

THE ART OF LIFE
HOLY BIBLE
a visual celebration



in the beginning . . .

NLT®

The Art of Life

HOLY BIBLE



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS



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A Note to Readers

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

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was

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

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

The Publishers



A full introduction to the NLT can be found at
tyndale.com/nlt/process.
A complete list of the translators can be found at
tyndale.com/nlt/scholars.



Welcome to *The Art of Life* Holy Bible



God is the great artist, the grand designer. He created a world of striking beauty and placed within it complex ecosystems to support life of astounding variety. God filled the world with living things—people, plants, animals—that express his creativity, his loving character, and his desire for community. But God's art isn't woven of fabric, carved in wood, shaped of clay, written on paper, or painted on canvas. It's alive and able to grow, heal, and reproduce. It's art that was intended to express God's inclination toward wholeness and interdependence for all of earth's flourishing life.

God's creativity is especially expressed in humans, who were created in God's very image. We have been made with the desire and ability to create beauty, shape the world around us, and participate in the movement of God's narrative for the world. (Some of this human creativity has been expressed in the creation of this Bible.)

God made us as humans with the ability to participate in writing our own stories, whether for good or for evil. And he created us with the ability to participate—through friendship with our creator and his present Holy Spirit—in writing God's life-giving presence and power into the lives of the people and communities around us. This is something God has planned for our good. God created humans, in part, to oversee the earth's communities and ecosystems and to enable all life to find a pathway to peace and health and wholeness—God's *shalom*.

The art in this Bible—which illustrates many of the people, plants, and animals mentioned in Scripture—reminds us that the Scriptures, though inspired by God, also reflect the stuff of earth. The books of the Bible were written by real people with real families and cultures and homes, in particular places with particular climates, sur-

rounded by particular plants and animals. The art of life in this Bible places the writings of Scripture within the physical realm and historical flow that defines the world of real, physical experience. The Scriptures aren't a book of myths disconnected from life. They remind us not only that God created the world and the life in it, but that he is also present in our lives today, in the life he created to inhabit and enrich our flourishing world, in the daily events and activities in our homes, communities, and nations.

The Creator also inspired the biblical writers to reveal God's truth by using metaphors drawn from the natural world. For example, the apostle John used the grapevine to illustrate how we, like branches, must remain constantly connected to God's Son, the grapevine, if we desire to live the abundant life God wants for us. Various writers used the olive tree to remind us that we, like the olive tree, are to be a fruitful blessing to the people around us. The writers used sheep to remind us of our tendency to wander from the Good Shepherd and our need to remain close to him. They used lions and wolves to illustrate the destructive consequences of misused power and the dangerous presence of evil among us. God "wrote" these and many other living symbols into the fabric of the world he created and inspired his writers of Scripture to connect them to his eternal truth. *The Art of Life Holy Bible* sets out to highlight these connections for you.

Features in This Bible

The Art of Life Holy Bible contains the entire text of the Bible translated into clear, natural English (the New Living Translation). As such, it can be read and studied as any Bible can. However, the extra features in this Bible offer a rich tapestry of artwork illustrating many of the living things mentioned in Scripture—people, plants, and animals—with reflective captions that highlight their significance.

The captions offer practical and scientific information about the people, plants, or animals pictured. In each caption, you will find concrete information about the item, important truths to think about and apply to life, and recommended Bible passages to read that show the item within the flow of Scripture.

People of the Bible

Portraits of important people in the Bible will help you picture them in the real world and reflect on the Scriptural accounts of their lives. These were people who walked this earth, who looked like people we know; perhaps some of them looked a lot like us. The artist sought to capture aspects of each person's physical appearance and character through facial features and expressions. And as we look closely at these people, it gives us an opportunity to learn things about ourselves. In the face of Cain, can you sense your own anger or bitterness? In the eyes of David, can you see something of your pride? In the hopeful eyes of Naaman's servant girl, can you sense a desire in your own heart to help someone in need?

The captions give the meanings of people's names, point to Scripture passages that tell their stories, summarize important events of their lives, and then share lessons we can learn from their lives. Through the lives of God's people from past generations, we can discover who we are as God's children, discover some of our strengths and weaknesses, and catch a vision for our own calling in God's world.

Plants of the Bible

Like a guidebook to Bible plants, this Bible gives detailed artwork and physical descriptions of the plants mentioned in Scripture. The captions provide scientific names and facts about each plant's growth patterns, ecology, and practical uses in Bible times. The captions also explore how the biblical writers used these plants to illustrate God's truth through their mention in stories, as metaphors for teaching and preaching, or in poetry. The presence of these plants in Scripture places their associated biblical events on the hills and in valleys of the ancient Near East, a world we can scientifically explore even today. God has revealed himself to us through events that took place in our world, not just a world of the imagination.

Many of the plants pictured appear numerous times in Scripture. For example, the olive tree and its fruit are mentioned over two hundred times in the Bible. It would be impossible to illustrate and comment on each occurrence, but for the olive tree we have placed illustrations and captions at seven locations, and in each context we have highlighted how the olive tree is used to teach God's truth. These olive captions conclude with page numbers pointing to the related captions, making it easy to explore the rich meaning that arises in the various Scripture contexts.

Animals of the Bible

In the creation account, we are told how God populated the sky, sea, and land with an amazing array of creatures. We have sought to illustrate and describe many of these animals, birds, fish, and insects in the Bible texts where they are mentioned. The captions provide scientific names and facts about the Bible's rich and varied animal life, describe the environments they live in, and show how they play a part in the Bible's story of life.

As with the plants, some animals appear often in Scripture and play a meaningful part in Scripture's teachings. The sheep is one such animal, so there are four illustrations and captions (two in the Old Testament, two in the New Testament) to explore the truths associated with them. Such animals are given multiple captions and pieces of art, and clearly linked together, so you can easily explore the role they play in the Bible's teachings.

Art of Life Panoramas

Through its many accounts and prophecies, poems and songs, the Bible tells one grand story—and it is our story. It is a story that reveals our beginnings in the beautiful garden of God's good creation, where people lived in close friendship with God and his world. But the story takes a dark turn as the man and woman disobey God's instructions and choose their own way, making decisions that lead to a wilderness of conflict, suffering, and death. Thankfully, though we find ourselves still living in this wilderness, God has taken steps to redeem what was lost and reconcile his broken relationship with humanity. He has begun a process through the sacrificial death and resurrection of his Messiah, Jesus, that will ultimately lead to the world's restoration and the return of God's wise and loving rule. Though

the Bible's story is often shaped by the consequences of humanity's fall, it becomes a story of hope for us through God's healing, redeeming, and reconciling work.

Two-page panoramas artistically illustrate each of these four major movements in the Bible's grand story: *Garden of God* pictures the wonder of God's good creation; *Wilderness* pictures the dark, chaotic consequences of the Fall; *Pastures* reveals dimensions of our hope in God's redemption and the community of believers, the church; *River of Life* illustrates God's ultimate work of healing and restoration, a work that we eagerly await. Take time to reflect on these four revealing panoramas, found on pages 2-3, 766-767, 1240-1241, 1402-1403. Captions are placed on the pages where the panoramas appear.

Indexes for People, Plants, Animals, and Panoramas

Indexes are provided at the back to give you quick access to all the artwork and captions related to people, plants, animals, and the panoramas. Use the indexes to find the content most helpful or interesting to you.

Ways to Use This Bible

Begin by paging through the Bible and stopping at illustrations that catch your eye. View the artwork and read the associated captions. If you want to find feature content for a particular plant, animal, or person, go to the indexes at the back to guide you.

And share what you are seeing with others. Sit down with your spouse, children, grandchildren, friends, and neighbors—anyone interested in the wonders of God's creation—and reflect together on the amazing art of God.

- ⇒ Read the Scripture passages associated with each item. Talk about what interests you in each passage.
- ⇒ Look closely at the artwork provided. What details of a person's face stand out? Do the features and expressions catch something of what you see in the Scripture accounts you have read? What do you see in the illustrations of the plants and animals?
- ⇒ Read and discuss the captions and the truths they reveal about the people, plants, or animals. Have



you learned anything new about God's truth? Are there any aspects of that truth that you can apply to your lives? Talk about this together.

Spend some time studying the four Art of Life Panoramas that illustrate for us God's great story of life. Talk together about what this story means for you. Do you appropriately appreciate the wonders of God's creation? Have you come to grips with the painful consequences of humanity's fall? Have you begun to experience the beauty of God's redeeming work in your life? Do you face life with an undying hope that God will someday make all things new? This is the Bible's story—and it's also your story. Talk together about how this story is true for you.

Remember that we all, in varied ways, express our good Creator's work and reflect his image, and that he is in the process of healing and remaking his broken creation, including us. We as creatures made in God's image have been invited to join in God's work in the world. Take some time each day to demonstrate your alliance with the loving God who made us. Take some time each day to join all God's creatures in the praise of our good creator.

Psalm 148

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens!

Praise him from the skies!

² Praise him, all his angels!

Praise him, all the armies of heaven!

³ Praise him, sun and moon!

Praise him, all you twinkling stars!

⁴ Praise him, skies above!

Praise him, vapors high
above the clouds!

⁵ Let every created thing give

praise to the LORD,
for he issued his command, and
they came into being.

⁶ He set them in place

forever and ever.
His decree will never be revoked.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,

you creatures of the ocean depths,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and clouds,*

wind and weather that obey him,

⁹ mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars,

¹⁰ wild animals and all livestock,

small scurrying animals and birds,

¹¹ kings of the earth and all people,

rulers and judges of the earth,

¹² young men and young women,

old men and children.

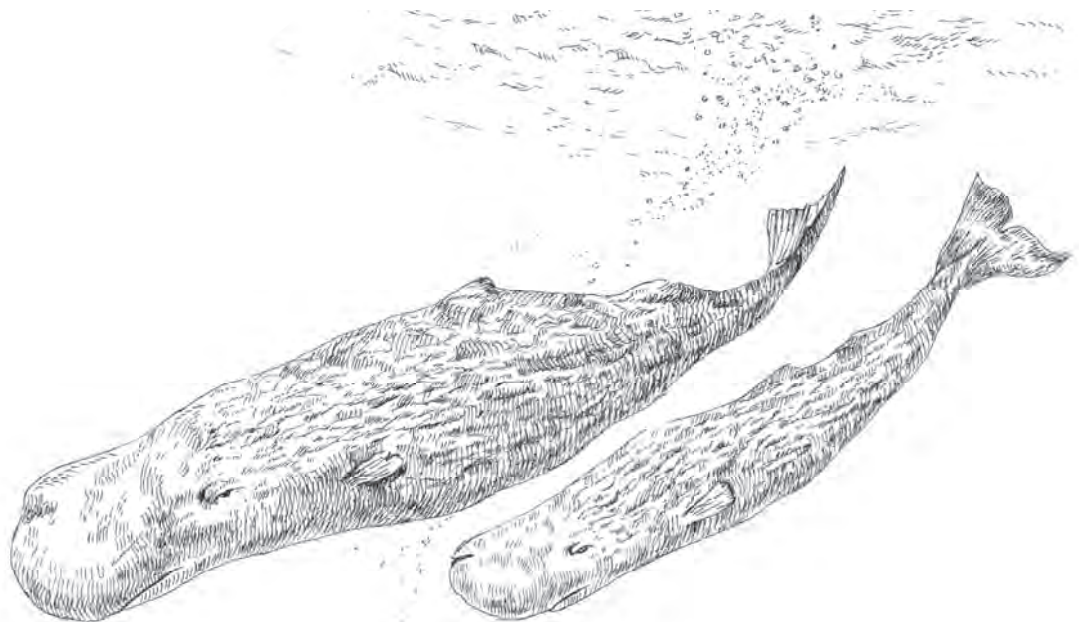
¹³ Let them all praise the name of the LORD.

For his name is very great;
his glory towers over the
earth and heaven!

¹⁴ He has made his people strong,

honoring his faithful ones—
the people of Israel who
are close to him.

Praise the LORD!



The
Old Testament



Garden of God

Key Passage: "Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!" (Genesis 1:31).

The Garden of God was planted by God himself, the perfect place for the first humans to live and work. Life in the Garden was life as God intended it to be. His garden satisfied all human needs abundantly, and God's goodness was reflected in the goodness of his creation. The lush and fruitful natural environment was nonviolent and nurturing, as safe and innocent as its inhabitants and human caretakers. Adam and Eve lived in complete harmony with each other and with nature, including all plants and animals. And more importantly, they had a special, open relationship with God.

The Garden of God also provided access to the tree of life, symbolic of eternal life and immortality. Unhindered and unmediated access to God, as it was experienced in the Garden, was a life without suffering and death. Life in the Garden was characterized by health and wholeness, unbroken by sin and its deadly consequences.







Genesis



The Account of Creation

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

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

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

⁶Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space "sky."

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

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

¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

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

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs

to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

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

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

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

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

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

1:1 Or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . . 1:26a Or man; Hebrew reads adam. 1:26b As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads all the earth.

Apricot

Prunus armeniaca

Read Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7, especially 2:16-17.

We cannot identify with certainty the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and it is probably not among the fruit trees we know today. (This is also true of the tree of life mentioned in 3:22-24.) But people love to speculate and have traditionally identified the forbidden fruit with the apple. Historians have more recently questioned the presence of apples in the ancient Middle East, and apricots have been given as another possibility.

Apricots grow on a tree from the rose family, and the most common cultivated varieties possibly descended from the Armenian plum. The tree can grow up to forty feet tall and bears white or light pink flowers in early spring before developing its leaves. The apricot fruit is a velvety two to three-inch fruit with firm, yellow flesh that covers a stony seed.

Whatever the identity of these special trees and their fruits, God shows us through this Genesis account that his plan all along was for humanity to have eternal life, and that this life on earth was to be lived in communion with God. Even though access to the tree of life in Eden was lost because of sin, God has since been at work to restore eternal life to humanity through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus.

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

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

²⁹ Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰ And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life." And that is what happened.

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

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

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

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

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶ Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹ The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced

delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

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

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

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

²³ "At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

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

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

1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. **2:2** Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. **2:6** Or *mist*. **2:19** Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. **2:21** Or *took a part of the man's side*.



Serpent

Daboia palaestinae

Read Genesis 3:1-24.

Approximately forty snake species are native to Palestine, many from the viper and cobra families. The snakes in this region range in size from six inches to around six feet. A number of different words for snakes are used in the Bible, though it is difficult to identify specific species by these terms. In fact, some of the terms simply refer generally to *snake*, including the most frequent term, *nahash*. While many snakes native to the Middle East are not venomous, most people in antiquity likely assumed that they were. That notion, along with snakes' penchant to lurk inconspicuously, make it unsurprising that snakes became symbolic of cunning, deception, and danger.

Here in Genesis 3, a serpent becomes the vessel through which sin enters the world (the Fall). This serpent, later identified in the biblical narrative as Satan, the great deceiver himself, has the ability to speak and convinces Adam and Eve to disobey God. The serpent's punishment from God for its role in the Fall is that it would now be forced to crawl on its belly. There is a hint in this passage of the ultimate defeat of Satan, described as a blow to the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

See more about specific serpents (cobra and viper) on pages 663 and 726.

The Man and Woman Sin

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

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about

in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike* your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

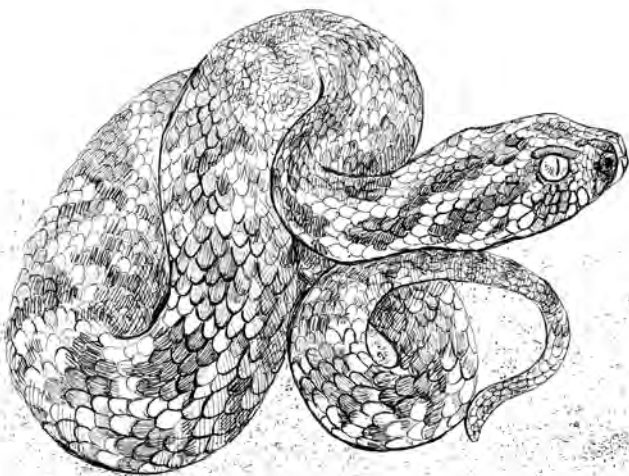
"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.*"

¹⁷And to the man he said,

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

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

3:8 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. **3:15** Or *bruise*; also in 3:15b. **3:16** Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.*





Eve

khawwah – living, enlivening

Read Genesis 3:1-21.

Eve was the first woman and the second human on earth. Like Adam, she was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and was a helper and companion for Adam (see page 1258). The Hebrew term for *helper* does not in itself convey subordination, since this term is also frequently used to describe God. Rather Eve was created to perfectly complement Adam—he was incomplete without her. Until Eve was created from Adam, there was still something “not good” (2:18) in God’s magnificent creation (1:31). Eve was Satan’s first target, and he deceptively suggested rebelling against God and the created order established by God’s word. Eve succumbed to the serpent’s temptation and took upon herself the role of determining good and evil, and Adam joined her in this, effectively including all humanity.

Despite being exiled from the garden and suffering the curse of mortality, Eve maintained her role as life-giver through childbirth: “She would be the mother of all who live” (3:20). However, this life-giving role is not limited to the physical realm, as the curse upon the serpent included a promise—the first glimpse of the gospel in the Bible—that the offspring of Eve would strike the head of the serpent, representing evil and sin. Outside the garden, Eve gave birth to Cain, Abel, Seth, and “other sons and daughters” (5:4).

Eve’s story is told in Genesis 2–4; she is also mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13–14.

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

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

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

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



Fig

Ficus carica

Read Genesis 3:1-19, especially 3:7.

The fig tree is abundant in the Middle East Bible lands and is mentioned often in Scripture. Fig trees can live up to 200 years and are often planted with olive trees. The distinctive fig leaves are about the size of a person's hand, with three "fingers" and a velvety undersurface of paler green. The fig "fruit" is actually a hollow fleshy pouch that hides numerous tiny flowers. The flowers later produce the tiny true fruits and seeds. The fig fruits appear in March, but the leaves don't appear for another four to six weeks, making it the last tree to produce leaves in Israel's spring (see Mark 13:28-29).

Here, Adam and Eve felt ashamed after they had sinned and used fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Later God provided clothing for them, using the skins of sacrificed animals to cover them. Sin always comes with a cost, but God desires to redeem us.

See more about the fig on pages 674, 870, 1360, and 1388.

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced* a man!" 2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

6 "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? 7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

8 One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields."* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

9 Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

10 But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! 11 Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. 12 No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

13 Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment* is too great for me to bear! 14 You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!"

15 The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. 16 So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

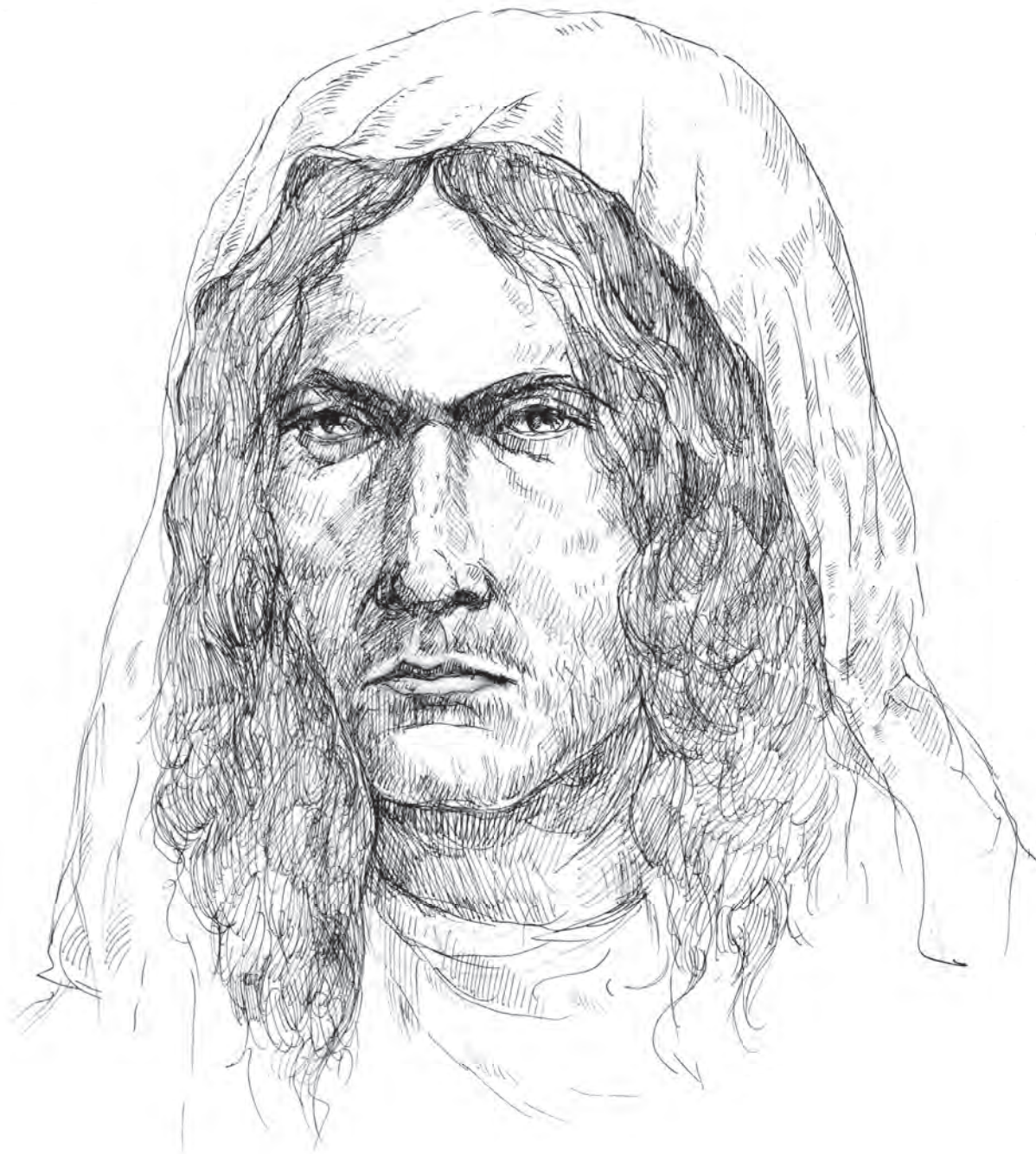
The Descendants of Cain

17 Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. 18 Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

19 Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. 21 His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. 22 Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. 23 One day Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.

3:20 *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." 3:22 *Or the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 4:1a *Or the man*; also in 4:25. 4:1b *Or I have acquired*. *Cain* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "produce" or "acquire." 4:8 *As* in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks "Let's go out into the fields." 4:13 *Or My sin*. 4:16 *Nod* means "wandering." 4:18 *Or the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse.



Cain

qayin – produce; acquire

Read Genesis 4:1-17.

Cain was Adam and Eve's first son, the first child born on earth. Eve links his name to the fact that she "produced a man" (Genesis 4:1). Cain went on to work in agriculture, while his brother Abel became a shepherd. The tragic event that changed Cain's life was murdering his brother—the firstborn human kills the second. When God rejected his offering of "some of his crops" but accepted Abel's offering of "the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock" (4:3-4), Cain became very angry. God tried to guide Cain in managing his sinful anger and envy, but Cain refused to listen and instead killed his brother in a field.

When God confronted Cain with his sin, he responded as his father and mother had in the same situation: He refused to confess his sin. God then condemned Cain to be a restless wanderer but protected him with a mark, so that no one would kill him as he went from place to place. Cain became the ancestor of nomads, the earliest musicians, and metal workers.

Cain's story is told in Genesis 4:1-17; he is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11.



Psalms



Book One (Psalms 1–41)

- 1** Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
- 2** But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.
- 3** They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.
- 4** But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.
- 5** They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly.
- 6** For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

- 2** Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
- 2** The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one.
- 3** “Let us break their chains,” they cry, “and free ourselves from slavery to God.”
- 4** But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.
- 5** Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury.
- 6** For the Lord declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem,* on my holy mountain.”

- 7** The king proclaims the LORD’s decree: “The LORD said to me, ‘You are my son.* Today I have become your Father.’”
- 8** Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.
- 9** You will break* them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.”
- 10** Now then, you kings, act wisely! Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
- 11** Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- 12** Submit to God’s royal son,* or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities— for his anger flares up in an instant. But what joy for all who take refuge in him!

3 A psalm of David, regarding the time David fled from his son Absalom.

- 1** O LORD, I have so many enemies; so many are against me.
- 2** So many are saying, “God will never rescue him!”
- 3** But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.
- 4** I cried out to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy mountain.

*Interlude**

Interlude

2:6 Hebrew on Zion. **2:7a** Or Son; also in 2:12. **2:7b** Or Today I reveal you as my son. **2:9** Greek version reads rule. Compare Rev 2:27. **2:12** The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. **3:2** Hebrew Selah. The meaning of this word is uncertain, though it is probably a musical or literary term. It is rendered *Interlude* throughout the Psalms.



Pine

Pinus halepensis

Read Psalm 1:1–6, especially 1:3. The Aleppo pine is native to the Mediterranean region and was one of the coniferous trees used for building ships and other structures. There is debate about the Hebrew words that point to the pine tree, though the modern Hebrew word ‘oren is likely one of them (see Isaiah 44:14). The Aleppo pine is a fast-growing conifer that grows to a height of between fifty and eighty feet. Today in Israel it is mostly found in planted forests. The Aleppo pine is a popular ornamental tree, but it is also used as a source of timber.

The psalmist compares the godly person to a productive evergreen tree growing in an optimal location. Though the species is not identified, in this picture the tree is well-protected and cared for by its creator. And as a result, it is a rich resource for everyone nearby, providing shelter, timber, firewood, and fruit. What a beautiful picture of the rich blessings that come through those who trust and obey God.

See more about pine trees on pages 812 and 945.

- 5 I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the LORD was watching over me.
- 6 I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.
- 7 Arise, O LORD!
Rescue me, my God!
Slap all my enemies in the face!
Shatter the teeth of the wicked!
- 8 Victory comes from you, O LORD.
May you bless your people.

4 *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.*

- 1 Answer me when I call to you,
O God who declares me innocent.
Free me from my troubles.
Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long will you people ruin
my reputation?
How long will you make
groundless accusations?
How long will you continue your lies? *Interlude*
- 3 You can be sure of this:
The LORD set apart the godly
for himself.
The LORD will answer when I call to him.
- 4 Don't sin by letting anger control you.
Think about it overnight and
remain silent. *Interlude*
- 5 Offer sacrifices in the right spirit,
and trust the LORD.
- 6 Many people say, "Who will show
us better times?"
Let your face smile on us, LORD.
- 7 You have given me greater joy
than those who have abundant
harvests of grain and new wine.
- 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe.

5 *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by the flute.*

- 1 O LORD, hear me as I pray;
pay attention to my groaning.
- 2 Listen to my cry for help, my King
and my God,
for I pray to no one but you.
- 3 Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD.
Each morning I bring my requests
to you and wait expectantly.
- 4 O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness;
you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.
- 5 Therefore, the proud may not
stand in your presence,
for you hate all who do evil.
- 6 You will destroy those who tell lies.
The LORD detests murderers and deceivers.
- 7 Because of your unfailing love, I
can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with
deepest awe.
- 8 Lead me in the right path, O LORD,
or my enemies will conquer me.
Make your way plain for me to follow.
- 9 My enemies cannot speak a truthful word.
Their deepest desire is to destroy others.
Their talk is foul, like the stench
from an open grave.
Their tongues are filled with flattery.*
- 10 O God, declare them guilty.
Let them be caught in their own traps.
Drive them away because of their many sins,
for they have rebelled against you.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them sing joyful praises forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that all who love your name
may be filled with joy.
- 12 For you bless the godly, O LORD;
you surround them with your
shield of love.

6 *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.**

- ¹ O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your rage.
- ² Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.
Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
- ³ I am sick at heart.
How long, O LORD, until you restore me?
- ⁴ Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
Save me because of your unfailing love.
- ⁵ For the dead do not remember you.
Who can praise you from the grave?*
- ⁶ I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping,
drenching it with my tears.
- ⁷ My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because
of all my enemies.
- ⁸ Go away, all you who do evil,
for the LORD has heard my weeping.
- ⁹ The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD will answer my prayer.
- ¹⁰ May all my enemies be disgraced and terrified.
May they suddenly turn back in shame.

7 *A psalm* of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin.*

- ¹ I come to you for protection, O LORD my God.
Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!
- ² If you don't, they will maul me like a lion,
tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me.
- ³ O LORD my God, if I have done wrong
or am guilty of injustice,
- ⁴ if I have betrayed a friend
or plundered my enemy without cause,
- ⁵ then let my enemies capture me.
Let them trample me into the ground
and drag my honor in the dust.

Interlude

- ⁶ Arise, O LORD, in anger!
Stand up against the fury of my enemies!

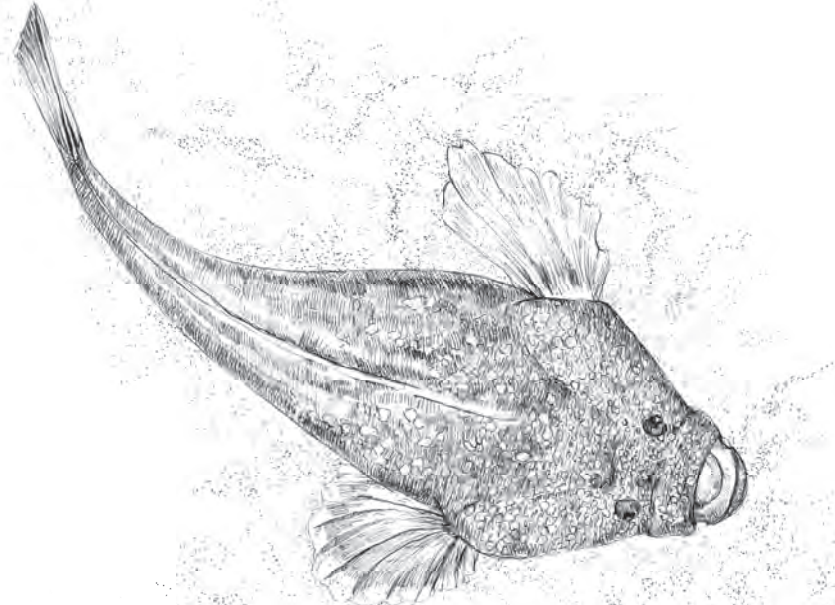
- Wake up, my God, and bring justice!
- ⁷ Gather the nations before you.
Rule over them from on high.
- ⁸ The LORD judges the nations.
Declare me righteous, O LORD,
for I am innocent, O Most High!
- ⁹ End the evil of those who are wicked,
and defend the righteous.
For you look deep within the mind and heart,
O righteous God.
- ¹⁰ God is my shield,
saving those whose hearts are true and right.
- ¹¹ God is an honest judge.
He is angry with the wicked every day.
- ¹² If a person does not repent,
God* will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.
- ¹³ He will prepare his deadly weapons
and shoot his flaming arrows.
- ¹⁴ The wicked conceive evil;
they are pregnant with trouble
and give birth to lies.
- ¹⁵ They dig a deep pit to trap others,
then fall into it themselves.
- ¹⁶ The trouble they make for others
backfires on them.
The violence they plan falls on their own heads.
- ¹⁷ I will thank the LORD because he is just;
I will sing praise to the name of
the LORD Most High.

8 *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.**

- ¹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic
name fills the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.

5:9 Greek version reads *with lies*. Compare Rom 3:13. **6:title** Hebrew *with stringed instruments; according to the sheminith*. **6:5** Hebrew *from Sheol?*
7:title Hebrew *A shiggaion*, probably indicating a musical setting for the psalm.
7:12 Hebrew *he*. **8:title** Hebrew *according to the gittith*.

- ² You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,*
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.
- ³ When I look at the night sky and see
the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
- ⁴ what are mere mortals that you
should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?*
- ⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower than God*
and crowned them* with glory and honor.
- ⁶ You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
- ⁷ the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
- ⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
- ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic
name fills the earth!



⁹ *For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Death of the Son."*

- ¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvelous
things you have done.
- ² I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.
- ³ My enemies retreated;
they staggered and died when you appeared.
- ⁴ For you have judged in my favor;
from your throne you have
judged with fairness.
- ⁵ You have rebuked the nations and
destroyed the wicked;
you have erased their names forever.
- ⁶ The enemy is finished, in endless ruins;
the cities you uprooted are now forgotten.
- ⁷ But the LORD reigns forever,
executing judgment from his throne.
- ⁸ He will judge the world with justice
and rule the nations with fairness.
- ⁹ The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble.
- ¹⁰ Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, O LORD, do not abandon
those who search for you.
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD who reigns in Jerusalem.*
Tell the world about his unforgettable deeds.
- ¹² For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless.
He does not ignore the cries of those who suffer.
- ¹³ LORD, have mercy on me.
See how my enemies torment me.
Snatch me back from the jaws of death.
- ¹⁴ Save me so I can praise you publicly
at Jerusalem's gates,
so I can rejoice that you have rescued me.
- ¹⁵ The nations have fallen into the
pit they dug for others.
Their own feet have been caught
in the trap they set.

The
New Testament





Matthew



The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham*:

- 2** Abraham was the father of Isaac.
Isaac was the father of Jacob.
Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
- 3** Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).
Perez was the father of Hezron.
Hezron was the father of Ram.*
- 4** Ram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- 5** Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.
- 6** Jesse was the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
- 7** Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asa.*
- 8** Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.*
Jehoram was the father* of Uzziah.
- 9** Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
- 10** Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.
Manasseh was the father of Amon.*
Amon was the father of Josiah.
- 11** Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin* and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
- 12** After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
- 13** Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.

Abiud was the father of Eliakim.

Eliakim was the father of Azor.

14 Azor was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Akim.

Akim was the father of Eliud.

15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar.

Eleazar was the father of Matthan.

Matthan was the father of Jacob.

16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

17All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

19Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement* quietly.

20As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. **21**And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,* for he will save his people from their sins."

22All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*. **1:3** Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9-10. **1:7** Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10. **1:8a** Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram; also in 1:8b. See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note at 1 Chr 3:11. **1:8b** Or *ancestor*; also in 1:11. **1:10** Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon; also in 1:10b. See 1 Chr 3:14. **1:11** Greek *Jeconiah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16. **1:19** Greek *to divorce her*. **1:21** *Jesus* means "The Lord saves."



²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,*
which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Visitors from the East

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,* and we have come to worship him.”

³King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities* of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for
my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

⁹After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”*

¹⁶Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance. ¹⁷Herod’s brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead.”*

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰“Get up!” the angel said. “Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.”

²¹So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²²But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. ²³So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ²“Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”* ³The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

“He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming!
Clear the road for him!’”*

⁴John’s clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁵People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. ⁶And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,* he denounced them. “You brood of snakes!” he exclaimed. “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? ⁸Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. ⁹Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. ¹⁰Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize with* water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* ¹²He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”

¹⁵But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.*” So John agreed to baptize him.

1:23 Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10 (Greek version). **2:1** Or *royal astrologers*; Greek reads *magi*; also in 2:7, 16. **2:2** Or *star in the east*. **2:6a** Greek *the rulers*. **2:6b** Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2. **2:15** Hos 11:1. **2:18** Jer 31:15. **3:2** Or *has come, or is coming soon*. **3:3** Isa 40:3 (Greek version). **3:7** Or *coming to be baptized*. **3:11a** Or *in*. **3:11b** Or *in the Holy Spirit and in fire*. **3:15** Or *for we must fulfill all righteousness*.

Joseph (Mary’s Husband)

iōsēph – from Hebrew *yoseph*: may he increase

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

Joseph was the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. He was thus probably presumed by most to be Jesus’ father. He was a descendant of Judah and in the line of David, but he did not live in Judea. Rather, he lived in Nazareth in Galilee and worked there as a carpenter, a profession he apparently passed on to Jesus (Mark 6:3). Joseph is described as a righteous man, and his actions of loyalty toward Mary and obedience to God’s word paint the picture of a humble and godly man. He is not mentioned after the account of the Passover celebration that took place when Jesus was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-52). His absence in the rest of the narrative (for example, at the wedding at Cana) could indicate that he died before Jesus began his public ministry. He and Mary had four sons together—James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon—and more than one daughter (Mark 6:3). At least two of the sons—James (see page 1358) and Jude (see page 1381)—came to believe that Jesus, their half brother, was the Messiah.

Joseph’s story is told in Matthew 1:16-2:23; Luke 1:26-2:52.



Wise Men from the East

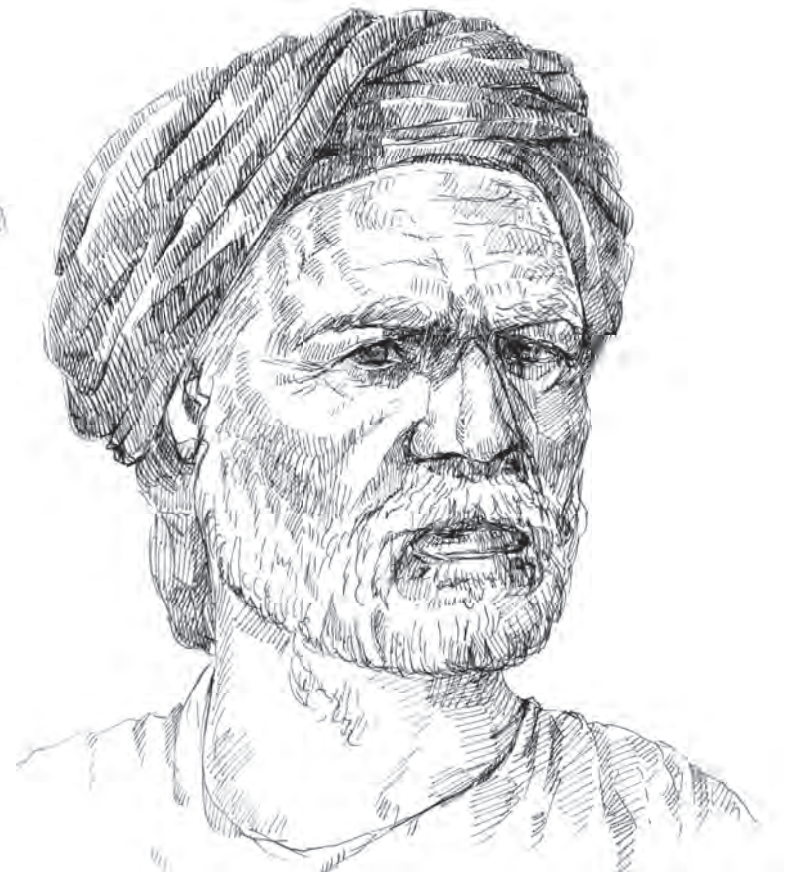
Read Matthew 2:1-12.

These mysterious figures appear only in Matthew's narrative, and there is very little information about them. The word Matthew uses to identify them is *magi*, probably a reference to a class of priests and astrologers who served in the court of an eastern ruler, though it is impossible to know precisely where they came from. The mention of three gifts has led to the assumption that three wise men were present, and some traditions posit that they were kings, but this is unlikely. We do know they came to find Jesus, whom they understood to be the king of the Jews. And within Matthew's narrative, the visit of these

foreigners serves to broaden the scope and universal significance of Jesus' birth. He came into the world in a humble place and was visited by lowly shepherds as well as these presumably wealthy, influential wise men.

On the church calendar, the coming of the wise men (Epiphany) is celebrated on the twelfth day after Christmas. Exactly when the wise men arrived in relation to Jesus' birth will never be known for certain. Regardless, their arrival does affirm the importance of Jesus' birth and helps demonstrate that it is an event with worldwide significance.

The wise men's story is told in [Matthew 2:1-18](#).



¹⁶After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened* and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil* came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes
from the mouth of God.'^{**}

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your
foot on a stone.'^{**}

⁷Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'^{**}

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹"I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

¹⁰"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.'^{**}

¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.



3:16 Some manuscripts read *opened to him*. **4:3** Greek *the tempter*. **4:4** Deut 8:3. **4:6** Ps 91:11-12. **4:7** Deut 6:16. **4:10** Deut 6:13.

Herod the Great

hērōdēs ~ son of a hero

Read Matthew 2:1-20.

Herod the Great was born around 73 BC. He became the first major vassal-king in Israel under the Romans. Though Herod was considered king of the Jews, he was not of Jewish descent. Rather, he was Idumean; his father was an Edomite, and his mother was the daughter of a Nabataean nobleman. He was politically savvy, and he understood that honoring the Jewish laws outwardly would help him be accepted by the people he ruled. His close Roman connections and his loyalty earned him far more autonomy than most vassal-kings in the Roman Empire. He controlled Jerusalem from 37 BC until his death at the age of seventy in 4 BC. One of his grand achievements was a vast expansion and beautification of the Temple in Jerusalem. (The western retaining wall of this structure, now known as the Wailing Wall, still stands today.) In spite of his building projects, the Jews disliked him intensely. Herod was notoriously brutal, executing even members of his own family—a family which was very large as he had ten wives. He had his oldest surviving son executed five days before his own death. It is not surprising that about a year earlier he had ordered without hesitation the massacre of all boys in Bethlehem two years of age and younger after learning from the wise men that a rival king had been born.

Herod's story is told in Matthew 2:1-20; he is also mentioned in Luke 1:5.

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ¹³He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the
Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,
¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.
And for those who lived in the land
where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined."*

¹⁷From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*"

The First Disciples

¹⁸One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰And they left their nets at once and followed him.

²¹A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Crowds Follow Jesus

²³Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ²⁴News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns,* Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ²and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

- ³ "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,*
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
⁴ God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
⁵ God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.
⁶ God blesses those who hunger
and thirst for justice,*
for they will be satisfied.
⁷ God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.
⁹ God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.
¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted
for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hill-top that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Teaching about Anger

²¹“You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’* ²²But I say, if you are even angry with someone,* you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot,* you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone,* you are in danger of the fires of hell.*

²³“So if you are presenting a sacrifice* at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

²⁵“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’* ²⁸But I say, anyone who even



4:15-16 Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version). **4:17** Or *has come, or is coming soon*.
4:25 Greek *Decapolis*. **5:3** Greek *poor in spirit*. **5:6** Or *for righteousness*.
5:21 Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17. **5:22a** Some manuscripts add *without cause*.
5:22b Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, ‘Raca.’* **5:22c** Greek *if you say, ‘You fool.’* **5:22d** Greek *Gehenna*; also in 5:29, 30. **5:23** Greek *gift*; also in 5:24. **5:26** Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans].
5:27 Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18.

looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹So if your eye—even your good eye*—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your hand—even your stronger hand*—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

³¹“You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’* ³²But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

³³“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’* ³⁴But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

³⁸“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’* ³⁹But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,* carry it two miles. ⁴²Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’* and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say, love your enemies!* Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵In that way,

you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends,* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

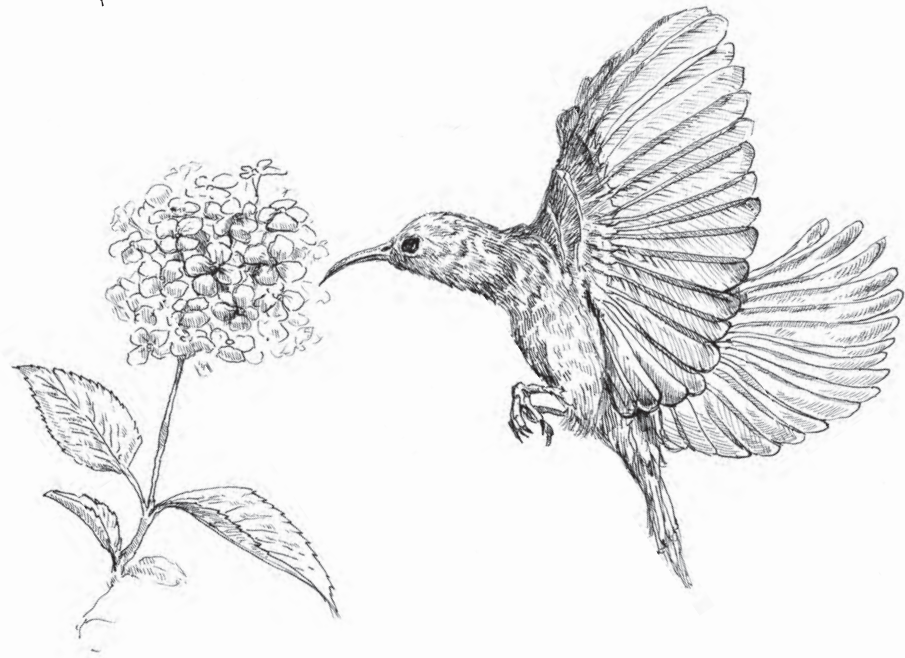
6 ¹“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ²When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹Pray like this:

- Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
 May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,*
¹² and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation,*
 but rescue us from the evil one.*



¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷But when you fast, comb your hair* and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²²“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole

body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

²⁵“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

5:29 Greek *your right eye*. **5:30** Greek *your right hand*. **5:31** Deut 24:1. **5:33** Num 30:2. **5:38** Greek *the law that says: ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21. **5:41** Greek *million* [4,854 feet or 1,478 meters]. **5:43** Lev 19:18. **5:44** Some manuscripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you*. Compare Luke 6:27–28. **5:47** Greek *your brothers*. **6:11** Or *Give us today our food for the day; or Give us today our food for tomorrow*. **6:13a** Or *And keep us from being tested*. **6:13b** Or *from evil*. Some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*. **6:17** Greek *anoint your head*.

Palestine Sunbird

Cinnyris osea

Read *Matthew 6:19–34*, especially *6:26*.

The Greek word translated “birds” in Matthew 6:26 is generic, indicating no particular species. There are several hundred bird species known in Israel. One example of a species native to the region is the Palestine sunbird. Like other sunbirds, this species is a small songbird characterized by the male’s brightly-colored plumage and the down-curved beak of both genders. The Palestine sunbird is approximately three to four inches long and feeds primarily on nectar.

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is encouraging his listeners not to worry. To support his point, he uses the example of birds, which do not perform any agricultural work but nonetheless are supplied with food by God. If God provides even for birds—often thought of as small and insignificant—then he will surely care for his people. Nothing—and no one—is outside of God’s sphere of concern.

Anemone

Anemone coronaria

Read Matthew 6:19-34,
especially 6:28.

The term traditionally translated “lilies of the field” was probably not referring specifically to the lily flower (*Lilium candidum*). This flower is very rare in Israel and would not have been widely known to the local people. The flower most likely associated with “lilies of the field” is the crown anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), one of the most common wildflowers in Israel. The showy flowers of anemones are made up of five or six colorful petals around a dark metallic blue, almost black, center. The petals are usually crimson red but sometimes emerge in purple or white. These flowers appear on top of foot-high, leafless stalks. The perennial crown anemone blooms for only a few weeks in midwinter.

God has left many reminders that he cares deeply about what he has made. In addition to his allusion to God’s care of birds, Jesus points to the “lilies of the field.” Since God cares to dress wildflowers so beautifully, will he not also take care of his people?

See more about anemones on pages 645 and 1001.





John



Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

- I**n the beginning the Word already existed.
 The Word was with God,
 and the Word was God.
- ² He existed in the beginning with God.
- ³ God created everything through him,
 and nothing was created except through him.
- ⁴ The Word gave life to everything
 that was created,*
 and his life brought light to everyone.
- ⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
 and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

⁶God sent a man, John the Baptist,* ⁷to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹²But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴So the Word became human* and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.* And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

¹⁵John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

¹⁶From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.* ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God,* is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

¹⁹This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants* from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" ²⁰He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹"Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?"
 "No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?"*
 "No."

²²"Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

²³John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness,
 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"*

²⁴Then the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

²⁶John told them, "I baptize with* water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. ²⁷Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

²⁸This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ³¹I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."

1:3-4 Or and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything. 1:5 Or and the darkness has not understood it. 1:6 Greek a man named John. 1:14a Greek became flesh. 1:14b Or grace and truth; also in 1:17. 1:16 Or received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law; Greek reads received grace upon grace. 1:18 Some manuscripts read But the one and only Son. 1:19 Greek and Levites. 1:21 Greek Are you the Prophet? See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6. 1:23 Isa 40:3. 1:26 Or in; also in 1:31, 33.



³²Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. ³³I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, “The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” ³⁴I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.*”

The First Disciples

³⁵The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” ³⁷When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

³⁸Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them.

They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹“Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”*)).

⁴²Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”*)).

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Come, follow me.” ⁴⁴Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s hometown.

⁴⁵Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses* and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

⁴⁶“Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied.

⁴⁷As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.”

⁴⁸“How do you know about me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”

⁴⁹Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.*”

The Wedding at Cana

2 The next day* there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no more wine.”

⁴“Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

⁵But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons.* ⁷Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with

water." When the jars had been filled, ⁸he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions.

⁹When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. ¹⁰"A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!"

¹¹This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹²After the wedding he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples.

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹³It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. ¹⁶Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

¹⁷Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me."^{*}

¹⁸But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

¹⁹"All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰"What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?"

²¹But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Jesus and Nicodemus

²³Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him.

²⁴But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew all about people. ²⁵No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person's heart.

3 There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ²After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

³Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,^{*} you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

⁴"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

⁵Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.^{*}

⁶Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.^{*} ⁷So don't be surprised when I say, 'You^{*} must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

⁹"How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? ¹¹I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. ¹²But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man^{*} has come down from heaven. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.^{*}

¹⁶"For this is how God loved the world: He gave^{*} his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him

1:34 Some manuscripts read *the Son of God*. **1:41** *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "anointed one." **1:42** The names *Cephas* (from Aramaic) and *Peter* (from Greek) both mean "rock." **1:45** Greek *Moses in the law*. **1:51** Greek *going up and down on the Son of Man*; see Gen 28:10-17. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. **2:1** Greek *On the third day*; see 1:35, 43. **2:6** Greek *2 or 3 measures* [75 to 113 liters]. **2:17** Or "Concern for God's house will be my undoing." Ps 69:9. **3:3** Or *born from above*; also in 3:7. **3:5** Or *and spirit*. The Greek word for *Spirit* can also be translated *wind*; see 3:8. **3:6** Greek *what is born of the Spirit is spirit*. **3:7** The Greek word for *you* is plural; also in 3:12. **3:13** Some manuscripts add *who lives in heaven*. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. **3:15** Or *everyone who believes will have eternal life in him*. **3:16** Or *For God loved the world so much that he gave*.

Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Read John 1:29-34, especially 1:32.

The English words *dove* and *pigeon* have become virtually interchangeable, used to describe birds of the family Columbidae. At least six species of pigeon or dove are native to Israel, and it is unclear whether the Hebrew terms used attempt to distinguish between species. One species found in Israel is the collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), a medium-sized dove, slightly smaller than the rock pigeon. The collared dove is mostly gray in color and is named for the black half collar around the back of its neck. Doves have long been considered symbolic of love and peace due to their attention to courtship (see Song of Songs 2:14) and the care the parents show to each other and toward their young.

All four Gospels indicate that when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. This visual event, accompanied by a voice from heaven, enabled John to identify Jesus as the Coming One, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This episode led to the dove being used among Christians as a symbol for the Holy Spirit, a natural association for a bird that was already linked to love, peace, and comfort.

See more about doves on page 643. See also the related notes on the pigeon (page 168) and the turtledove (page 850).

Nicodemus

nikodēmos – victor over the people

[Read John 3:1-21.](#)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the governing council of the Jews. John, the only Gospel writer to mention Nicodemus, characterized him as a religious leader of high status and influence. He also seems to have been quite wealthy, given the volume of expensive spices he provided for Jesus' burial (John 19:39). One night during Jesus' ministry, Nicodemus visited him, and their conversation is recorded in detail. Nicodemus called Jesus "Rabbi," a surprising greeting coming from a respected Jewish teacher to a carpenter from a Galilean village. He probably met Jesus at night because, though he was interested in Jesus and his teachings, he wasn't willing to admit this publicly yet. In Jesus' words to Nicodemus, we find a powerful explanation of the gospel. In a bolder move, Nicodemus later spoke up for Jesus when other Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him (John 7:50-52). The subsequent response of hostility from the rest of the council toward his modest request makes it clear that Nicodemus's caution was warranted. After Jesus' death, Nicodemus assisted Joseph of Arimathea, a fellow member of the Sanhedrin, in taking Jesus' body down from the cross and preparing it for burial. These actions imply that Nicodemus may have indeed become a disciple of Jesus.

[Nicodemus's story is told in John 3:1-21; 7:50-52; 19:39-42.](#)



will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”*

John the Baptist Exalts Jesus

²²Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.

²³At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. ²⁴(This was before John was thrown into prison.) ²⁵A debate broke out between John’s disciples and a certain Jew* over ceremonial cleansing. ²⁶So John’s disciples came to him and said, “Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us.”

²⁷John replied, “No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves know how plainly I told you, ‘I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.’ ²⁹It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom’s friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

³¹“He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.* ³²He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴For he is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his

hands. ³⁶And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.”

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

4 Jesus* knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ²(though Jesus himself didn’t baptize them—his disciples did). ³So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

⁴He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.” ⁸He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

3:21 Or *can see God at work in what he is doing*. **3:25** Some manuscripts read *some Jews*. **3:31** Some manuscripts do not include *and is greater than anyone else*. **4:1** Some manuscripts read *The Lord*.



Woman at Jacob’s Well

Read John 4:1-42.

All we know about this unnamed Samaritan woman is found in the story of her encounter with Jesus in John 4. Jesus had left Judea and passed through the mountainous region of Samaria on his way to Galilee. The Samaritans were descendants of mixed marriages between Jews and other peoples. Inter-marriage was a violation of the law, and this practice, along with various other tensions that had arisen between the Jews and Samaritans, led to much animosity. So, the fact that Jesus engaged in conversation with a Samaritan—especially a Samaritan woman—was quite shocking. The woman came to draw water while Jesus was sitting alone at Jacob’s well at Sychar. This happened around noon, the hottest time of the day and an unusual time for going to draw water. This suggests that she may have been a social outcast. But Jesus was sent to everyone (as articulated in his encounter with Nicodemus), regardless of social or economic status, race, or gender. In his conversation with this woman, Jesus supernaturally recounted her personal history and showed that she hadn’t really understood her true needs. Jesus explained that the living water he offered would meet her needs beyond the physical need of water. Jesus then presented himself as the Messiah, and the woman’s testimony to her village led many Samaritans to believe in Jesus.

This woman’s story is told in John 4:1-42.



Spiny Burnet

Sarcopoterium spinosum

Read John 19:1-30, especially 19:2.

The spiny burnet is a thorny plant exhibiting mound-like growth. It is very common in scrubland areas throughout the Middle East. As with many drought-resistant plants, the leaves are small and the flowers inconspicuous. The thorns of the spiny burnet can reach a length of up to four inches. In areas where trees are few and small, the otherwise useless and unproductive thorny plants, such as the spiny burnet, have been an important source of fuel in cooking fires.

The spiny burnet is one of the plants traditionally associated with Jesus' crown of thorns. Its thorny, flexible stems would have been readily available in Jerusalem, and it could easily have been the plant the Roman soldiers used in making the mocking crown. Thorns and thistles are part of the curse God laid on the earth for Adam and Eve's sin (Genesis 3:17-19). It is thus fitting that Jesus wore a crown of thorns while carrying the painful burden of our sin as he conquered, once and for all, the suffering and death associated with the Fall.

See more about the spiny burnet on page 387.

⁴Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked.

⁵"Jesus the Nazarene,"* they replied.

"I AM he,"* Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) ⁶As Jesus said "I AM he," they all drew back and fell to the ground! ⁷Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?"

And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene."

⁸"I told you that I AM he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." ⁹He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me."*

¹⁰Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. ¹¹But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?"

Jesus at the High Priest's House

¹²So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. ¹³First they took him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time.* ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people."

Peter's First Denial

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?"

"No," he said, "I am not."

¹⁸Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰Jesus

replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people* gather. I have not spoken in secret. ²¹Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said."

²²Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?"

²⁴Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Peter's Second and Third Denials

²⁵Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

²⁶But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?"

²⁷Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus' Trial before Pilate

²⁸Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor.* His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

³⁰"We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

³¹"Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. ³²(This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.*)

³³Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.

³⁴Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

³⁶Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

³⁷Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Jesus Sentenced to Death

19 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ²The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. ³"Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.

⁴Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." ⁵Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

⁶When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty."

⁷The Jewish leaders replied, "By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God."

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹He took Jesus back into the headquarters* again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰"Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

¹¹Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

¹²Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.'"* Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

¹³When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people,* "Look, here is your king!"

¹⁵"Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!"

"What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

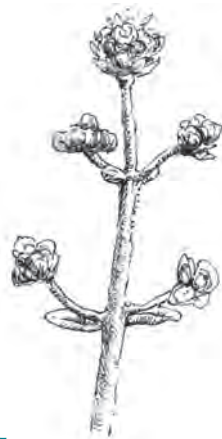
So they took Jesus away. ¹⁷Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, *Golgotha*). ¹⁸There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth,* the King of the Jews." ²⁰The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

²¹Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

²²Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written."

²³When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice* for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing."* So that is what they did.

18:5a Or *Jesus of Nazareth*; also in 18:7. **18:5b** Or "*The 'I AM' is here*"; or "*I am the LORD*"; Greek reads *I am*; also in 18:6, 8. See Exod 3:14. **18:9** See John 6:39 and 17:12. **18:13** Greek *that year*. **18:20** Greek *Jewish people*; also in 18:38. **18:28** Greek *to the Praetorium*; also in 18:33. **18:32** See John 12:32-33. **19:9** Greek *the Praetorium*. **19:12** "Friend of Caesar" is a technical term that refers to an ally of the emperor. **19:14** Greek *Jewish people*; also in 19:20. **19:19** Or *Jesus the Nazarene*. **19:24a** Greek *cast lots*. **19:24b** Ps 22:18.



Hyssop

Origanum syriacum

Read John 19:28-37,
especially 19:29.

Hyssop is known today as Syrian oregano, an aromatic herb native to the Middle East. It grows in stony ground to about twenty inches in height, with small rounded grayish-green leaves. It is widely used as an ingredient in culinary spice mixtures. It has traditionally been harvested in the wild, but recent commercial demand has led to its cultivation. In the Bible, hyssop is mentioned mostly in connection with ceremonial cleansing and worship. It most famously appears in connection with the Passover ritual (Exodus 12:22), ceremonial cleansing from skin diseases (Leviticus 14:4), and symbolically for cleansing in David's psalm of confession (Psalm 51:7; see NLT text note).

Here, a hyssop branch was used to lift up a sponge of sour wine to Jesus while he was on the cross. Since hyssop stalks are relatively short and flexible and likely would not have worked very well for this purpose, it has been argued that John referred to hyssop for symbolic reasons: to show Jesus as the Passover Lamb. Others argue that botanical precision is not in view here and that its mention simply points to the use of some sort of plant, possibly a reed or sorghum stem.

See more about hyssop on pages 394 and 1351.

²⁵Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." ²⁷And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

The Death of Jesus

²⁸Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty."^{*} ²⁹A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. ³³But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. ³⁴One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. ³⁵(This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.^{*}) ³⁶These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken,"^{*} ³⁷and "They will look on the one they pierced."^{*}

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. ³⁹With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds* of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. ⁴¹The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before. ⁴²And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish

Passover* and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

The Resurrection

20 Early on Sunday morning,^{*} while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ²She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—⁹for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

"Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. ¹²She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

¹⁷"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell

them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹That Sunday evening* the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." ²²Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),* was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵They told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

²⁶Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

²⁸"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

Purpose of the Book

³⁰The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may continue to believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.



Thomas

thōmas ~ the twin

Read John 20:19-29.

Thomas, whose name means "the twin" in Aramaic (*Didymos* in Greek), was one of the twelve disciples. He appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke only in the list of disciples, but in John, he is featured in a few stories. Thomas is mostly known for the doubt he expressed after hearing from the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. However, upon seeing and touching Jesus' wounds, his confession (recorded in John 20:28) is perhaps the most profound declaration of Jesus' deity in the Bible: "My Lord and my God!" On an earlier occasion, Thomas had professed a willingness to give up his life alongside Jesus (11:16), though he presumably fled like the other disciples at Jesus' arrest. Little else is known about Thomas, who is mentioned only once more (in another list of the apostles) in the rest of the New Testament (Acts 1:13). According to early Christian tradition, Thomas journeyed east and founded churches as far away as India.

Thomas's story is told in John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-31; 21:2. He is also listed in Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13.

Epilogue: Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

21 Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee.* This is how it happened. ²Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),* Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. ⁵He called out, "Fellows,* have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

19:28 See Pss 22:15; 69:21. **19:35** Some manuscripts read *that you also may believe*. **19:36** Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20. **19:37** Zech 12:10. **19:39** Greek 100 litras [32.7 kilograms]. **19:42** Greek *because of the Jewish day of preparation*. **20:1** Greek *On the first day of the week*. **20:19** Greek *In the evening of that day, the first day of the week*. **20:24** Greek *Thomas, who was called Didymus*. **20:31** Some manuscripts read *that you may believe*. **21:1** Greek *Sea of Tiberias*, another name for the Sea of Galilee. **21:2** Greek *Thomas, who was called Didymus*. **21:5** Greek *Children*.



Aloeswood

Aquilaria malaccensis

Read John 19:28-42, especially 19:39.

The mention of aloes in the Bible is not a reference to the succulent *Aloe vera* plant. Though extracts from *Aloe vera* are widely used for cosmetics and skin care products, the plant is not particularly fragrant. Rather, the terms likely refer to the dark hardwood of *Aquilaria* trees, also called aloeswood or agarwood, which is the source of a highly valued aromatic oil used for incense and perfumes. The tree itself is a tropical evergreen that stands sixty-five feet tall when fully grown. The fact that the extract cannot be tapped or otherwise distilled from the tree without cutting it down has led to illegal logging, which is threatening the survival of the species.

Nicodemus included aloes with myrrh in the perfumed ointment he brought to use for the burial of Jesus. Incidentally, it is likely that this ointment also included crushed *Aloe vera* as the primary bulking material, a common practice in the production of embalming ointments in that day.

See more about aloeswood on page 631.

⁶Then he said, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. ⁸The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards* from shore. ⁹When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰“Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

¹²“Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?*

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

¹⁶Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

¹⁷A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

¹⁸“I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others* will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”

²⁰Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, “Lord, who will betray you?” ²¹Peter asked Jesus, “What about him, Lord?”

²²Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.” ²³So the rumor spread among the community of believers* that this disciple wouldn’t die. But that isn’t what Jesus said at all. He only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

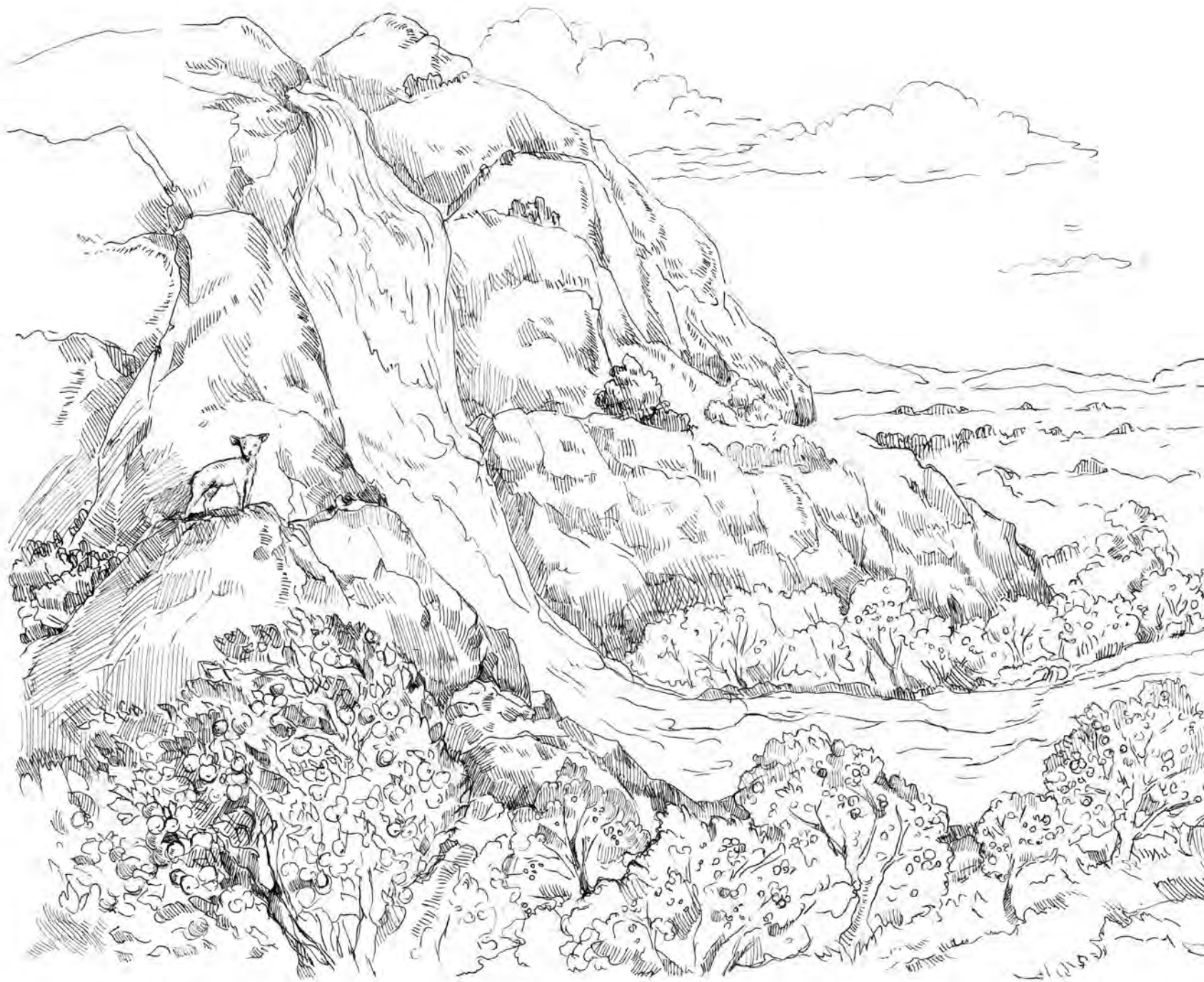
²⁴This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

²⁵Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

21:8 Greek 200 cubits [90 meters]. **21:15** Or more than these others do?

21:18 Some manuscripts read and another one. **21:23** Greek the brothers.







River of Life

Key Passage: "Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5).

In Revelation 21–22, an angel reveals the garden-city, the New Jerusalem. Trees and a river with the water of life feature prominently. The tree of life is the supreme image of the restored Garden of God—symbolic of God's presence and of our well-being and happiness. It marks a place of eternal, unending life. With the death of death, access to the tree of life has been restored, and the nations can be healed by its leaves.

Rivers are symbolic throughout the Bible for cleansing and as a source of life. This image is especially powerful in the arid backdrop of the Bible's world. The river of life in the New Jerusalem reminds us of the original Garden of God, where rivers were identified as essential for life and fertility. Jesus spoke of living water as the source of the eternal life found in him (John 4:10-14). In the restored garden, this living water flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This river of life in the restored Garden of God signifies God's final work of restoration, to be completed at the return of Jesus—our Redeemer, Healer, and King.

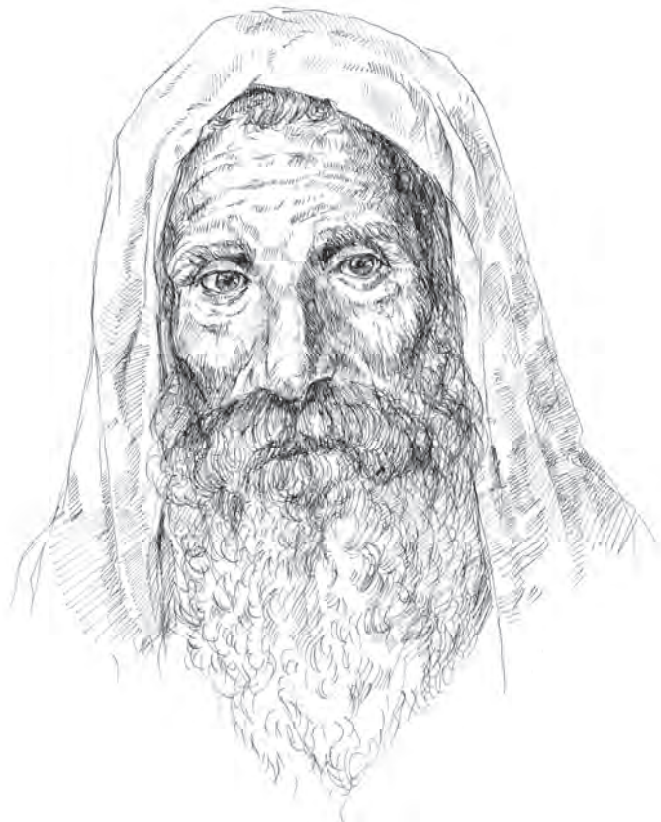
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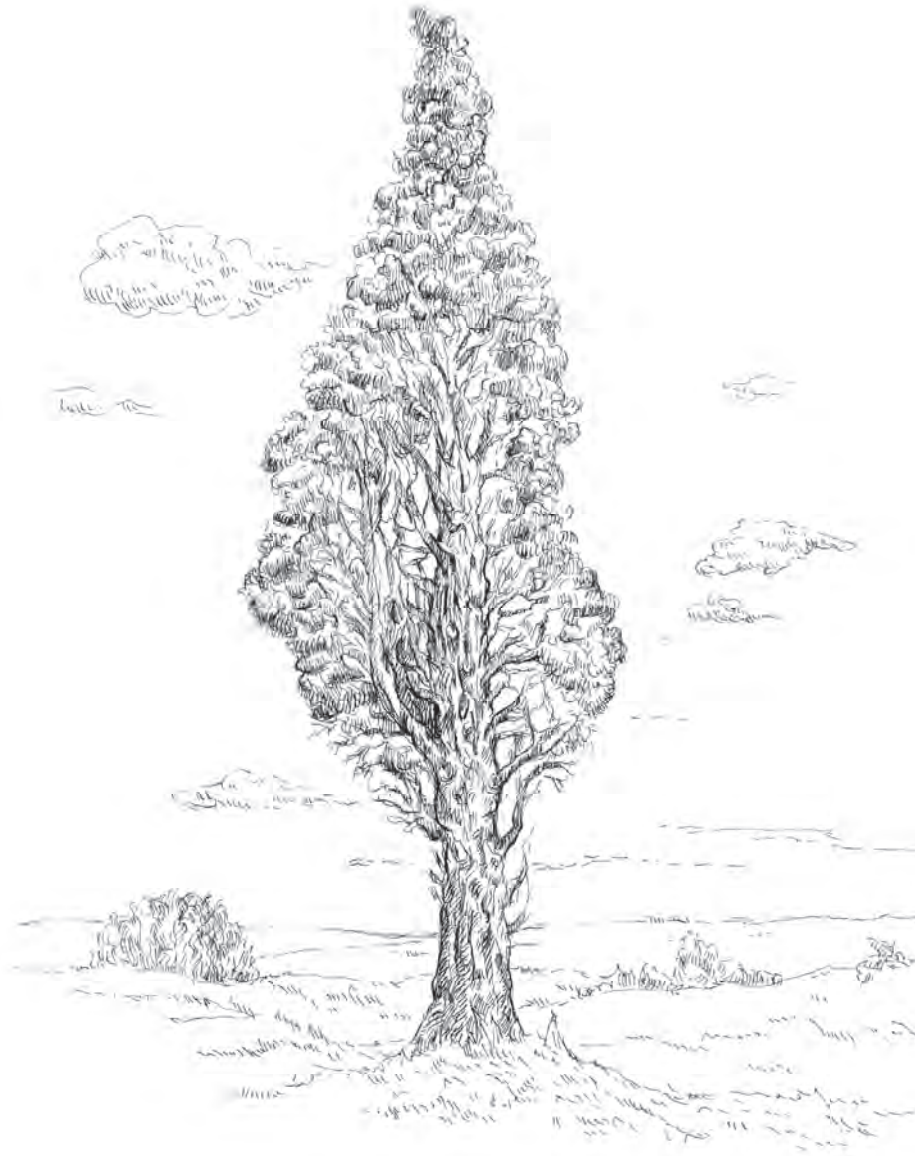
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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

It took Dina Danosa over four years to create the hundreds of pen-style line drawings that illustrate *The Art of Life Holy Bible*.

The team at 2K/DENMARK envisioned an informative, inspirational Bible that could be as inviting as a coffee-table book. Some people who have never read the Bible are interested in plants and animals, so creating a Bible that illustrates them seemed like an excellent way to make the connection. The team researched the many plants and animals named in Scripture to create an illustration list. And since many readers also find Bible people intriguing, they chose a list of important Bible characters to be illustrated. As they searched for an illustrator, they discovered a young Latvian artist named Dina Danosa.

As a child, Dina liked to write and illustrate stories, perhaps the beginnings of her passion for illustration. But her professional work as an illustrator began only about five years ago. Her first bachelor's degree was in advertising design, but toward the end of her studies she began to realize she wasn't very passionate about it. At some point, she realized she only really felt at home while drawing, so she decided to go back to study art formally. First she graduated from Liepaja Art School, Faculty of Painting and Illustration, where she realized she wanted to be a professional illustrator. She then enrolled in the Latvian Academy of Art and, in 2018, obtained a bachelor's degree in graphic arts. She is now working on her master's degree.

In this project Dina used mostly Staedtler 0.1 and 0.5 Rapidograph pens and sketching paper. Dina actually prefers to draw with ink, since it allows her to draw an extremely thin line. Rapidograph pens cannot produce lines quite as fine. However, drawing with ink goes more slowly, while also risking spills. For all her rough sketches, Dina generally uses Rapidograph pens. But for this project, she has stayed with the Rapidographs for their convenience and reliability.

Dina commented that it wasn't easy to maintain a consistent style for over five hundred drawings and a time period of more than four years. She noticed that her line style evolved over time, and that it was somewhat hard to control. To ensure she wouldn't fall out of style, she regularly reviewed her earlier drawings.

This was Dina's first lengthy project and the first time she has worked on art related to the Bible. She was surprised by how many different plants and animals appear. Each time she began a new piece, she was always intrigued to discover where and how it appeared in the text.





A series of horizontal blue lines for writing, starting from the top right of the insect illustration and extending across the width of the page. There are 20 lines in total, providing a template for handwriting practice.