

# NEW TESTAMENT

**The Bible is divided** into two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament contains twenty-seven books. These books contain several kinds of writings. You will find Gospels, religious history, letters to individuals, letters to communities, homilies, and visions. All these books are in some way about God's biggest breakthrough in history: the coming of Jesus Christ. The New Testament stories tell how Jesus' mission starts with God's Chosen People, who today we call the Jews. They also tell how Jesus' first disciples quickly expanded the mission to include non-Jews, who were called Gentiles.

*Testament* is another word for *covenant*, and a covenant is a holy promise made between God and human beings. The Old Testament is about the original Covenant that God made with his Chosen People. The New Testament writings show how the promises of the Covenant in the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, God extended the Covenant to the whole human race. We call this the New Covenant, the promise that every person—Jew or Gentile—can have eternal life with God. This New Testament tells how this was made possible by Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection.


*Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics* divides the New Testament into two sections. The table of contents shows the books that are in each section. Here's some information on each section:

**The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.** *Gospel* literally means "good news." We call Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John Gospels because they tell the Good News of Jesus Christ. These four books each have their unique picture of Jesus Christ. It is believed that Mark was written first. The writers of Matthew and Luke probably used Mark as a starting point in creating their Gospels. That is why these three Gospels have some very similar stories.

The Gospel of John is quite different from the other three. There are fewer miracles and fewer parables, and John more clearly presents Jesus as God's Son. Having four Gospels gives us a more complete understanding of Jesus than just having one.

New Testament





The Acts of the Apostles picks up where the Gospels leave off. It was written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Acts tells the exciting story of the first Christians. By traveling and preaching, they spread the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the known world.

**The Letters and Revelation.** Back at the time of Jesus, there was no telephone, television, radio, or Internet. So when the early leaders of the Church wanted to communicate, they did so by writing letters. These letters were written to groups and to individuals. They helped the first Christians—and they help us—understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

The majority of the letters were written by Saint Paul or by people writing in his name. It was not uncommon at that time to honor a great person by writing letters or books in his or her name. So some letters that say they were written by Saint Paul or Saint Peter may have been written by other early Christians.

The Revelation to John is not a letter but a collection of prophecies and visions. It is about the struggle between the good and evil forces of creation. Revelation promises that even though believers will suffer and be persecuted, God will make everything right in the end.

To fully understand God's plan for the human race, we need both the Old and the New Testaments. The New Testament reveals the great love God has for us by sending his Son into the world. Through the Gospels and letters, God shows us that we can be saved from fear, anxiety, sin, and even death by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. Then, as disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can bring God's love to other people.

**If the Gospel of Matthew** were a blockbuster movie, it might be titled *God Saves*. Then the Old Testament books of the Bible might be called *God Saves: The Beginning*. In the Old Testament we hear the story of a God who loves his people and wants to save them from sin and the effects of sin. In the Gospel of Matthew—really in all the books of the New Testament—we hear how God’s plans are fulfilled in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Matthew shows how Jesus takes the ancient teachings and makes them new. He challenges his followers, including us today, to love as completely as he does. And keep watching! Matthew gives a preview of *God Saves: The Conclusion*, when Jesus will conquer evil and death once and for all at his second coming.



Chap. 28:1–3

## Headlines

- Future King Born In a Stable! (1:1—2:23)
- Jesus’ Extreme Message: Love Your Enemies (5:43–48)
- Dead Girl Brought Back to Life! (9:23–26)
- Jesus Responds to Criticisms (12:1–42)
- Jesus Seen Talking to Dead Prophets (17:1–13)
- Women Claim to See Resurrected Jesus! (28:1–9)
- Jesus’ Followers Sent to the Whole World (28:16–20)

## FACTOIDS

**Who wrote this book?** An old tradition says it was the Apostle Matthew but no one knows for sure. We do know that the author was a Jew who had become a Christian.

**When was it written?** Probably between AD 75 and 90, or about fifty years after Jesus’ Resurrection.

**Whom was it written for?** It was originally written for Jews who had become followers of Christ. These Jewish Christians were becoming outcasts in the Jewish community.

**Why was it written?** Matthew was written to reassure the early Jewish Christians that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

### Important themes

- Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of heaven.
- Jesus is in conflict with religious leaders who are not open to his message.
- Jesus has miraculous power over sickness, storms, evil, and even death.



# MATTHEW

## The Ancestors of Jesus Christ

(Luke 3:23–38)

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

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

<sup>6b-11</sup>From David to the time when the people of Israel were taken into exile in Babylon, the following ancestors are listed: David, Solomon (his mother was the woman who had been Uriah's wife), Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, and Jehoiachin and his brothers.

<sup>12-16</sup>From the time after the exile in Babylon to the birth of Jesus, the following ancestors are listed: Jehoiachin, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, and Joseph, who married Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was called the Messiah.

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

## The Birth of Jesus Christ

(Luke 2:1–7)

<sup>18</sup>This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately.

<sup>20</sup>While he was thinking about this, an angel

# Study it!

## King of Kings

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy, or listing of Jesus' ancestors. The genealogy shows that God is doing what he promised to do. Look at some of the names in the list. Many of them are names that you will recognize from the Old Testament. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2). God promised David that the Messiah, the one who would save the people, would be a descendant of David's (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

— Matthew 1:1–17

of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived.

<sup>21</sup>She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins."

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

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

## The Liturgical Year

After the genealogy Matthew continues with the stories about Jesus' birth and the visit of the wise men, or magi. The Catholic Church celebrates these events during the Christmas season. These are special seasons during the Church year.

The Church has its own calendar called the liturgical calendar. It moves through seasons just like any other calendar does. The seasons are connected to the important moments in Jesus' life. Advent is the season before Christmas. During Advent we remember and celebrate the events leading up to and surrounding the birth of Jesus. The liturgical year reminds us that God's saving action continues today and will be fulfilled when Jesus returns at the end of time.

# Catholic Connections

— Matthew 1:18—2:12

### Visitors from the East

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

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

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

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

7 So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them

the exact time the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: "Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him."

9-10 And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 11 They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother



*The star . . . went ahead of them (2:9–10)*

2:6 Mic 5:2

**Do you think Joseph was scared? How would you feel if an angel asked you to do something for God?**

## Study it!

### Remember Moses?

Jesus was hidden as a baby so that he would not be killed. The same thing happened to Moses (see Exodus 1:22—2:10). The story of Moses was important to the people for whom Matthew's Gospel was written. They were Jews. They would have recognized this comparison to Moses, one of their greatest leaders. Matthew's Gospel includes other similarities between Jesus and Moses. For example, by fleeing to Egypt and returning to Israel, Jesus takes the same journey that Moses and his people, the Israelites, took.

— Matthew 2:13–18

Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

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

### The Escape to Egypt

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

<sup>14</sup>Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, <sup>15</sup>where he stayed until Herod died. This was done to make come true what the Lord had

said through the prophet, "I called my Son out of Egypt."

### The Killing of the Children

<sup>16</sup>When Herod realized that the visitors from the East had tricked him, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old and younger—this was done in accordance with what he had learned from the visitors about the time when the star had appeared.

<sup>17</sup>In this way what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true:

<sup>18</sup>"A sound is heard in Ramah,  
the sound of bitter weeping.  
Rachel is crying for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted,  
for they are dead."

### The Return from Egypt

<sup>19</sup>After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt <sup>20</sup>and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go back to the land of Israel, because those who tried to kill the child are dead." <sup>21</sup>So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went back to Israel.

<sup>22</sup>But when Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there. He was given more instructions in a dream, so he went to the province of Galilee <sup>23</sup>and made his home in a town named Nazareth. And so what the prophets had said came true: "He will be called a Nazarene."

### The Preaching of John the Baptist (Mark 1:1–8; Luke 3:1–18; John 1:19–28)

**3** At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. <sup>2</sup>"Turn away from your sins," he said, "because the Kingdom of heaven is near!" <sup>3</sup>John was the man the prophet Isaiah was

2:15 Hos 11:1 2:18 Jer 31:15 2:23 Mk 1:24; Lk 2:39; Jn 1:45 3:2 Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15

The visitors from the East represent all of us who are not descended from the Jewish people. They show that God's salvation is for everyone.

# Pray it!

## Announcing God's Kingdom!

John the Baptist went ahead of Jesus. He let everybody know that something special was about to happen. The way his clothes are described would have reminded people of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). People of Jesus' time believed that Elijah would return from heaven to announce the coming of the Day of the Lord. The author compares John to Elijah to let people know that Jesus is the one they have been waiting for.

*Saving God,  
Help me to be like John  
by my words and actions.  
Help me to announce Jesus' coming.  
Help me to make a path for Jesus in my heart.*

— Matthew 3:1–12

talking about when he said,

“Someone is shouting in the desert,  
‘Prepare a road for the Lord;  
make a straight path for him to travel!’ ”

<sup>4</sup>John's clothes were made of camel's hair; he wore a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>People came to him from Jerusalem, from the whole province of Judea, and from all over the country near the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup>They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan.

<sup>7</sup>When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, “You snakes—who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? <sup>8</sup>Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. <sup>9</sup>And don't think you can escape punishment by saying that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! <sup>10</sup>The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. <sup>11</sup>I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the

Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. <sup>12</sup>He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out.”

### The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21, 22)

<sup>13</sup>At that time Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to make him change his mind. “I ought to be baptized by you,” John said, “and yet you have come to me!”

<sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.” So John agreed.

<sup>16</sup>As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him. <sup>17</sup>Then a voice said from heaven, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.”

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# Where To Find It?

## Old Testament Stories

*These stories are listed in the order in which they first appear in the Bible.*

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*Genesis, chapter 3*  
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Noah and the Great Flood,  
*Genesis, chapters 6–9*  
God’s covenant with Abraham,  
*Genesis 17:1–18:15*  
God’s command to sacrifice Isaac,  
*Genesis 22:1–19*  
Isaac’s blessing of Jacob, *Genesis 27:1–29*  
Jacob’s dream, *Genesis 28:10–22*  
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*Genesis, chapters 37–46*  
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*Exodus 3:1–12*  
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Passover and the Exodus,  
*Exodus, chapters 12–14*  
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*Joshua 5:13–6:27*  
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*1 Samuel, chapters 1–3*  
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*2 Samuel, chapter 11*  
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Elijah’s triumph over the priests of Baal,  
*1 Kings 18:21–40*

miracles of Elisha, *2 Kings 4:1–6:23*  
return from Exile, *Ezra, chapter 1*  
battles of Judas Maccabeus,  
*1 Maccabees, chapters 3–5*  
Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones,  
*Ezekiel 37:1–14*  
Daniel, *Daniel, chapters 1–6*  
Jonah and the Ninevites,  
*Jonah, chapters 1–3*

## New Testament Stories

*These stories are listed in the order in which they first appear in the Bible.*

birth of Jesus, *Matthew 1:18–2:12*;  
*Luke, chapters 1–2*  
baptism of Jesus, *Matthew 3:13–17*;  
*Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22*  
temptation of Jesus, *Matthew 4:1–11*;  
*Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13*  
Peter’s declaration about Jesus,  
*Matthew 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30*;  
*Luke 9:18–20*  
Transfiguration of Jesus,  
*Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–13*;  
*Luke 9:28–36*  
Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem,  
*Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11*;  
*Luke 19:28–40; John 12:12–19*  
Jesus in the Temple, *Matthew 21:12–17*;  
*Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48*;  
*John 2:13–17*  
Judas’s betrayal of Jesus,  
*Matthew 26:14–16, 47–56*;  
*Mark 14:10–11, 43–52*;  
*Luke 22:1–53; John 13:21–30*;  
*18:1–5*  
Last Supper, *Matthew 26:17–30*;  
*Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–38*;  
*1 Corinthians 11:23–26*

**The “Catholic Connections” articles** show how the teachings of the Catholic Church are rooted in the Bible. If you read them all, the “Catholic Connections” articles provide a simple overview of the Catholic faith. This index will help you find those articles. The articles are arranged to reflect the order in which they are explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Keep in mind that there is much more to be learned about the Catholic faith than what is covered in these short articles.

## **The Creed** **(Part One of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*)**

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## **Liturgy and the Sacraments** **(Part Two of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*)**

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# Bible Passages for Special Occasions

**God speaks to us** though the words of the Bible. Here are some suggestions for passages to read and reflect on at important moments in your life. Approach these passages in confidence that God wants you to feel his love and presence.

**When you need a good friend or want to be a good friend:**

- 1 Samuel, chapter 20
- Sirach 6:5–17
- John 15:12–17
- Colossians 3:12–17

**When you are feeling hopeless:**

- Psalm 42
- Matthew 11:28–30
- Romans 8:18–39
- 1 Peter 1:3–9

**When you are feeling happy:**

- Psalm 40
- Psalm 150
- Sirach 25:1–11
- Philippians 4:4–9

**When you are acting as a leader:**

- 1 Kings 3:4–14
- Mark 10:35–45
- 1 Timothy 4:4–12

**When preparing for a big game or competition:**

- 1 Corinthians 9:23–27
- 2 Timothy 2:5

**When someone you love has died:**

- Psalm 90
- John 3:16–17
- 1 Corinthians 15:50–57
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

**When you are facing temptation:**

- Genesis 3:1–21
- Matthew 4:1–11
- 1 Timothy 6:6–10
- James 1:12–18

**At the beginning of the school year:**

- Proverbs, chapter 1
- Proverbs 10:1,4,13–14,23
- 1 Corinthians 2:6–8

**When you want to be a better follower of Jesus:**

- Mark 8:34–38
- Luke 6:20–49

**When you want to be a better follower of Jesus: (continued)**

- Ephesians 5:1–20
- James 1:19–27

**When you are feeling angry or want revenge:**

- Proverbs 25:21–22
- Matthew 5:21–24,38–42
- Romans 12:17–21
- Ephesians 4:25–32

**When you want to know that God loves you:**

- Exodus 34:5–6
- Psalm 36:5–12
- Psalm 59:16–17
- Psalm 139
- John 15:1–17
- Romans 5:6–8

**When you or someone you know is sick:**

- Psalm 23
- Luke 7:21–23
- James 5:14–15
- 1 Peter 3:3–17

**When you are having problems controlling your tongue:**

- Proverbs 10:18–21
- Sirach 28:12–26
- Matthew 12:33–37
- James 3:1–12

**During times of violence or war:**

- Proverbs 3:31–33
- Micah 4:1–4
- Luke 12:4–7
- John 14:27–31

**When you are overcome by sexual feelings:**

- Genesis 1:26–31
- Matthew 19:3–9
- 1 Corinthians 6:12–20
- Ephesians 5:1–5



# Word List

*This word list identifies many objects or cultural features whose meaning may not be known to all readers.*

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

**Abyss.** The place in the depths of the earth where the demons were imprisoned until their final punishment.

**Acacia.** A flowering tree, a type of mimosa, with hard and durable wood.

**Adar.** The twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to the period from about mid-February to about mid-March.

**Agate.** A semiprecious stone of various colors, but usually white and brown.

**Alabaster.** A soft stone of usually light, creamy color; vases and jars were made from it.

**Aloes.** A sweet-smelling substance, derived from a plant. It was used medicinally and as a perfume.

**Amen.** A Hebrew word that means “it is so” or “may it be so.” It can also be translated “certainly,” “truly,” or “surely.” In Revelation 3:14 it is used as a title for Christ.

**Amethyst.** A semiprecious stone, usually purple or violet in color.

**Anoint.** To pour or rub olive oil on someone in order to honor him or appoint him to some special work. The Israelite kings were anointed as a sign of their taking office, and so the king could be called “the anointed one.” In a figurative sense, “The

Anointed One” is the title of the one whom God chose and appointed as Savior and Lord.

**Apostle.** Principally one of the group of twelve men whom Jesus chose to be his special followers and helpers. It is also used in the New Testament to refer to Paul. The word means “one who is sent.”

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

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

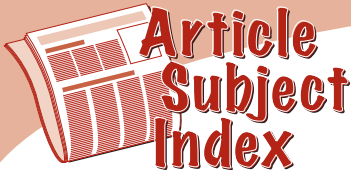
**Asherah.** A goddess of fertility worshiped by the Canaanites; her male counterpart was Baal. After the Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshiping these two gods.

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

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

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

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



# Article Subject Index

**This subject index** is not an index to the Bible itself (sometimes called a concordance). Rather, it is an index to the subjects covered in the various articles in *Breakthrough!*.

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- anger**  
9, 743, 1202
- animals**  
569, 1018
- anointing**  
340, 1430
- answered prayer**  
573, 576, 733, 759
- apocalypse**  
1467; horsemen of the, 1817
- apocalyptic writing**  
1280
- Apostles**  
1587. *See also* Twelve Apostles, the; discipleship
- apostolic succession**  
1411, 1582
- appearance, physical**  
975



## New Testament Passages Quoted or Paraphrased from the Septuagint

**The writers of the New Testament** often directly quoted or paraphrased the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known as the Septuagint Version (LXX). The LXX was translated from the original Hebrew version of the Old Testament some two hundred years before the time of Christ. In a number of instances, the LXX differs significantly in meaning from the Masoretic Hebrew text. However, the Old Testament in this Bible was translated from the Hebrew text. Thus, many Old Testament quotations in the New Testament will be different from the way those verses appear in this Bible.

As a special help to the reader, such occurrences of LXX quotations, paraphrases, or evident allusions are listed here. The following translations of the LXX passages reflect in general the wording of Today's English Version of the New Testament (TEV). When, however, an LXX quotation occurs several times in the New Testament, the TEV wording of the translation may vary because of evident differences in meaning or emphasis reflected in the different contexts. Chapter and verse numbers are those of the English Bible.

**Matthew 1:23** (Isaiah 7:14)

A virgin will become pregnant and have a son.

**Matthew 3:3** (Isaiah 40:3)

Someone is shouting in the desert, "Prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for our God to travel!"

**Matthew 12:21** (Isaiah 42:4)

And on him all people will put their hope.

**Matthew 13:14,15** (Isaiah 6:9,10)

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears, and have closed their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes would see, their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them.

**Matthew 15:8,9** (Isaiah 29:13)

These people, says God, . . . honor me with their words, but their heart is really

far away from me. It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach man-made rules and laws.

**Matthew 21:16** (Psalm 8:2)

You have trained children and babies to offer perfect praise.

**Mark 1:3** (Isaiah 40:3)

Someone is shouting in the desert, "Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for our God to travel!"

**Mark 4:12** (Isaiah 6:9,10)

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see . . .; for if they did . . ., they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them.

**Mark 7:6,7** (Isaiah 29:13)

These people, says God, . . . honor me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me. It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach man-made rules and laws.

# Reading the Bible with the Church Year

**The feast days and holy days** celebrated by Catholics and other Christians follow a yearly pattern. This pattern is called the liturgical year; it is different from the calendar year. Here is a description of the major seasons in the liturgical year. As you read this, refer to the chart on the next page.

**Advent** begins the liturgical year four Sundays before Christmas. It is a time of preparation for the coming of Christ. The Advent season can be found on the liturgical year wheel in November and December. It is represented by the small graphic of an Advent wreath.

The **Christmas** season lasts twelve days, beginning with Christmas Day and concluding with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This season is found at the top part of the liturgical year wheel. The cross reminds us that the wood of the manger becomes the wood of the cross.

**Lent** begins with Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days. It is a solemn time of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving in preparation for Easter. The small picture of the palms and cross in the liturgical year wheel symbolizes all of Lent as a journey toward Palm Sunday, when the same crowd that waves palms and yells "Hosanna!" ends up waving angry fists and shouting "Crucify him!"

The **Easter Triduum** is the celebration of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. At this one, continuous, three-day liturgy, Christians remember the Lord's Supper, Christ's Passion and death, and his Resurrection. These feasts are at the heart of the liturgical year. They are represented by the picture of the Easter candle, which makes its appearance in the darkness of the Easter Vigil. The vestments and altar cloths seen are red on Good Friday and white on the other two days.

The **Easter** Season lasts fifty days, beginning with Easter Sunday and ending

with the feast of Pentecost. The symbol of the lamb represents Jesus, the innocent sacrificial lamb of God. The symbol of the Holy Spirit reminds us that the Holy Spirit came to the disciples, in the rush of wind and tongues of fire. The altar cloths and vestments are white throughout the Easter season, and then red on Pentecost. Red is the color of the Holy Spirit (as in Confirmation Mass) and of the celebration of feast days associated with martyrs, people killed for their faith (such as the feast of Saints Peter and Paul).

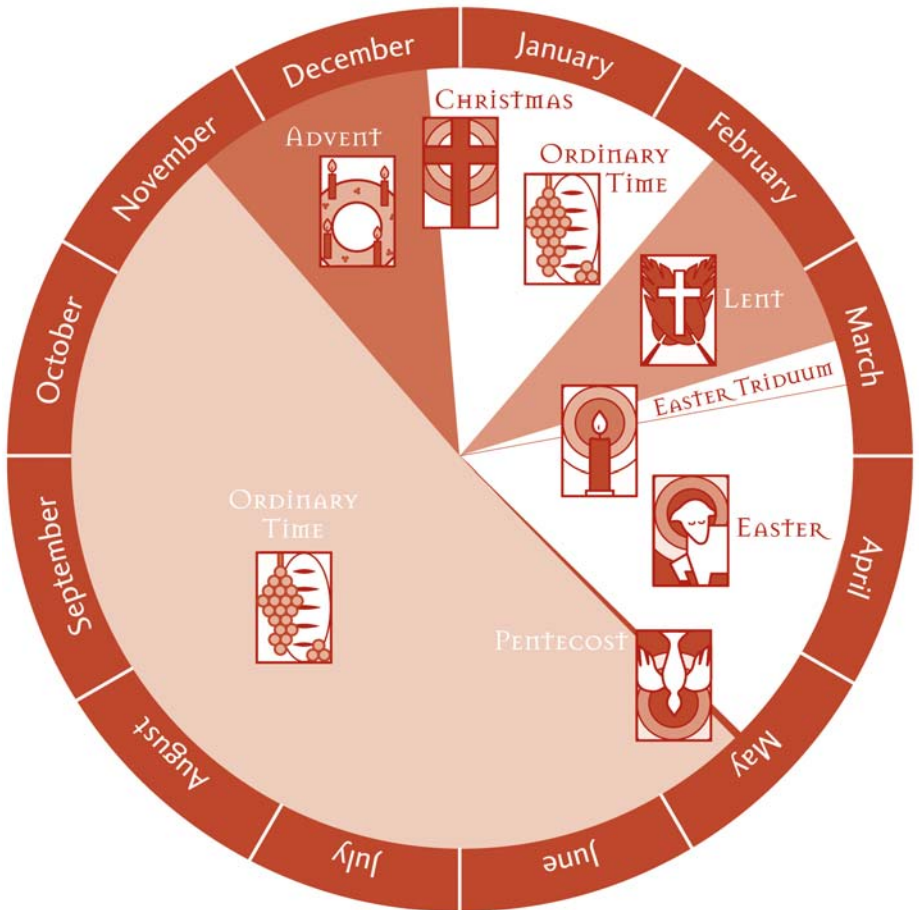
The season of **Ordinary Time** is made up of the days between Christmas and Lent, and the days between Easter and Advent. The bread and wine show us that the main focus of Ordinary Time is the ministry of Jesus, represented by the grapes and bread of communion. There are some special feast days during Ordinary Time that are not celebrated with green vestments and altar cloths, such as Trinity Sunday and the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the first two Sundays after Pentecost, and the Feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday before Advent. You'll see white on all three of those days. The particular dates and days these feasts fall upon vary from year to year.

*Christmas* is always December 25, so counting backwards four Sundays shows the four Sundays of Advent. Sometimes Advent includes Thanksgiving weekend, and sometimes it doesn't, depending on which day of the week Christmas is.

*Easter* is always the first Sunday after the first full moon in the spring. Counting

backwards six Sundays and then one Wednesday shows when Ash Wednesday and Lent begin. Sometimes Easter is in March, and sometimes it is in April.

On the next page, you will find the Bible readings heard on Sundays throughout the liturgical year. The first reading is usually from the Old Testament. The second reading is usually from a New Testament letter. The third reading is always from one of the four Gospels.





This chart lists the Sunday Bible readings from the liturgical, or Church, year.

## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Year A (2007, 2010, 2013)	Year B (2005, 2008, 2011)	Year C (2006, 2009, 2012)
<b>The First Sunday of Advent</b>		
Isa 2:1–5 Rom 13:11–14 Mt 24:37–44	Isa 63:16–17,19; 64:2–7 1 Cor 1:3–9 Mk 13:33–37	Jer 33:14–16 1 Thess 3:12–4:2 Lk 21:25–28,34–36
<b>The Second Sunday of Advent</b>		
Isa 11:1–10 Rom 15:4–9 Mt 3:1–12	Isa 40:1–5,9–11 2 Pet 3:8–14 Mk 1:1–8	Bar 5:1–9 Phil 1:4–6,8–11 Lk 3:1–6
<b>The Third Sunday of Advent</b>		
Isa 35:1–6,10 Jas 5:7–10 Mt 11:2–11	Isa 61:1–2,10–11 1 Thess 5:16–24 Jn 1:6–8,19–28	Zeph 3:14–18 Phil 4:4–7 Lk 3:10–18
<b>The Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>		
Isa 7:10–14 Rom 1:1–7 Mt 1:18–24	2 Sam 7:1–5,8–11,14,16 Rom 16:25–27 Lk 1:26–38	Mic 5:1–4 Heb 10:5–10 Lk 1:39–45
<b>Midnight Mass</b> (25 December, every year: readings are the same for all cycles)		
Isa 9:1–6 Titus 2:11–14 Lk 2:1–14	Isa 9:1–6 Titus 2:11–14 Lk 2:1–14	Isa 9:1–6 Titus 2:11–14 Lk 2:1–14
<b>Feast of the Holy Family</b>		
Sir 3:2–7,12–14 Col 3:12–21 Mt 2:13–15,19–23	Sir 3:2–7,12–14 Col 3:12–21 Lk 2:22–40 or 2:22,39–40	Sir 3:2–7,12–14 Col 3:12–21 Lk 2:41–52
<b>Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God</b> (1 January, every year, readings are the same for all cycles)		
Num 6:22–27 Gal 4:4–7 Lk 2:16–21	Num 6:22–27 Gal 4:4–7 Lk 2:16–21	Num 6:22–27 Gal 4:4–7 Lk 2:16–21
<b>Epiphany</b> (readings are the same for all cycles)		
Isa 60:1–6 Eph 3:2–3,5–6 Mt 2:1–12	Isa 60:1–6 Eph 3:2–3,5–6 Mt 2:1–12	Isa 60:1–6 Eph 3:2–3,5–6 Mt 2:1–12
<b>Baptism of the Lord</b>		
Isa 42:1–4,6–7 Acts 10:34–38 Mt 3:13–17	Isa 42:1–4,6–7 Acts 10:34–38 Mk 1:7–11	Isa 42:1–4,6–7 Acts 10:34–38 Lk 3:15–16,21–22

## LENT AND EASTER

Year A (2008, 2011, 2014)	Year B (2006, 2009, 2012)	Year C (2007, 2010, 2013)
<b>Ash Wednesday</b> (readings are the same for all cycles)		
Joel 2:12–18 2 Cor 5:20–6:2 Mt 6:1–6,16–18	Joel 2:12–18 2 Cor 5:20–6:2 Mt 6:1–6,16–18	Joel 2:12–18 2 Cor 5:20–6:2 Mt 6:1–6,16–18
<b>The First Sunday of Lent</b>		
Gen 2:7–9; 3:1–7 Rom 5:12–19 Mt 4:1–11	Gen 9:8–15 1 Pet 3:18–22 Mk 1:12–15	Deut 26:4–10 Rom 10:8–13 Lk 4:1–13
<b>The Second Sunday of Lent</b>		
Gen 12:1–4 2 Tim 1:8–10 Mt 17:1–9	Gen 22:1–2,9,10–13,15–18 Rom 8:31–34 Mk 9:2–10	Gen 15:5–12,17–18 Phil 3:17–4:1 Lk 9:28–36

# About this Translation

In September 1966 the American Bible Society published *The New Testament in Today's English Version*, the first publication of a new Bible translation intended for people everywhere for whom English is either their mother tongue or an acquired language. Shortly thereafter the United Bible Societies (UBS) requested the American Bible Society (ABS) to undertake on its behalf a translation of the Old Testament following the same principles. Accordingly the American Bible Society appointed a group of translators to prepare the translation. In 1971 this group added a British consultant recommended by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The translation of the Old Testament, which was completed in 1976, was joined to the fourth edition New Testament, thus completing the first edition of the translation that came to be known as the *Good News Bible*.

## Two Ways to Present the Deuterocanonical Books

The translation of the books of the Deuterocanon and others classed as Apocrypha was completed in 1978, and the first edition of the *Good News Bible* with Deuterocanonicals and Apocrypha was published in 1979, with the Imprimatur of the Most Reverend John F. Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford, Connecticut. The 1979 publication was an interconfessional edition in which these books were grouped in a separate section between the Old and the New Testaments.

In this present edition, the deuterocanonical books are arranged in the order most familiar to Roman Catholics. The books of Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2 Maccabees follow the historical books Ezra and Nehemiah. The Book of Esther and its six additions follow Judith in this grouping. Most of these books were written or have their settings in the last several centuries BC.

The book of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah are positioned after Lamentations, as part of the Jeremiah grouping. The books of the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach, being wisdom books, are located among the other Old Testament Wisdom books, immediately following Song of Songs. The three additions to the book of Daniel, which are presented as separate books in the interconfessional edition of the Good News Bible, are presented here in the way most familiar to Roman Catholics. Susanna and Bel and the Dragon are traditionally treated as chapters 13 and 14 of Daniel. The third addition has its location between verses 23 and 24 of chapter 3 in the Hebrew text because this is the position it holds in the Septuagint. Known as the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, this addition to Daniel provides the text of the prayer offered by Azariah and of the song he and his companions sang while in the midst of the flames in the fiery furnace. The result is an Old Testament with forty-six books, several of which contain significant additions. These books formed part of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was in circulation at the time of Christ.

Prior to Jerome's great Latin translation, which came to be known as the *Vulgata* (the common language), there were numerous Latin translations in circulation, all of which had been done from the Greek Septuagint. The great significance of Jerome's work, at least for the Old Testament (AD 389–405), is that he broke from that tradition and based his translation on the received consonantal Hebrew text. His knowledge of Hebrew was excellent, and he had recourse to Jewish text scholars wherever he had questions. For the sections of Esther and Daniel not in the Hebrew canon, Jerome worked from the ancient Greek text. For Tobit and Judith, his base texts were (no longer extant) Aramaic editions of these books. Already before taking on the Old Testament books, Jerome had

prepared a revised edition of the Gospels (revising the Old Latin text in light of the best Greek manuscripts available to him). The rest of the Vulgate New Testament text is also attributed to Jerome. The influence of the Vulgate in western Christendom remained unsurpassed from his time until the era of the Reformation and the proliferation of vernacular Bible translations, well over one thousand years later.

### The Text Used for This Translation

The basic Hebrew (and Aramaic) text for the Old Testament is the Masoretic text, made available through printed editions published by the UBS, and since 1977 under the title of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. In some instances the words of the printed consonantal text have been divided differently or have been read with a different set of vowels; at times a variant reading in the margin of the Hebrew text (*qere*) has been followed instead of the reading in the text (*kethiv*); and in other instances a variant reading supported by one or more Hebrew manuscripts has been adopted. Where no Hebrew source yields a satisfactory meaning in the context, the translation has either followed one or more of the ancient versions (for example, Greek, Syriac, Latin) or has adopted a reconstructed text (technically referred to as a conjectural emendation) based on scholarly consensus; such departures from the Hebrew are indicated in footnotes.

The basic text for the deuterocanonical books is the Greek text printed in the Septuagint (third edition, 1949), edited by Alfred Rahlfs. For some of these books, the more recently published Göttingen edition of the Septuagint was also consulted.

The basic text for the translation of the New Testament is the *Greek New Testament* published by the UBS (third edition, 1975), but in a few instances the translation is based on a variant reading supported by one or more Greek manuscripts.

### The Translation Process

Drafts of the translation in its early stages were sent for comments and suggestions to a

Review Panel comprising prominent theologians and biblical scholars appointed by the American Bible Society Board of Managers in its capacity as trustee for the translation. In addition, drafts were sent to major English-speaking Bible Societies throughout the world. Final approval of the translation on behalf of the United Bible Societies was given by the American Bible Society's Board of Managers upon recommendation of its Translations Committee.

The primary concern of the translators was to provide a faithful translation of the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Their first task was to understand correctly the meaning of the original. At times the original meaning cannot be precisely known, not only because the meaning of some words and phrases cannot be determined with a great degree of assurance, but also because the underlying cultural and historical context is sometimes beyond recovery. All aids available were used in this task, including the ancient versions (for example, the Septuagint Greek text of the Old Testament, the Vulgate of Jerome, and Old Latin texts as available) and the modern translations in English and other languages.

After ascertaining as accurately as possible the meaning of the original, the translators' next task was to express that meaning in a manner and form easily understood by the readers. Because this translation is intended for all who use English as a means of communication, the translators have tried to avoid words and forms not in current or widespread use; but no artificial limit has been set to the range of the vocabulary employed. Every effort has been made to use language that is natural, clear, simple, and unambiguous. Consequently there has been no attempt to reproduce in English the parts of speech, sentence structure, word order, and grammatical devices of the original languages. Faithfulness in translation also includes a faithful representation of the cultural and historical features of the original. Certain features, however, such as the hours of the day and the measures of weight, capacity, distance, and area, are given their modern equivalents, because the information in those terms conveys more meaning to the reader than the biblical form of those terms.

In cases where a person or place is called by two or more different names in the original, this translation has normally used only the more familiar name in all places: for example, King Jehoiachin of Judah (Jeremiah 52:31), also called Jeconiah (Jeremiah 24:1) and Coniah (Jeremiah 37:1). Where a proper name is spelled two or more different ways in the original text, this translation has used only one spelling: for example, Nebuchadnezzar, also spelled Nebuchadrezzar (Jeremiah 29:3 and 29:21); and Priscilla, also spelled Prisca (Acts 18:26 and Romans 16:3).

Following an ancient tradition, begun by the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint) and followed by the vast majority of English translations, the distinctive Hebrew name for God (usually transliterated *Yahweh*, and earlier *Jehovah*) is in this translation represented by "LORD." When *Adonai*, normally translated "Lord," is followed by *Yahweh*, the combination is rendered by the phrase "Sovereign LORD."

## The Revision of the Good News Bible

Since the initial appearance of the *Good News Bible* in *Today's English Version* in 1976, some minor editorial changes and corrections of printing errors have been introduced into the text in connection with various printings. The New Testament was already in its fourth edition at the time the full Bible appeared, but for the Old Testament and the Deuterocanonicals/Apocrypha of the *Good News Bible*, there was no revised edition until 1992. The preparation and publication of the second edition of the full *Good News Bible* in two formats, with and without the Deuterocanonicals and Apocrypha, is the result of a broad international process of careful review and evaluation of the Good News translation by many scholars and experts over a period of several years. This Catholic edition is consequently the beneficiary of all those corrections and revisions.

In December 1986, acting in response to a mounting perception of a need for text revisions, the ABS Board of Managers approved the undertaking of a revision of the Good News translation. The revision was

restricted to two main areas of concern that had been raised and discussed over the years since the first appearance of the translation: (1) passages in which the English style had been unnecessarily exclusive and inattentive to gender concerns, and (2) passages in which the translation had been seen as problematic from either a stylistic or an exegetical viewpoint.

The process followed in preparing this revised edition was one of first inviting and collecting proposals for needed revisions from all English-language Bible Societies and English-speaking UBS translations consultants around the world, as well as numerous scholarly consultants in the United States and representatives of various American churches. The proposals received were then assembled for review and evaluation by the same broad array of experts whose specializations included translation, linguistics, English usage, literary and poetic style, biblical studies, and theology. In a series of four stages, consensus was sought on which proposals were necessary and valid, and at each of these review stages, the number of proposals under consideration was reduced until widespread agreement was reached. On the recommendation of the program committee of the ABS Board of Trustees (formerly Board of Managers) and its Translations subcommittee, the ABS Board acted to approve the revisions for the Good News Second Edition.

In the decade and a half since the initial publication of the Good News Bible, many Bible readers had become sensitive to the negative effects of exclusive language; that is, to the ways in which the built-in linguistic biases of the ancient languages and the English language toward the masculine gender has led some Bible readers to feel excluded from being addressed by the scriptural word. This concern has led to the revision of most major English translations during the 1980s, and, increasingly, readers of the Good News translation wrote to request that the Bible Society take this concern into consideration in preparing any revision. In practical terms what this means is that, where references in particular passages are to both men and women, the revision aims at language that is not exclusively masculine-

oriented. At the same time, however, great care was taken not to distort the historical reality of the ancient patriarchal culture of Bible times.

## Helps for the Reader

To make the text easier to understand, various kinds of readers' helps are supplied. The text itself has been divided into sections, and headings are provided to indicate the contents of the section. Where there are parallel accounts elsewhere in the Bible, as happens frequently in the Gospels, a reference to such a passage appears within parentheses below the heading. There are, in addition, several kinds of notes that appear at the bottom of the page.

(1) *Cultural or historical notes.* These provide information required to enable the modern reader to understand the meaning of the text in terms of its original setting (for example, the explanation of *Rahab* in Psalm 89:10; and the explanation of *Day of Atonement* in Acts 27:9).

(2) *Textual notes.* In the Old Testament, these indicate primarily those passages where the Hebrew word or words may be unclear in meaning, or where one or more of the ancient translations (for example, the Septuagint, Vulgate, or Syriac) appears to preserve the original wording better than the received Hebrew text. In Exodus 8:23, for example, all the above ancient translations have a word meaning "distinction" (cf. Vulgate, *divisionem*) rather than "redemption," which the Hebrew word *pedut* means. The ancient translations point to a Hebrew word *pelut* (division), which is only one letter different from *pedut* (redemption). Where one or more of the ancient versions were followed, the note indicates this by *One ancient translation* (for example, Genesis 1:26) or *Some ancient translations* (for example, Genesis 4:8); where a conjectural emendation was adopted, the note reads *Probable text* (for example, Genesis 10:14). Where the Greek is the primary text, such as in the New Testament or in the Old Testament books based on the Septuagint (also known as the deuterocanonicals), textual notes indicate some of the places where significant differences exist among the ancient manuscripts. These differences may consist of

additions to the text (for example, Matthew 21:43), deletions (for example, Matthew 24:36), or substitutions (for example, Mark 1:41).

(3) *Alternative renderings.* In many places the precise meaning of the original text is in dispute, and there are two or more different ways in which the text may be understood. In some of the more important of such instances, an alternative rendering is given (e.g. Genesis 2:9; Matthew 6:11).

(4) *References to other passages.* In addition, many editions of the Good News Bible include references (by book, chapter, and verse) to other places in the Bible where identical or similar matters or ideas are dealt with.

The line drawings that accompany the text were specially prepared for this translation.

The numbering of chapters and verses in this translation follows the traditional system of major English translations of the Bible. In some instances, however, where the order of thought or events in two or more verses is more clearly represented by a rearrangement of the material, two or more verse numbers are joined (for example, Exodus 2:15–16; Acts 1:21–22). In Old Testament books where additions from the Septuagint have been integrated with the Hebrew text, various strategies of versification have been employed. For these, it will be helpful for the reader to consult the book's introductions and footnotes for guidance.

## A Bible that Brings Good News

No one knows better than the translators how difficult their task has been. But they have performed it gladly, conscious always of the presence of the Holy Spirit and of the tremendous debt they owe to the dedication and scholarship of those who have preceded them. The Bible is not simply great literature to be admired and revered; it is Good News for all people everywhere—a message both to be understood and to be applied in daily life. It is with prayer and thankfulness that the translator and staff of the United Bible Societies and American Bible Society offer this translation to the Lord; it is with humility that we pray God will make it fruitful. And to Christ be the glory forever and ever!

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