Concordia’s Complete Bible Handbook presents a survey of all sixty-six biblical books and the time between the Testaments. Arranged by the major collections of biblical literature and ordered by biblical books, this resource is easy to access and use, allowing readers to explore and discover many topics and features:

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Supplemented with numerous reader-friendly summaries on major topics of the Bible, this handbook includes the following:

- Articles
- Genealogies
- Overviews
- Bible Dictionary
- Illustrations
- Smart Index
- Charts
- Maps
- Outlines
- Table of Contents in Detail
- Diagrams
- Outlines
- Timelines

With a devotional style that will inspire faith and deep reflection, this handbook focuses on the promises about Christ in the Old Testament and their New Testament fulfillment in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior.

**Dr. Jane L. Fryar** is an author and editor who has written for children and adults for more than thirty years, including the popular *Today’s Light Bible* (1999) and its devotional series.

**Edward A. Engelbrecht** (STM) serves as senior editor for Bible resources at Concordia Publishing House. He is the general editor for *The Lutheran Study Bible* (2009) and a contributing editor for *The Story Bible: 130 Stories of God’s Love*—a 2012 ECPA Christian Book Award Finalist.
CONCORDIA’S COMPLETE

Bible

Handbook

Second Edition

Introductions by Jane L. Fryar

Other contributors include
Carla Fast, Abigail Genig, Deborah Henry,
Judith E. Meyer, Cynthia Schilf, Susan Schulz,
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Edward A. Engelbrecht, General Editor
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What’s the Bible All About?
An Introduction

Each year, more than 275,000 new books are published in the United States. If you wanted to read them all, you’d need to read more than 450 of them every day, all year long. Then you’d need to start all over again on the next year’s publications!

That’s a lot of reading! Many books are worth reading; some, probably not. But one book returns to the top of the best-seller list every year, decade after decade: the Bible. It’s an extraordinary book. It’s changed literally millions of lives. It can change yours. Maybe it already has.

Some people—even some Christians—see the Bible as “God’s Book of Rules.” For them, the stories become moral tales, like Aesop’s fables, and the characters are heroes—or villains. These people respect the Bible, but they don’t really understand it.

Other people—even some Christians—treat the Bible like a book of mysteries that help one uncover higher spiritual truths. They think that by meditation or speculation, they will uncover these higher truths and gain an advantage in life and with God. These people also respect the Bible, and yet they don’t really understand it.

The Bible does contain rules and describe mysterious things, as you will see. But Jesus Himself told us how to interpret the Bible. Read His words carefully:

> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.
> John 5:39 (emphasis added)

When the resurrected Christ met the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the first Easter evening, the three talked about what had happened on the cross and in the now-empty tomb:

> Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
> Luke 24:27 (emphasis added)

Later that evening, Jesus appeared to all the disciples. He told them:

> “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
> Luke 24:44–45 (emphasis added)
From start to finish, Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is about Jesus! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob point us to Jesus! Noah, Samuel, and David point us to Jesus! The tabernacle and the temple point us to Jesus! All the sacrifices, all the wars, all the poems, and even all the genealogies point us to Jesus! Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and all the other human authors of the Holy Scriptures point us to Jesus! He’s the true hero—the only hero—of the Bible.

Unless you realize this and read the Bible looking for your Savior, you will miss the main thing God intends to communicate in His book. You may even come to believe things about God and about His purposes for your life that simply aren’t true! So keep Christ in mind no matter what you’re reading in Holy Scripture. The Bible is all about Jesus and the salvation God made possible for us through Jesus. That story is the one true story on which Christians base their lives!

Who wrote the Bible?

Scripture itself answers this question:

No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

(2 Peter 1:21)

God used human beings to write the Bible. The prophets wrote the books of the Old Testament, and the apostles and evangelists wrote the books of the New Testament. In all, many authors contributed books to this unique library. We say the Bible was “inspired” by God. This means:

■ The Holy Spirit moved the authors to write and guided them as they wrote. Yet He also worked with the authors’ emphases and styles so that the books are true expressions of those authors.

■ The Holy Spirit’s inspiration was not partial, but full and complete. Thus, we often refer to plenary verbal inspiration. By this, we assert that God inspired the complete text of the Bible.

■ We can trust not just the doctrinal content of Scripture, but also the historical and scientific data included in it, understanding that ancient people wrote about these things in different ways than historians or scientists might write about them today.

■ The Bible is inerrant. This means it is accurate, truthful, and free of error.

The Holy Spirit inspired a wonderful book, one on which we can fully rely! That does not mean God dictated the text. Rather, He gave the human authors the freedom to let their personalities shine through. John writes
differently than Moses does. Isaiah’s poetry differs from David’s. In fact, God used the backgrounds, interests, and knowledge of the human authors, incorporating it into the text while still excluding errors and mistakes. For example, Luke was a physician, and his profession influenced some of the details he chose to use as he reported on some of Jesus’ healing miracles.

Divine. Human. The Scripture is uniquely both.

---

**Random Facts about Chapter and Verse**

- There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament and 260 chapters in the New Testament. This makes a total of 1,189 chapters.

- Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the Bible. Psalm 117 is also the shortest chapter of the Bible.

- Psalm 119 is the longest chapter of the Bible.

- There are 23,145 verses in the Old Testament and 7,957 verses in the New Testament. This makes a total of 31,102 verses.

- 1 Chronicles 1:25 (“Eber, Peleg, Reu;”) is the shortest verse in the Hebrew Old Testament.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16 (“παντοτε χαιρετε,” “Rejoice always,”) is the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament.

- John 11:35 (“Jesus wept.”) is the shortest verse in most English translations.

---

**How is the Bible organized?**

The Bible is not really one book, but a library of sixty-six shorter books. Not all of these books are written in the same genre. Some are history, some poetry, some are letters, some prophecy. A few books are *apocalyptic*—a special kind of literature. The word *apocalypse* means “unveiling or revealing.” Parts of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation are written in apocalyptic style. They reveal Christ and the new heavens and new earth His second coming will bring. (See, for example, Revelation 1 and 21.)
The Old Testament includes thirty-nine books. All were written in Hebrew, though a few chapters of Daniel and Ezra were penned in a language called Aramaic. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written in Koine Greek—the Greek of the marketplace during Jesus’ earthly life and the decades that followed.

The Old Testament documents the history and experiences of God’s people before Jesus was born. It points forward to the Messiah, the Savior, God promised to send.

The New Testament focuses on that Savior, documenting the life of Jesus and the history of the Church in the decades that followed His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.

After Malachi wrote the last book of the Old Testament, God gave no further revelation for about four hundred years. God was still at work in and for
His people during this “intertestamental period.” Other historians of that time tell us some of what happened during those years. But Scripture itself is silent between the Book of Malachi and the first of the New Testament writers.

The original text of the Bible did not contain chapters and verses. These were added later to make finding specific sentences and paragraphs easier.

**What’s up with all those translations?**

The authors of the Old Testament wrote primarily in Hebrew; the authors of the New Testament wrote in Greek. If all Christians today would learn Hebrew and Greek, we wouldn’t need translations at all. But even if we could do that, we might want a Bible in our own language anyway. There’s something powerful about reading or hearing God’s Word in our own “mother tongue” or “heart language.” It’s why missionaries around the world
1 The OLD TESTAMENT
Into the Old Testament

What's a “testament”?  

We use this term today in legal documents, as in “last will and testament.” It means “agreement” or “covenant.” The term Old Testament refers to the thirty-nine books of the Bible in which God revealed Himself and His will to His people before the Savior, Jesus Christ, was born. The term New Testament refers to the twenty-seven books of the Bible inspired by God after Jesus came. A third set of books were written during the time between the

---

Adam and Eve  
fall into sin  
The first promise of the Savior  
(the “Protoevangel”)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Flood</th>
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<th>1600 BC</th>
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<td>2166–1800 BC</td>
<td>Noah and the great flood</td>
<td>1800–1450 BC</td>
<td>The patriarchs</td>
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<td>1400–1050 BC</td>
<td>Israel in Egypt and the exodus</td>
<td>circa 1050–930 BC</td>
<td>The conquest of Canaan and the time of the judges</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050–930 BC</td>
<td>The united kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<th>Abraham</th>
<th>Isaac</th>
<th>Jacob</th>
<th>Jacob's twelve sons, including Judah through whose line Jesus descended</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moses, who led God's people out of slavery and wrote the first five books of the Bible (Genesis–Deuteronomy, the “Pentateuch”)</td>
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<td>Joshua: the fall of Jericho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judges: Gideon, Samson, Deborah, Samuel, and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
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<th>King Saul</th>
<th>King David</th>
<th>King Solomon</th>
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Old Testament and the New Testament. They are called “the Apocrypha.” They are good to read and are included in some Bible translations. But they are not the same as the Holy Scriptures.

The Old Testament is sometimes also called “the Hebrew Scriptures” because Christians and Jewish believers both recognize the divine origin and authority of these books.

What history does the Old Testament include?

Here’s a timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1200 BC</th>
<th>800 BC</th>
<th>400 BC</th>
<th>BC AD</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>circa 930–586 BC</strong></td>
<td><strong>722 BC</strong></td>
<td><strong>586 BC</strong></td>
<td><strong>586–circa 520 BC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The divided kingdom</td>
<td>The fall of Samaria</td>
<td>The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple</td>
<td>The exile in Babylon</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>586–400 BC</strong></td>
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<td>Return from exile</td>
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<td><strong>Prophets</strong>:</td>
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<td>The time of Ezra, Nehemiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel (Northern Kingdom)</td>
<td>Judah (Southern Kingdom)</td>
<td>Ezekiel, Daniel</td>
<td>Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt</td>
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<td>Prophets:</td>
<td>Prophets:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prophets:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Jonah</td>
<td>Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Habakkuk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</td>
</tr>
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</table>
How did God reveal Himself in the Old Testament?

The more you read the Bible, the more you will understand how wonderful, majestic, powerful, holy, and magnificent God is. In fact, human beings cannot understand Him fully. We can’t even come close to understanding Him!

Add to that the fact that human sin creates fear in our hearts. Not only can’t we know God, we don’t want to know Him! His holiness and power terrify us.

Still, despite our rebellion and disobedience, God keeps on loving us! He still wants us to belong forever in His family. And so, down through history, He’s taken steps to make that possible. The Old Testament records the many ways He revealed Himself to human beings:

- In the creation, we see God’s wisdom, power, and care. (See Genesis 1; 2; Psalm 19:1–6; 139:13–18.)
- In promising a Savior after Adam and Eve sinned, we see God’s mercy and compassion. (See Genesis 3:15.)
- In choosing Abraham and promising to send the Savior (“Messiah”) through Abraham’s descendants, God shows us His grace, His undeserved love for sinners. (See Genesis 12; 15; 17.)
- In preserving the covenant people through whom He would enact His plan of salvation, God reveals His almighty power and fatherly care. (See especially the Books of Exodus, Joshua, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and Ezra, but all the books of the Old Testament underscore the hand of God at work in the history of His people.)
- God used various names in making Himself known, such as the seven redemptive names found below. God reveals His holiness, majesty, power, goodness, kindness, and grace by His names:
  - YAHWEH—Yireh—The Lord Our Provider (Genesis 22:13–14)
  - YAHWEH—Rophe’—The Lord Our Healer (Exodus 15:26)
  - YAHWEH—Nissi—The Lord Our Banner (Exodus 17:15)
  - YAHWEH—Shalom—The Lord Our Peace (Judges 6:24)
  - YAHWEH—Ro’eh—The Lord Our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)
  - YAHWEH—Tsidkenu—The Lord Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6)
  - YAHWEH—Shammah—The Lord Present with Us (Ezekiel 48:35)
In the Old Testament, God tied words of promise to physical objects (proto-sacraments) to strengthen the faith of His people. God revealed His care, kindness, and His understanding of His children’s needs. (See, for example, the serpent on a pole in Numbers 21:6–9, the ceremony of circumcision in Genesis 17:10–11, and the Passover Seder in Exodus 12.)

In sending the prophets by whom “the Word of the Lord came,” God demonstrated His concern for all humanity and His heart’s desire that sinners turn to Him for life and salvation. That phrase—“the Word of the Lord came”—occurs more than a hundred times in the Old Testament, particularly in the prophetic books. The Word came and came and kept on coming. It comes to us still today, changing hearts and lives.

---

### The Mighty Tetragrammaton

It sounds like something out of a sci-fi novel: the Mighty Tetragrammaton! But actually, the term refers to God’s Old Testament covenant name: the Lord.

Tetra means “four” in Greek. Grammaton refers to “letters,” as in letters of the alphabet. Tetragrammaton, then, refers to a four-letter name that Bible translators render “YHWH,” “Yahweh,” or “Jehovah.” In many Bibles, the tetragrammaton appears as “the LORD” (all capital letters). This is the covenant name God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:14).

In Hebrew, this word comes from a verb. While we often think of this word as meaning “I AM,” it could be translated “He causes to happen” or, more loosely, “the One Who Makes It So.” When we read Exodus 34:4–7 and note all the mercy and goodness of God revealed there, we can see how the name came to imply “The One Who Makes the Good Thing Happen.”

The Yah part of the tetragrammaton forms the first part of the Hebrew name Joshua, the Old Testament version of Jesus. So one could say that Jesus’ name means “the One Who Makes Salvation Happen.”

Look for the tetragrammaton as you read the Old Testament. It will add to the meaningfulness of the text as you remember what God says about Himself in His covenant name!
God’s self-revelation came most fully and perfectly in Jesus Christ, the God-man and Savior of the world:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:1–3 (emphasis added)

How does the Old Testament look forward to Jesus?

The reformer Martin Luther once called the Old Testament “the cradle for the Christ.” We see Jesus throughout, from Genesis to Malachi:

- Jesus was present at the creation, participating fully in it. (See Genesis 1; 2; Proverbs 8:22–32; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–3.)
- Jesus’ work for our salvation is pictured in the Old Testament sacrifices, in the fixtures and arrangement of both the tabernacle and the temple, and even in the way the nation of Israel set up camp in the wilderness after the exodus. (See Exodus; Leviticus; 1 Kings; and 2 Chronicles 3–7.)
- The Lord sometimes appeared in a bodily form to walk across the pages of the Old Testament before the incarnation, or so many Bible scholars think. (See, for example, Joshua 5:13–15.)
- Jesus is the faithful, obedient child of God pictured in the Psalms, the only one who can confidently pray them. But because He has connected us to Himself through faith in His cross and empty tomb, the comfort God gives and the promises He makes to Jesus in the Psalms now belong to us!
- Jesus is the servant of the Lord, the true “Israel” described by Isaiah in chapters 42, 49, 50, and 53. (See also Galatians 6:16.)
- Jesus is pictured in the lives of several Old Testament believers. That picture is cloudy and incomplete, but it is there nonetheless. These people foreshadow His person and work. Abraham, David, and Joshua have all been called “types of Christ.” The Bible itself compares Melchizedek to Jesus (see Genesis 14:18–20; Psalm 110:4; and Hebrews 7:1–17).
2 The Books of MOSES

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Genesis

Into Genesis

*Genesis* means “beginnings.”

**Theme:** What it means to live by faith

**Who wrote Genesis?**

Moses wrote Genesis as well as Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Together, these five books are called “the Pentateuch”—*penta* meaning “five” and the entire word itself meaning, roughly, “five-volume book.” More than thirty times in the Gospels¹ Jesus quotes the Pentateuch and credits Moses as its author. Other New Testament books also refer to Moses as the author of these books (see, for instance, Romans 10:5). Other rabbis and leaders in the Early Church attested to the Pentateuch’s Mosaic authorship.

Genesis closes more than three hundred years before Moses was born. So how did Moses know what to write? God may have revealed it to him directly. Moses may have had records from faithful writers available to him (for example, “the book of the generations of Adam,” Genesis 5:1). Or the Holy Spirit may have used the faithful testimony of His people as they passed the history of the human family down from parents to children, generation after generation. (Keep in mind that people in cultures without written records often memorize—word for word—material that would fill many pages if it were written out. Still today, children in some Islamic cultures succeed in memorizing the entire Qur’an!) Whatever method the Holy Spirit chose to use as He inspired Moses to write, the resulting text is God’s Word for us still today:

¹The “Gospels”—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are the four biographies of our Savior, Jesus Christ, included in the New Testament. See the introductions to the Gospels for more detail.
When was Genesis written? Why?

The Bible doesn’t plainly tell us when. But it seems likely that Moses wrote Genesis (and the other four books of the Pentateuch) after God rescued His people Israel from slavery in Egypt and while Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness (ca. 1446–1406 BC).

If so, Genesis would have provided much encouragement to the nation as they struggled to understand their identity and their place in God’s plan to save the world. They had been slaves in Egypt for nearly four hundred years! Think of what that would have done to the way they saw themselves and the way they saw their God.

And yet, Genesis assured Israel of their God-given destiny:

- They could trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve, the world’s first people and God’s unique creation. In fact, their God had created the universe as a home for them!
- God had preserved their ancestors through the great flood, destroying the scoffers of that day while at the same time rescuing believing Noah and his family—eight people in all.
- They were children of Abraham, the patriarch to whom God spoke, revealing His plan to send the world’s Savior through one of Abraham’s descendants.
- The time of slavery in Egypt had not taken God by surprise; He had, in fact, told Abraham all about his descendants’ enslavement and its duration in an unusual but amazingly exact vision (Genesis 15:12–20).
God’s Family Tree

Adam and EVE

Cain
Abel
Seth
Enosh
Kenan
Mahalalel
Jared
Enoch
Methuselah
Lamech
Noah
Shem
Japheth
Ham

Arphaxad
Shelah
Eber
Peleg
Reu
Serug
Nahor
Terah

Nahor
Haran
Abram (Abraham)
SARAI (SARAH)

MILCAH
ISCAH Lot
Bethuel
Laban
REBEKAH

Isaac
Esau
Jacob
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their family had endured many hardships, but the Lord had delivered them out of every trouble. Just as He had guarded and protected the patriarchs, so He would guard and protect the nation of Israel that had now descended from them.

In the same way, Genesis assures God’s people still today of His unchanging love for us. Despite our sins and failures, He forgives—just as He forgave Adam, Eve, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, Tamar, and the other saints whose lives Genesis records. Just as God protected them, so still He guards, protects, warns, and cherishes us today.

How is Genesis classified?

Genesis is one of the Books of Moses in the Old Testament. Most of it is written as factual narrative and should be interpreted that way. However, it does include text that is obviously poetry; see, for example, the blessings Jacob pronounces on his sons in Genesis 49.

Noah’s ark was shaped like a box or similar container. The word in Genesis for ark is the same word used for Moses’ basket when, as a baby, he floated in the river.

“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.” (Genesis 6:14)

Fascinating Facts about Noah’s Ark

How big was Noah’s ark?

- 300 cubits long × 50 cubits wide × 30 cubits high (Genesis 6:15)

How long is a cubit?

A cubit is the length of a man’s forearm, from fingertips to elbow, which is about 18 inches long. So, if a cubit roughly equals 18 inches, or 1 1/2 feet, Noah’s ark was:

- 450 feet long × 75 feet wide × 45 feet high

That means the deck of Noah’s ark was 33,750 square feet! That’s larger than twelve tennis courts lined up side by side!
Did Noah’s ark look like this?

No! A boat shaped like this would never have survived over a year at sea!

The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.

(Genesis 7:17–19)

Which animals did Noah take on the ark?

Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

(Genesis 7:2–3)

Creatures that lived in the water didn’t need to board the ark.
What are the key divisions of Genesis?

■ Genesis 1–11 The history of our world before the patriarchs. In these chapters, we read of the creation, the fall into sin, the great flood, and the tower of Babel. These chapters provide a quick overview of how our world came to be. They also explain that although in the beginning, God pronounced His creation “very good” (1:31), evil has invaded and is on the rampage. Sin, trouble, and death have marred the universe, and every human being bears some of the responsibility for this.

■ Genesis 12–50 The history of God’s grace in working with sinful human beings to rescue us from our rebellion and the eternal death it brings. These chapters focus on the family of Abraham and how God gave him faith, nurtured that faith, and allowed him to pass that faith down to his children and his children’s children. An especially important note in these chapters is God’s ongoing promise that He would send a Savior through the family of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah.

How does Genesis point to Jesus?

Genesis often points to Jesus! Here are a few examples:

■ God’s first promise to send a Savior\(^2\) is found in Genesis (3:15).

■ The animals God sacrificed to cover Adam and Eve’s sin and shame foreshadow Jesus’ death on Calvary (Genesis 3:21).

■ The altars of sacrifice that dot Genesis point forward to the altar of Christ’s cross, where God Himself would make the one, final, perfect Sacrifice for our sins (e.g., Genesis 8:20; 12:7; 13:18; 35:3).

■ Melchizedek is a “type,” or picture, of Christ, picturing Jesus as both King and Priest, bringing peace. (Compare Genesis 14:17–24 with Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7.)

■ Abraham is a “type” of Christ as he prays for sinful Sodom (Genesis 18:22–33). He foreshadows Jesus, our great High Priest, interceding for us.

■ Sometimes called “The Sacrifice of Isaac,” Genesis 22 foreshadows the Savior’s death for us. God commands that a ram die in Isaac’s place. Thousands of years later, God the Father did what He would not ask Abraham to do—sacrifice His Son in atonement for sin.

\(^2\) This is sometimes called the protoevangel, a word coming from the Greek language and meaning literally “first good news.”
Jesus appears to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:10–17) at a time of great sin and need in Jacob’s life. Compare the text in Genesis with John 1:51. These two texts were the inspiration behind the American spiritual song “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.”

Jesus’ kingly role is foretold in Jacob’s blessing of Judah (Genesis 49:8).

Joseph’s forgiveness of his brothers (Genesis 50:15–21) pictures Jesus’ mercy on us.

What are the key chapters in Genesis?

- **Genesis 1–2** The creation of the universe.
- **Genesis 3** The first sin and the first promise of the Savior.
- **Genesis 6–11** The great flood and the escape God provided Noah.
- **Genesis 12** God calls Abram and brings him to faith.
- **Genesis 17** Circumcision is introduced as a sign of God’s covenant. (This corresponds to the New Testament Sacrament of Baptism; compare Colossians 2:11–15.)
- **Genesis 22** The “sacrifice” of Isaac.
- **Genesis 41** Joseph’s ascent to power in Egypt.
- **Genesis 46** Jacob’s family comes to live in Egypt as guests of Pharaoh during a drought in the Promised Land.

In the Book of Genesis, we learn about Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel (35:10). From his twelve sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi,
7 The NEW TESTAMENT
“He taught in their synagogues. . . . But He said to them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’”
(Luke 4:15, 43)
More than fifteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine described the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Modern writers have worded Augustine’s comment this way: “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed.”

The two biblical testaments complement and explain one another. The New Testament picks up where the Old Testament leaves off. The four-hundred-year gap between Malachi and Matthew changes God’s message not at all. All sixty-six books of the Bible agree: Repent! The kingdom of God is near!

Each of the Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—makes the connection between the Old and New Testaments clear. Take Mark, for example. For Mark, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began in the Old Testament. Mark 1:1–3 shows us the tight connection the holy writer saw:

_The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight’ . . . .”_

Seven centuries before Mark, Isaiah had written about the Messiah and His forerunner, John the Baptist. Then John came, proclaiming Isaiah’s message. Jesus of Nazareth preached the message when John could no longer do so (Mark 1:14–15).

God’s Word to the human race has never changed, and it never will! We are sinners and we face the consequences of our sin, but the Lord is merciful and has provided a Savior from sin and its consequences. As He works in us, we are to turn from sin and live lives of repentance and faith.

Each day we need to hear that message! When the reformer Martin Luther urged Christians to remember their Baptism each day, that’s what he meant. Each day, we recall again the fact that in Christ, God has changed our direction and our destination:

- We used to run _from_ our Father as fast as our feet would carry us. Now we run _to_ Him with our sin, confident of His compassion and pardon.

- We once lived a hopeless, hellish existence—alone, and without a purpose, headed for eternal death. Now we live in the sunshine of God’s smile, looking forward with joy to life with our Savior in heaven when our life on this earth ends.

In Jesus and His cross, we have new life and a new reason to live. That’s the message of the Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. That’s the new life God has revealed to us!
Coins from Bible Times

**The Prutah (PROO-tah) or Mite**

These tiny copper coins were the smallest unit of currency. Archaeologists have found thousands of these little coins, showing that they were extremely common at the time of Jesus. They were used until the fourth century. The mite is referred to in Luke 21:2.

**The Silver Dinar (DEE-nahr) or Denarius**

The silver dinar was another common coin used at the time of Jesus. On one side of the coin was the name of Caesar Tiberius (a Roman ruler), and on the other side was a picture of a female figure. The Good Samaritan gave the innkeeper two denarii to take care of the wounded man he cared for (Luke 10:35). The dinar is also referred to in Luke 20:24.
The Tyrian Shekel (TIR-ee-uhn SHEH-kuhl)

The Tyrian shekel contained about 14.2 grams of silver.
- 192 prutahs or mites = 1 dinar
- 4 dinars = 1 Tyrian shekel
- 26 silver dinars = 1 gold dinar

### What Money Could Buy in Bible Times

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wages</strong></td>
<td>Vineyard worker’s daily wage</td>
<td>1 dinar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scribe’s weekly wage</td>
<td>12 dinars</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roman soldier’s yearly wage</td>
<td>50 dinars</td>
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<td><strong>Clothing</strong></td>
<td>Cloak of a rich man</td>
<td>100–200 dinars</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman’s yearly clothing allowance</td>
<td>50 dinars</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td>Pomegranate</td>
<td>1 prutah</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A cluster of grapes</td>
<td>1 prutah</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Large meal</td>
<td>1 dinar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 seah (about 2 gallons) of flour</td>
<td>1 dinar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12 loaves of bread</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jar of olive oil</td>
<td>1 dinar</td>
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<td><strong>Animals</strong></td>
<td>Donkey foal</td>
<td>2–4 dinars</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lamb</td>
<td>4 dinars</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ram</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Calf</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>100–200 dinars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>Rental of house for a month</td>
<td>4 dinars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Land of Jesus

The Synagogue in Nazareth

Mount Tabor is another possible site for the Transfiguration of Jesus.

THE GREAT SEA
(Mediterranean Sea)
Mount Hermon is a possible site for the Transfiguration of Jesus.
Mark

Into Mark

This Gospel at a Glance

■ Like Matthew and Luke, Mark is one of the three Synoptic Gospels. (For the meaning of synoptic, see “This Gospel at a Glance,” p. 302) These three biographies of our Savior take a similar approach as they tell our Savior’s life story.

■ Mark’s Gospel is the shortest. Mark’s earliest readers were likely Gentiles and probably Romans. Among other clues leading to this conclusion is the fact that Mark often explains Jewish customs, and he seldom quotes directly from the Old Testament.

■ Mark was likely the John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25) who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. He was not one of the twelve disciples, and thus he was likely not an eyewitness to the events he records. Instead, he interviewed various eyewitnesses as he composed his manuscript.

■ Many scholars think Mark interviewed Peter extensively and used Peter’s eyewitness testimony as he put his account together. Of course, this in no way takes away from the divine inspiration of Mark’s Gospel. (See “Who Wrote the Bible?” on p. xvi)

■ Mark uses a crisp, fast-paced style of writing; he uses the words “immediately” and “at once” more than forty times in his book. In doing so, he communicates his urgency to proclaim the Good News. Chapter 1 plunges us into the midst of the story; Mark says nothing about Jesus’ birth or boyhood.

■ Mark pictures Jesus as powerful and decisive, but also as a humble servant.
Like Matthew, Mark focuses on the coming kingdom of God, but Mark accents the forces opposing that kingdom—both human and demonic. Unbelieving people and Satan himself clash with Jesus throughout Mark’s Gospel.

Mark’s Gospel falls roughly into two main sections, each focusing on a different aspect of what Jesus came to do: to serve (chapters 1–10) and to sacrifice (chapters 11–16).

Many scholars believe Mark was the first Gospel written, perhaps between AD 50 and the early 60s.

**How is the Book of Mark classified?**

Mark is a Gospel, which presents the life of Jesus while also teaching how Jesus’ life fulfilled the Old Testament promises about salvation. Mark is called a “Synoptic Gospel” because its outline is very similar to that of Matthew and Luke.

**Mark’s Portrait of Jesus**

Mark pictures Jesus as the Suffering Servant. In doing so, he echoes the Servant Songs composed by the prophet Isaiah some seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth. (See “Into Isaiah,” p. 189.)

In painting this portrait, Mark invites his readers to see Jesus as the Servant who calls His followers to serve also.

**How Can I Best Grow in Grace as I Read Mark?**

Mark writes to draw us in. One way he does this is to use four overlapping cycles in narrating his account:

- John the Baptist comes onto the scene, preaches the coming kingdom of God, faces opposition, and is killed.
- Jesus comes onto the scene, preaches the coming kingdom of God, faces opposition, and is killed, but rises from the dead.
- The twelve disciples come onto the scene and begin to preach the coming kingdom of God. Mark’s early readers had likely heard about the persecution and death that faced the Twelve and other followers who had begun to witness about Jesus and His kingdom.
- Now we readers have come onto the scene, simply by reading this Gospel! Will we “take up [the] cross” Jesus talks about (Mark 8:34–37)? Or will we join the religious leaders and demons who oppose Him? What’s our answer to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29)?

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As you read, ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer this question: where am I in this book?

What are the key chapters and verses in Mark?

- **Mark 1:1–7** John the Baptist appears and serves.
- **Mark 1:9–14** Jesus appears and serves.
- **Mark 3:13–21** Jesus calls the Twelve to serve.
- **Mark 4:1–20** The parable of the sower explains what faithful servants can expect.
- **Mark 6:1–6** Jesus is rejected.
- **Mark 6:14–29** John the Baptist is killed.
- **Mark 8:27–30** Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah.
- **Mark 8:31–38** Jesus warns Peter and the other disciples to expect the cross.
- **Mark 14–15** Jesus suffers and dies.
- **Mark 16:1–13** Jesus rises; some believe and some doubt.
- **Mark 16:14–20** Jesus sends the Eleven, knowing what awaits them. As readers, we are left with the question, how will we respond?
Disease and Medicine in Bible Times

Many diseases and health problems are mentioned in the Bible. People suffered from tumors, fevers, seizures, blindness, paralysis, and a wide variety of skin diseases. These included leprosy, boils, and other sores and infections. The Bible describes demons that caused illness, so casting out demons was a form of healing.

Doctors and physicians are mentioned in the Bible, but they were unable to help many people. Some of their practices actually increased their patients’ suffering.

Antibiotics—the type of medicine we use today to cure infections—did not exist in Bible times. Instead, people used certain plants, oils, wine, and other natural substances as medicines. The Good Samaritan used oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been badly beaten (Luke 10:30–34).

Soothing ointments were prepared from various herbs. Some of these worked, but often these “medicines” could not heal the injury or cure the illness or disease.

People with arthritis, rheumatism, or other aches and pains found relief in warm springs near the Dead Sea, which was rich in minerals.
Gethsemane

You might be familiar with the name Gethsemane as that of a garden that Jesus frequented. It was in this garden that He went to pray just before He was arrested, tried, and crucified. The Savior went to this garden to pray for strength to undo what Adam had done in another garden. It was to Gethsemane that Jesus came to pray to His Father, and it was from there that He went forward to complete the promise made so long ago—to become the Savior of all humankind.

Gethsemane is a Hebrew word that means “oil press,” no doubt referring to the pressing of oil from the olive trees in the area. In Jesus’ time, the garden was probably an orchard containing various fruit trees.

Religious tradition gives two sites for Gethsemane. Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church claim that the original garden is now a small, fenced piece of land located at the base of the Mount of Olives; it measures only about seventy paces around, and it contains old olive trees. Representatives from the Greek Orthodox Church, however, insist that the actual spot of Gethsemane is farther up the Mount of Olives.
The Sea of Galilee

Much of Jesus’ ministry took place along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. In fact, Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, was only about twenty miles from Capernaum, which is near the Sea of Galilee. Close to the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called His first disciples, and on the waters of Galilee, Jesus calmed the storm. The Sea of Galilee is also called the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1) and the lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1).

This boat, known as the “Jesus Boat,” is believed to be about 2,000 years old and is typical of the boats used in Bible times. It was found buried in deep mud on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It is called the “Jesus Boat” because archaeologists believe it was being used during the time Jesus performed His ministry around the Sea of Galilee.

Capernaum—Jesus preached and performed many miracles in this town and the surrounding area.

Magdala—Mary Magdalene, one of the women who followed Jesus, was from the town of Magdala, which is on the Sea of Galilee.

Tabgha—We believe this is where Jesus multiplied the two fish and five loaves of bread. Today, a church called the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes stands at Tabgha.

This mosaic in the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes is believed to be about 1,500 years old. Some Christians believe this is the spot where Jesus fed thousands of people, using only five barley loaves and two fish.

Tabgha — We believe this is where Jesus multiplied the two fish and five loaves of bread. Today, a church called the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes stands at Tabgha.

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## Abbreviations

### Scripture

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AARON (AIR-uhn; of uncertain meaning). Moses’ assistant, the first high priest (Ex 4:14–17; 7). Aaron was born in Egypt. His family was from the tribe of Levi, the descendants of one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Ex 6:19–20). Miriam was his older sister, and Moses was his younger brother (Nu 26:59).

Aaron was praised because he spoke well in public (Ex 4:14). At God’s command, Aaron spoke to the people for Moses because Moses did not believe himself to be a good public speaker.

During a battle in the wilderness between the children of Israel and the Amalekites, Aaron helped Hur hold up Moses’ hands (Ex 17:12). While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the people became impatient, so Aaron made a golden calf for an idol (Ex 32). Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses because of the foreign woman he had married (Nu 12:1).

Moses anointed Aaron and Aaron’s sons to the priesthood (Nu 3:1–3). The Lord confirmed Aaron as His high priest when the staff with Aaron’s name on it blossomed (Nu 17). Because Aaron and Moses doubted God at Meribah, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Nu 20:12–13). Aaron’s son Eleazar followed him as high priest. Aaron died at age 123 and was buried on Mount Hor (Nu 20:22–29). See pp. 39, 149–50.

AARON’S STAFF. When Aaron’s staff swallowed the staffs of the magicians and sorcerers summoned by Pharaoh, God demonstrated His supremacy over the gods of Egypt (Ex 7:8–13). Later, by making the staff with Aaron’s name on it blossom, God proved Aaron’s authority. This staff was placed before the ark of the covenant (Nu 17; Heb 9:4). See pp. 34, 65.

ABASE. To humble or make low. The proud and wicked are to be abased (Jb 40:11). God abases the priests who fail to preach His Word (Mal 2:9).

ABBA (AB-ah; Aramaic “father”). Conveys childlike intimacy and confidence (Mk 14:36; Rm 8:15; Gal 4:6). Expresses the deep, loving relationship Jesus had with the Father and which believers now share. Ab and abi are also used to form proper names, e.g., Abraham.

ABEDNEGO (ah-BED-ne-go; servant of Nego). The Babylonian name given to Azariah, one of Daniel’s friends (Dn 1:7). Abednego was thrown into the fiery furnace for not worshipping the golden idol set up by King Nebuchadnezzar (Dn 3). See pp. 121, 137, 217, 224.

ABEL 1. (AY-buhl; perhaps meaning “son” or “vapor”). The second son of Adam and Eve. Abel was a keeper of sheep. When God was pleased with Abel’s sacrifice, Abel’s brother, Cain, became jealous and murdered him (Gn 4:1–8). In the New Testament, Abel is described as a righteous man because, by faith, he offered God “a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain” (Heb 11:4). See pp. 12, 149.

2. (AY-buhl; meadow). A prefix for the names of towns and places (Gn 50:11; Jgs 7:22).

ABHORRENCE (ab-HAWR-uhns). Aversion or loathing; shrinking or withdrawing from someone or something that is disgusting. Believers abhor wicked, unholy
things and sins (Dt 7:26; Ps 119:163). The wicked abhor both God’s Law and the person who speaks God’s truth (Lv 26:43; Am 5:10). God abhors those who worship false gods and break His Law (Lv 26:30).

**ABIATHAR** (ah-BIGH-ah-thahr; father of abundance). The son of the high priest Ahimelech. When Saul put Abiathar’s father and 84 other priests to death, Abiathar escaped and fled to David’s camp for protection (1Sm 22:20–23). He became David’s counselor and with Zadok brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1Ch 15:11–14; 27:34). Toward the close of David’s reign, Abiathar joined with Joab in supporting David’s son Adonijah as the next king. Solomon became the new king, however, and expelled Abiathar from office (1Ki 1:7, 19, 25, 41–42; 2:26–27).

**ABIGAJH** (ah-BIGH-jah; the Lord is father). 1. A descendant of Aaron’s son Eleazar. When David organized the priests into 24 divisions, the eighth division was named after Abijah (1Ch 24:10; Ne 12:17). Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, belonged to this division (Lk 1:5).

2. The second son of Samuel. Because Abijah was a wicked judge, the elders asked for a king (1Sm 8:1–5). See p. 88.

3. The son of Jeroboam I (1Ki 14:1–18).

4. The son of Rehoboam and Maacah. Abijah was also known as Abijam. After his father died, Abijah became the next king of Judah. In an effort to regain the ten northern tribes, he made war on Jeroboam I. Abijah reigned three years, following in the wicked ways of his father, and then he died (1Ki 15:1–8; 2Ch 12:16; 13). See p. 125.

5. The wife of Ahaz and mother of Hezekiah (2Ch 29:1).

**ABIMELECH** (ah-BIM-uh-lek; my father is king). 1. The king of Gerar who made a covenant with Abraham (Gn 20; 21:22–34).

2. The king of Gerar who made a covenant with Isaac (Gn 26:1–33). He may have been the same person as the king who made the covenant with Abraham.


4. The son of Abiathar and grandson of Ahimelech the priest. Abimelech, who is sometimes referred to as Ahimelech, was a priest during David’s reign (1Ch 18:16).

5. The name given to the Philistine king (probably King Achish, 1Sm 21:10) in the title of Psalm 34. It is thought that Abimelech was the throne name or title of Philistine kings.

**ABNER** (AB-nur; father is light). The son of Ner and commander of his cousin Saul’s army (1Sm 14:50–51; 17:55; 26:5–14). When Saul died, Abner brought Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, to Mahanaim and made him king over Israel (2Sm 2:8–9). Then Abner and his men met David’s army in combat at the pool of Gibeon and were defeated (2Sm 2:12–17). Later, Abner quarreled with Ish-bosheth and left his camp to join with David. Although David received him in peace, David’s commander, Joab, and Joab’s brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother in the battle at Gibeon (2Sm 3:6–30). David mourned for Abner and described him as a prince and great man (2Sm 3:31–39).

**ABOMINATION** (ah-bahm-i-NAY-shuhn). That which is disgusting, loathsome, detestable, particularly in a religious context. The term is applied to animals the
Israelites were not allowed to eat, pagan practices, and idolatry (1Ki 11:5). Cf. "tainted" and "detestable" in Lv 7:18, 21; Dt 29:17; Hos 9:10. See p. 217.

**ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION.** This is mentioned in Dn 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, and may refer to the time when Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the sanctuary by putting an idol to Zeus on the altar where sacrifices were offered. Ultimately, Daniel’s prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation finds its fulfillment in messianic times.

Christ also referred to the abomination of desolation (Mt 24:15–16; Mk 13:14). Here Jesus announced a new desolation and destruction of the Jerusalem temple, which would be carried out by the Romans in AD 70. This event would end all temple worship and sacrifice. However, these desolations are but a taste of what lies in the future (cf. 2Th 2:3–4). In a figurative sense, this term is applied to the neglect of the Gospel in the Church. See p. 217.

**ABRAHAM** (AY-brah-ham; father of a multitude). The son of Terah and founder of the Hebrew nation. Abraham’s name, before God changed it, was Abram. Abram and his family descended from Shem and lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. After Haran died, Terah, Abram, Abram’s wife, Sarai, and Haran’s son, Lot, left Ur for Canaan. But when they arrived in Haran, a city in Mesopotamia, they settled there instead. When Terah was 205 years old, he died in Haran (Gn 11:27–32).

After Terah’s death the Lord told Abram to leave his country, his family, and his father’s house for a land the Lord would show him. He also promised to make Abram a great nation and bless him and all the families of the earth in him. So Abram, now 75 years old, left Haran with Sarai, Lot, and all their possessions and began the journey to Canaan. In Canaan Abram pitched his tent by Shechem’s holy place, the oak of Moreh. The Lord appeared to him there and promised to give the land to Abram’s descendants. Then Abram built an altar to the Lord both there and, a little later, east of Bethel. When a famine came to the land, Abram went to Egypt. In order to be well received by Pharaoh, Abram told Sarai to say she was only his sister. Not realizing she was also Abram’s wife, Pharaoh decided to marry Sarai because her beauty pleased him. When plagues fell on his household, however, Pharaoh found out that Abram had deceived him. He told Abram to take his family and many possessions and leave (Gn 12).

Abram and his family returned with Lot to the altar near Bethel. Because of bickering and fighting between their herdsmen, Abram and Lot decided to part ways. Lot, given his choice of the land, chose the Jordan Valley and pitched his tent as far as Sodom. The Lord repeated his promise to bless Abram, who moved to the oaks of Mamre at Hebron (Gn 13).

When four kings defeated five other kings in the territory where Lot lived and took Lot captive, Abram chased after the enemies, recovered the goods they had stolen, and rescued Lot. After this Abram received a blessing from Melchizedek, the priest and king of Salem (Gn 14).

Then God made a covenant with Abram, sealing His promise to make of Abram a great nation by giving him and his descendants the land of Canaan (Gn 15). But when Sarai did not become pregnant, she thought she could not have children of her own, so she gave her maid, Hagar, to Abram. He and Hagar had a son whom they named Ishmael (Gn 16). Then God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and promised that His everlasting covenant would be fulfilled in Isaac,
his son with Sarai. He made circumcision the sign of the covenant (Gn 17). God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah.

While Abraham was sitting at the door to his tent by the oaks of Mamre, the Lord appeared to him and told him that Sarah would bear him a son within the year. When Sarah heard this, she laughed because she thought she was too old to have a baby. The Lord rebuked her for laughing and told her nothing was too difficult for Him (Gn 18). When Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born. Soon after that Hagar and Ishmael were cast out (Gn 21).

Then the Lord tested Abraham’s faith in His promise by commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. At the last minute the angel of the Lord stopped Abraham from doing this. He told Abraham not to harm Isaac and provided a ram for sacrifice instead (Gn 22).

Because Abraham did not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman, he sent his servant back to his homeland to get a wife for Isaac. The servant returned with Rebekah, Abraham’s great-niece. She became Isaac’s wife (Gn 24). When Abraham was 175 years old, he died and was buried in the cave of Machpelah (Gn 25).

God called Abraham, who is later described as the friend of God, from a family that served idols (Jsh 24:2). God took the first step in making the covenant with Abraham, a covenant in which He bound Himself to give without receiving anything in return. Circumcision is a sign of His covenant (Rm 4:11).

By faith Abraham was just, as God wanted him to be, and thus became the father of all believers (Rm 4; Gal 3). This faith showed itself in works (Jas 2:21).

In Christ, Abraham’s offspring from all nations of the earth are blessed (Gal 3:16). Believers are the spiritual sons and heirs of Abraham (Rm 4:13–14; Gal 3:29).

See pp. 11–13, 15–16, 18, 24.

**ABRAHAM’S SIDE.** A term for everlasting life (Lk 16:22). Perhaps the place of honor at the heavenly banquet (cf. Mt 8:11).

**ABRAM** (AY-bruhm; exalted father). See ABRAHAM.

**ABSALOM** (AB-sah-luhm; father is peace). The handsome son of David and Maacah (2Sm 3:3). When Amnon, his half-brother, raped Absalom’s sister, Absalom killed him. Then Absalom fled to Geshur, where he stayed for three years (2Sm 13–14).

Four years after his return to Jerusalem, Absalom made plans to seize the throne from his father, David. To this end, he gathered people around him who were unhappy with David’s rule. Ahithophel advised Absalom to attack David before the king had time to regroup his followers, but Hushai cautioned Absalom to wait. He told Absalom that he would need a big army to defeat David’s able warriors (2Sm 17).

The two armies met in the forest of Ephraim, where Absalom’s men were defeated by David’s. When Absalom was fleeing, his hair became tangled in an oak branch. While he was hanging from the tree, Joab killed him with three spears. When David heard that Absalom died, he grieved for his son (2Sm 18). See p. 103.

**ABSTINENCE** (AB-stuh-nuhns). The act of abstaining from or not partaking of something. There are various examples of abstinence in the Old Testament. The Israelites were to abstain from eating fat and blood, certain kinds of meats, parts of the offering sacred to the altar, and meats consecrated to idols (Ex 34:13–15;