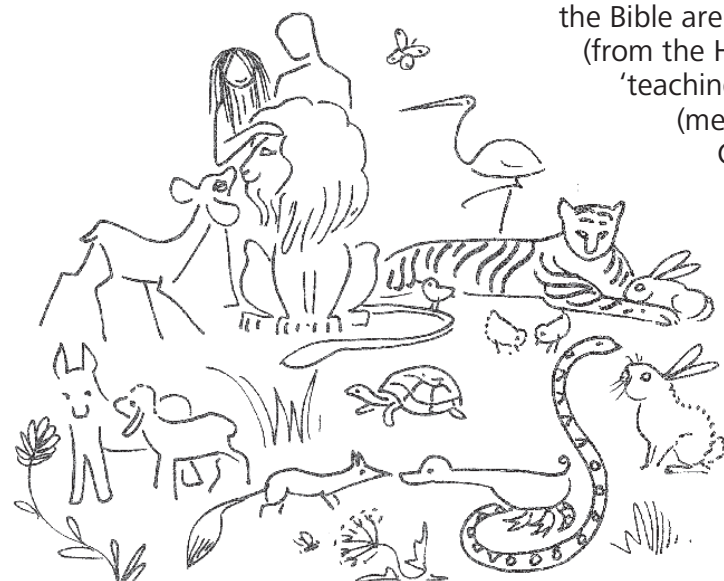
Who wrote it? The first five books of the Bible are often called the Torah (from the Hebrew word meaning 'teaching') or Pentateuch (meaning 'five books' in Greek). Tradition has it that these books were written by Moses, but no one is sure.

Why read it?

These ancient stories were passed down from generation to generation, and they tell us many things about God, us and our relationship with him. The people in this

book are not so different from us: they triumph with God's help and fail spectacularly when they turn against him.

What's it to me? Genesis raises some of the big questions of life and gives us space to discover answers to those questions.



The Story of Creation

1 In the beginning, when God created the universe,* ² the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the Spirit of God* was moving

over the water. ³ Then God commanded, "Let there be light" — and light appeared. ⁴ God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, ⁵ and he named the light "Day" and the darkness "Night". Evening passed and morning came — that was the first day.

⁶⁻⁷ Then God commanded, "Let there be a dome to divide the water and to keep it

1.1 In the beginning... the universe; *or* In the beginning God created the universe; *or* When God began to create the universe.

1.2 the Spirit of God; *or* the power of God; *or* a wind from God; *or* an awesome wind.

See also: **1.3:** 2 Cor 4.6 **1.6-8:** 2 Pet 3.5

in two separate places” — and it was done. So God made a dome, and it separated the water under it from the water above it. ⁸ He named the dome “Sky”. Evening passed and morning came — that was the second day.

⁹ Then God commanded, “Let the water below the sky come together in one place, so that the land will appear” — and it was done. ¹⁰ He named the land “Earth”, and the water which had come together he named “Sea”. And God was pleased with what he saw. ¹¹ Then he commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit” — and it was done. ¹² So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased with what he saw. ¹³ Evening passed and morning came — that was the third day.

¹⁴ Then God commanded, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate day from night and to show the time when days, years, and religious festivals* begin; ¹⁵ they will shine in the sky to give light to the earth” — and it was done. ¹⁶ So God made the two larger lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night; he also made the stars. ¹⁷ He placed the lights in the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God was pleased with what he saw. ¹⁹ Evening passed and morning came — that was the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God commanded, “Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds.”

²¹ So God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. ²² He blessed them all and told the creatures that live in the water to reproduce, and to fill the sea, and he told the birds to increase in number. ²³ Evening passed and morning came — that was the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life:

domestic and wild, large and small” — and it was done. ²⁵ So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.

²⁶ Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild,* large and small.”

²⁷ So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, ²⁸ blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals. ²⁹ I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat; ³⁰ but for all the wild animals and for all the birds I have provided grass and leafy plants for food” — and it was done. ³¹ God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased. Evening passed and morning came — that was the sixth day.

2 And so the whole universe was completed. ² By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. ³ He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation* and stopped working. ⁴ And that is how the universe was created.

The Garden of Eden

When the LORD* God made the universe, ⁵ there were no plants on the earth and no seeds had sprouted, because he had not sent any rain, and there was no one to cultivate the land; ⁶ but water would come up from beneath the surface and water the ground.

1.26 *One ancient translation* animals, domestic and wild; *Hebrew* domestic animals and all the earth.

2.3 by that day he had completed his creation; or on that day he completed his creation.

2.4 THE LORD: See LORD in Word List

See also: **1.26:** 1 Cor 11.7 **1.27:** Mt 19.4; Mk 10.6

1.27–28: Gen 5.1–2 **2.2:** Heb 4.4, 10

2.2–3: Ex 20.11

1.14 religious festivals; or seasons.

May you become rich in the clan of Ephrath and famous in Bethlehem. ¹² May the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman make your family like the family of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar.”

Boaz and his Descendants

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth home as his wife. The LORD blessed her, and she became pregnant and had a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi, “Praise the LORD! He has given you a grandson today to take care of you. May the boy become famous in Israel! ¹⁵ Your daughter-in-law loves you,

and has done more for you than seven sons. And now she has given you a grandson, who will bring new life to you and give you security in your old age.” ¹⁶ Naomi took the child, held him close,* and took care of him.

¹⁷ The women of the neighbourhood named the boy Obed. They told everyone, “A son has been born to Naomi!”

Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

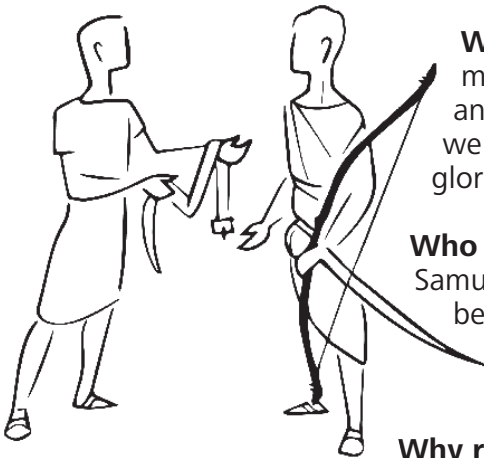
^{18–22} This is the family line from Perez to David: Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

See also: 4.12: Gen 38.27–30

4.16 held him close; or adopted him.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

The arrival of the kings



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

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

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

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

⁶ David was now in great trouble, because his men were all very bitter about losing their children, and they were threatening to stone him; but the LORD his God gave him courage. ⁷ David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod," and Abiathar brought it to him. ⁸ David asked the LORD, "Shall I go after those raiders? And will I catch them?"

He answered, "Go after them; you will catch them and rescue the captives."

⁹ So David and his 600 men started out, and when they arrived at the brook of Besor, some of them stayed there. ¹⁰ David continued on his way with 400 men; the other 200 men were too tired to cross the brook and so stayed behind. ¹¹ The men with David found an Egyptian out in the country and brought him to David. They gave him some food and water, ¹² some dried figs, and two bunches of raisins. After he had eaten, his strength returned; he had not had anything to eat or drink for three full days. ¹³ David asked him, "Who is your master, and where are you from?"

"I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite," he answered. "My master left me behind three days ago because I was ill. ¹⁴ We had raided the territory of the Cherethites in the southern part of Judah and the territory of the clan of Caleb, and we burnt down Ziklag."

¹⁵ "Will you lead me to those raiders?" David asked him.

He answered, "I will if you promise me in God's name that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master." ¹⁶ And he led David to them.

The raiders were scattered all over the place, eating, drinking, and celebrating because of the enormous amount of loot they had captured from Philistia and Judah. ¹⁷ At dawn the next day David attacked them and fought until evening. Except for 400 young men who mounted camels and got away, none of them escaped. ¹⁸ David rescued everyone and everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives; ¹⁹ nothing at all was missing. David

got back all his men's sons and daughters, and all the loot the Amalekites had taken. ²⁰ He also recovered all the flocks and herds; his men drove all the livestock in front of them* and said, "This belongs to David!"

²¹ Then David went back to the 200 men who had been too weak to go with him and had stayed behind at the brook of Besor. They came forward to meet David and his men, and David went up to them and greeted them warmly. ²² But some mean and worthless men who had gone with David said, "They didn't go with us, and so we won't give them any of the loot. They can take their wives and children and go away."

²³ But David answered, "My brothers, you can't do this with what the LORD has given us! He kept us safe and gave us victory over the raiders. ²⁴ No one can agree with what you say! All must share alike: whoever stays behind with the supplies gets the same share as the one who goes into battle." ²⁵ David made this a rule, and it has been followed in Israel ever since.

²⁶ When David returned to Ziklag, he sent part of the loot to his friends, the leaders of Judah, with the message, "Here is a present for you from the loot we took from the LORD's enemies." ²⁷ He sent it to the people in Bethel, to the people in Ramah in the southern part of Judah, and to the people in the towns of Jattir, ²⁸ Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, ²⁹ and Racal; to the clan of Jerahmeel, to the Kenites, ³⁰ and to the people in the towns of Hormah, Borashan, Athach, ³¹ and Hebron. He sent it to all the places where he and his men had roamed.

The Death of Saul and his Sons

(1 Chr 10.1–12)

31 The Philistines fought a battle against the Israelites on Mount Gilboa. Many Israelites were killed there, and the rest of them, including King Saul and his sons, fled. ² But the Philistines caught up with them and killed three of Saul's sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.

³ The fighting was heavy round Saul, and he himself was hit by enemy arrows and badly wounded. ⁴ He said to the young man carrying his weapons, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that these godless Philistines won't gloat over me and kill me." But the young man was too terrified to do it. So Saul took his own sword and threw himself on it. ⁵ The young man saw that Saul was dead, so he too threw himself on his own sword and died with Saul. ⁶ And that is how Saul, his three sons, and the young man died; all of Saul's men died that day. ⁷ When the Israelites on the other side of the Valley of Jezreel and east of the River Jordan heard that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had been killed, they abandoned their towns and fled. Then the Philistines came and occupied them.

⁸ The day after the battle the Philistines went to plunder the corpses, and they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons lying on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They cut off Saul's head, stripped off his armour, and sent messengers with them throughout Philistia to tell the good news to their idols and to their people. ¹⁰ Then they put his weapons in the temple of the goddess Astarte, and they nailed his body to the wall of the city of Beth Shan.

¹¹ When the people of Jabesh in Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² the bravest men started out and marched all night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall, brought them back to Jabesh, and burnt them there. ¹³ Then they took the bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in the town, and fasted for seven days.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

The promise of a future king



What's it about? 2 Samuel continues the story of 1 Samuel, with David finally taking control of Israel. God made a promise to David about his family tree, assuring him that one of his descendants would always be king.

Who wrote it? We don't know, but 2 Samuel, along with 1 Samuel, could have been written and collated after the death of David.

Why read it? David was a great king, but he made some mistakes.

2 Samuel is an honest portrayal of a flawed man who loved God. The promise that God made to David foretells the coming of Jesus, who was part of David's family.

What's it to me? David's flaws as a king show us that everyone can make a difference for God. Despite his mistakes, David was still a mighty king.

David Learns of Saul's Death

1 After Saul's death David came back from his victory over the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag for two days. ² The next day a young man arrived from Saul's camp. To show his grief, he had torn his clothes and put earth on his head. He went to David and bowed to the ground in respect. ³ David asked him, "Where have you come from?"

"I have escaped from the Israelite camp," he answered.

⁴ "Tell me what happened," David said.

"Our army ran away from the battle," he replied, "and many of our men were killed. Saul and his son Jonathan were also killed."

⁵ "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?" David asked him.

⁶ He answered, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and I saw that Saul was leaning on his spear and that the chariots and horsemen of the enemy were closing in on him. ⁷ Then he turned round, saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Yes, sir!' ⁸ He asked who I was, and I told him that I was an Amalekite. ⁹ Then he said, 'Come here and kill me! I have been badly wounded, and I'm about to die.' ¹⁰ So I went up to him and killed him, because I knew that he would die anyway as soon as he fell. Then I took the crown from his head and the bracelet from his arm, and I have brought them to you, sir."

¹¹ David tore his clothes in sorrow, and all his men did the same. ¹² They grieved and mourned and fasted until evening for Saul and Jonathan and for Israel, the people of the LORD, because so many had been killed in battle.

¹³ David asked the young man who had brought him the news, "Where are you from?"

He answered, "I'm an Amalekite, but I live in your country."

¹⁴ David asked him, "How is it that you dared to kill the LORD's chosen king?"

¹⁵ Then David called one of his men and said, "Kill him!" The man struck the

Amalekite and mortally wounded him, ¹⁶ and David said to the Amalekite, "You brought this on yourself. You condemned yourself when you admitted that you killed the one whom the LORD chose to be king."

David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

¹⁷ David sang this lament for Saul and his son Jonathan, ¹⁸ and ordered it* to be taught to the people of Judah. (It is recorded in *The Book of Jashar*.)

¹⁹ "On the hills of Israel our leaders are dead!
The bravest of our soldiers have fallen!

²⁰ Do not announce it in Gath
or in the streets of Ashkelon.
Do not make the women of
Philistia glad;
do not let the daughters of
pagans rejoice.

²¹ "May no rain or dew fall on
Gilboa's hills;
may its fields be always barren!
For the shields of the brave lie
there in disgrace;
the shield of Saul is no longer
polished with oil.

²² Jonathan's bow was deadly,
the sword of Saul was merciless,
striking down the mighty, killing
the enemy.

²³ "Saul and Jonathan, so wonderful
and dear;
together in life, together in
death;
swifter than eagles, stronger
than lions.

²⁴ "Women of Israel, mourn for Saul!
He clothed you in rich scarlet
dresses
and adorned you with jewels and
gold.

1.18 One ancient translation it; Hebrew the bow.

See also 1.18: Josh 10.13

See also 1.6–10: 1 Sam 31.1–6; 1 Chr 10.1–6

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The story of Jesus, promised by God



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

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

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

What's it to me? Matthew records Jesus' teaching alongside Jesus' actions. We see Jesus practising what he preaches, giving us a prime example of what it means to live God's way. But Jesus is much more than a

good man who lived long ago. According to Matthew, he is the saviour promised by God and he will be with us until the end of the world (28.20).

The Ancestors of Jesus Christ

(Lk 3.23–38)

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

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

^{6b–11} From David to the time when the people of Israel were taken into exile in

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

^{12–16} From the time after the exile in Babylon to the birth of Jesus, the following ancestors are listed: Jehoiachin, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, and Joseph, who married

See also: 1.11: 2 Kgs 24.14–15; 2 Chr 36.10; Jer 27.20

Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was called the Messiah.

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

The Birth of Jesus Christ

(Lk 2.1–7)

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

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

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

Visitors from the East

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

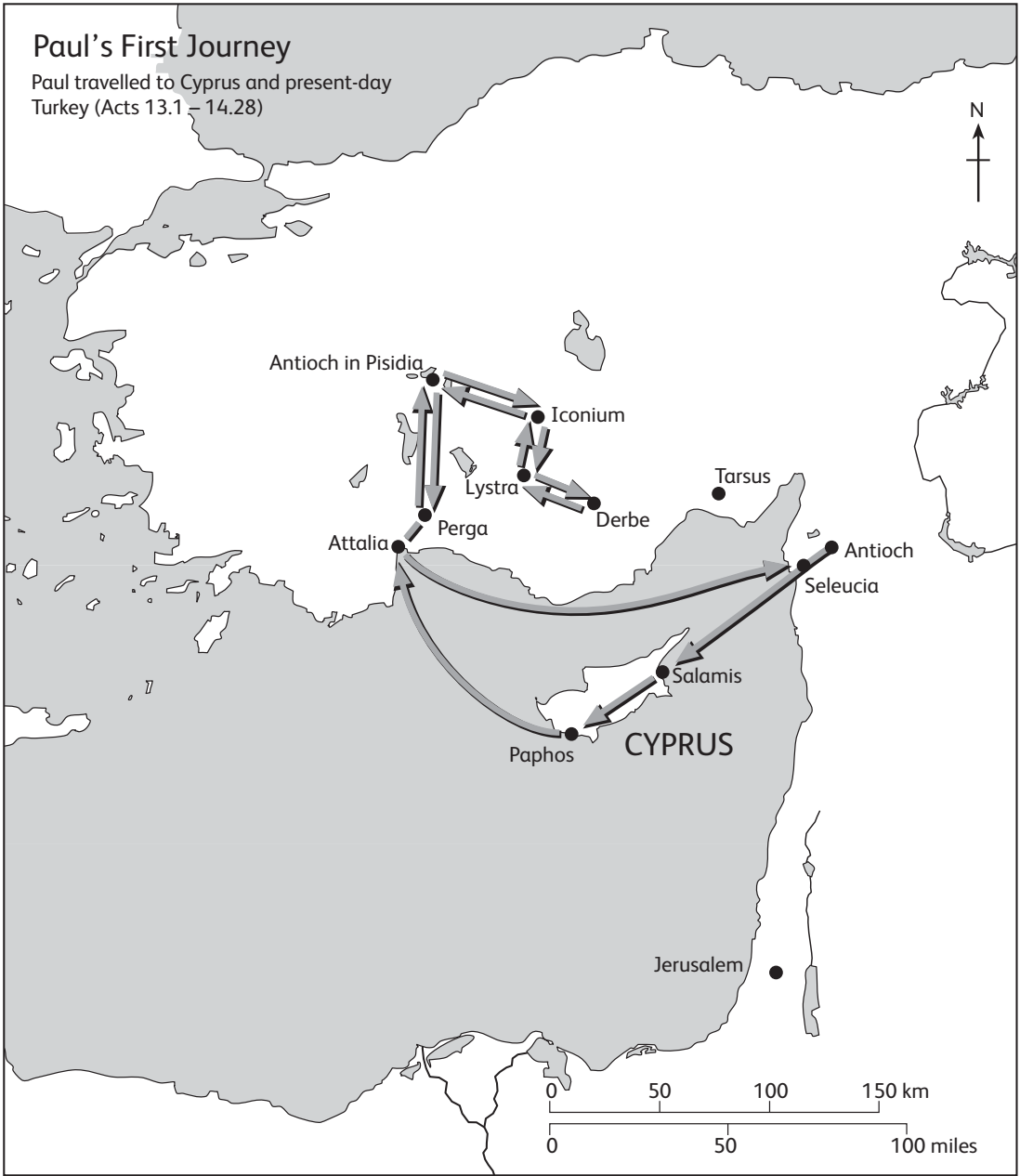
The Escape to Egypt

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

¹⁴ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until Herod died.

Paul's First Journey

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



Word list

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

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

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

Acacia A flowering tree with hard and durable wood.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anoint To pour or rub olive oil on someone in order to honour him or to appoint him to some special work. The Israelite kings were anointed when they took office, and so the king could be called "the anointed one".

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

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

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

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

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

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

Baal The god of fertility worshipped by the Canaanites; his female counterpart was *Asherah*. After the Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshipping these two gods.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Calamus A sweet-smelling plant, like a reed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Covenant An agreement, either between people or between God and a person or a group of people.

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

Cumin A small plant whose seeds are crushed and used for seasoning foods.

David's City The part of Jerusalem which was captured from the Jebusites by King David.

David's town A name for Bethlehem, King David's boyhood home and the town where Jesus was born.

Dedication, Festival of A Jewish festival in which people remembered how Judas Maccabeus rededicated the altar in the Temple in 165 BC. The festival began on the 25th day of the month Kislev (about 10 December) and lasted eight days. The Jewish name for this festival is Hanukkah.

Index

[OT] Old Testament [NT] New Testament

<i>Key word</i>	<i>Page number</i>	<i>Bible reference</i>	<i>Key word</i>	<i>Page number</i>	<i>Bible reference</i>
Aaron [OT]	59	Ex 4.14	Agrippa [NT]		
	60	Ex 5.1	(a) Herod Agrippa I	163	Acts 12.1-4,6,11
	74	Ex 17.12		164	Acts 12.19-23
	84	Ex 28	(b) Herod Agrippa II	181	Acts 25.13-26.2
	85	Ex 29		183	Acts 26.19,27-32
	89	Ex 32	Ahab [OT]	351	1 Kgs 16.28-33
	142	Num 12		352	1 Kgs 18.1-19.1
	148	Num 17		355	1 Kgs 20.2-22.40
	151	Num 20	Ahasuerus <i>see</i> Xerxes		
[NT]	156	Acts 7.40	Amalek, Amalekite [OT]	74	Ex 17.8-16
	276	Heb 5.4		239	Judg 6.3
	278	Heb 7.11		242	Judg 7.12
	279	Heb 9.4		279	1 Sam 15.2-20
Abel [OT]	6	Gen 4.2-9,25		295	1 Sam 30.1-18
[NT]	35	Mt 23.35		298	2 Sam 1.1-13
	94	Lk 11.51	Ammon, Ammonite [OT]	19	Gen 19.38
	282	Heb 11.4		172	Deut 2.37
	285	Heb 12.24		246	Judg 10.7-12.3
Abraham, Abram [OT]				306	2 Sam 10.1-11.1
born	12	Gen 11.26		309	2 Sam 12.26-31
married Sarai	12	Gen 11.29		414	1 Chr 19.1-20.3
migrated from Ur to Haran	12	Gen 11.31		448	2 Chr 26.8
called by God	12	Gen 12.1-5		449	2 Chr 27.5
went to Egypt	13	Gen 12.10-20		786	Jer 49.1-6
separated from Lot	13	Gen 13.7-11		822	Ezek 21.28-32
rescued Lot	14	Gen 14.13-16	Amorite [OT]	827	Ezek 25.1-7,10
God's covenant with	15	Gen 15.18		143	Num 13.29
name changed from Abram	16	Gen 17.1-22		152	Num 21.13
to Abraham	16	Gen 17.5		176	Deut 4.47
entertained angels	17	Gen 18.1-21		217	Josh 10.5-10
interceded for Sodom	18	Gen 18.22-23		234	Judg 1.34-35
banished Hagar and Ishmael	20	Gen 21.9-21		247	Judg 11.19-23
willing to offer Isaac	21	Gen 22.1-14	Ananias [NT]		
buried Sarah in Machpelah	22	Gen 23	(a) Ananias and Sapphira	153	Acts 5.1-6
married Keturah	25	Gen 25.1	(b) Ananias of Damascus	159	Acts 9.10-17
death and burial	25	Gen 25.8-9		178	Acts 22.12-16
[NT]	5	Mt 3.9	(c) High Priest	178	Acts 23.2
	75	Lk 1.73		180	Acts 24.1
	101	Lk 16.22-30	Andrew [NT]	6	Mt 4.18
	129	Jn 8.33-58		46	Mk 1.16
	191	Rom 4.1-22		65	Mk 13.3
	235	Gal 3.6-29		118	Jn 1.40,44
	282	Heb 11.8-11,17		124	Jn 6.8
	289	Jas 2.21,23		135	Jn 12.22
Absalom [OT]	300	2 Sam 3.3	Angel(s)		
	310	2 Sam 13.21-18.33	(a) messengers and		
Achaia [NT]	172	Acts 18.12,27	agents of God [OT]	18	Gen 19.1,15
	173	Acts 19.21		21	Gen 21.17
	203	Rom 15.26		29	Gen 28.12
	221	1 Cor 16.15		53	Gen 48.16
	222	2 Cor 1.1		154	Num 22.22-35
	228	2 Cor 9.2		354	1 Kgs 19.5-7
	255	1 Thes 1.7-8		416	1 Chr 21.12-30
Adam [OT]	6	Gen 3.20-21		600	Ps 103.20
	6	Gen 4.1,25		915	Zech 1.9-19
	7	Gen 5.1-5		916	Zech 3.1-6
[NT]	192	Rom 5.12-21		916	Zech 4.1-5
	219	1 Cor 15.22,45-49	[NT]	4	Mt 1.20-24
	262	1 Tim 2.13,14		6	Mt 4.11
Agabus [NT]	163	Acts 11.28		20	Mt 13.39,41,49
	176	Acts 21.10		25	Mt 16.27