

THE
PASSION
TRANSLATION

THE
NEW TESTAMENT

WITH PSALMS, PROVERBS, AND SONG OF SONGS

BroadStreet

P U B L I S H I N G

The Passion Translation® New Testament with Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs

Translated from Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts by Dr. Brian Simmons

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ABOUT THE PASSION TRANSLATION

The message of God's story is timeless; the Word of God doesn't change. But the methods by which that story is communicated should be timely; the vessels that steward God's Word can and should change. One of those timely methods is Bible translation. Bible translations are both a gift and a problem. They give us the words God spoke through his servants, but words can be poor containers for revelation because they leak! The meanings of words change from one generation to the next. Meaning is influenced by culture, background, and many other details. Just imagine how differently the Hebrew authors of the Old Testament saw the world three thousand years ago from the way we see it today!

There is no such thing as a truly literal translation of the Bible, for there is not an equivalent language that perfectly conveys the meaning of the biblical text. It must be understood in its original cultural and linguistic settings. This problem is best addressed when we seek to transfer meaning, not merely words, from the original text to the receptor language.

The purpose of the Passion Translation is to reintroduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader. It doesn't merely convey the literal meaning of words. It expresses God's passion for people and his world by translating the original, life-changing message of God's Word for modern readers.

You will notice at times we've italicized certain words or phrases. These highlighted portions are not in the original Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic manuscripts but are implied from the context. We've made these implications explicit for the sake of narrative clarity and to better convey the meaning of God's Word. This is a common practice by mainstream translations.

We've also chosen to translate certain names in their original Hebrew or Greek form to better convey their cultural meaning and significance. For instance, some translations of the Bible have substituted Jacob with James and Judah with Jude. Both Greek and Aramaic leave these Hebrew names in their original form. Therefore, this translation uses those cultural names.

God longs to have his Word expressed in every language in a way that would unlock the passion of his heart. Our goal is to trigger inside every English-speaking reader an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible. This is a heart-level translation, from the passion of God's heart to the passion of your heart.

We pray this version of God's Word will kindle in you a burning desire for him and his heart, while impacting the church for years to come.

Please visit thePassionTranslation.com for more information about the Passion Translation.

²⁹ There they are! They're worshipping!

The wealthy of this world will feast in fellowship with him
right alongside the humble of heart,
bowing down to the dust, forsaking their own souls.

They will all come and worship this worthy King!

³⁰ His *spiritual* seed^a shall serve him.

Future generations will hear from us
about the wonders of the Sovereign Lord.

³¹ His generation yet to be born will glorify him.

And they will all declare, "It is finished!"

23 THE GOOD SHEPHERD

David's poetic praise to God^b

¹ The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd.^c

I always have more than enough.

² He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love.^d

His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss.

³ That's where he restores and revives my life.^e

He opens before me pathways to God's pleasure
and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness^f
so that I can bring honor to his name.

⁴ Lord, even when your path takes me through

the valley of deepest darkness,

fear will never conquer me, for you already have!

You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way.

^a 22:30 Jesus, our crucified Savior, had no natural offspring. These are the sons and daughters who were birthed by the work of the cross.

^b Most scholars conclude that Ps. 23 was written by David when he was a young shepherd serving his father, Jesse, while he was keeping watch over sheep near Bethlehem. He was most likely sixteen or seventeen years old. The other psalm that he wrote when but a young lad was Ps. 19. Those are two good psalms to memorize and meditate upon if you want to have the heart of the giant killer.

^c 23:1 The word most commonly used for "shepherd" is *ra'ah*, which is also the Hebrew word for "best friend." The translation includes both meanings.

^d 23:2 The Greek word for "love" is *agape*, which is a merging of two words and two concepts. *Ago* means "to lead like a shepherd," and *pao* is a verb that means "to rest." Love is our Shepherd leading us to the place of true rest in his heart.

^e 23:3 Or "He causes my life [or soul, Heb. *nephesh*] to return." So often life drains out of us through our many activities, but David found that God restores our well-being by pursuing what pleases God and resting in him.

^f 23:3 Or "circular paths of righteousness." It is a common trait for sheep on the hillsides of Israel to circle their way up higher. They eventually form a path that keeps leading them higher. This is what David is referring to here. Each step we take following our Shepherd will lead us higher, even though it may seem we are going in circles.

Your authority is my strength and my peace.^a
 The comfort of your love takes away my fear.
I'll never be lonely, for you are near.

⁵ You become my delicious feast
 even when my enemies dare to fight.
 You anoint me with the fragrance of your Holy Spirit;^b
 you give me all I can drink of you until my heart overflows.

⁶ So why would I fear the future?
 For your goodness and love pursue me all the days of my life.
 Then afterward, when my life is through,
 I'll return to your glorious presence to be forever with you!

24 THE GLORIOUS KING

David's poetic praise to God^c

¹ God claims the world as his.
 Everything and everyone belongs to him!
² He's the one who pushed back oceans
 to let the dry ground appear,
 planting firm foundations for the earth.
³ Who, then, ascends into the presence of the Lord?^d
 And who has the privilege of entering into God's Holy Place?
⁴ Those who are clean—whose works and ways are pure,
 whose hearts are true and sealed by the truth,
 those who never deceive, whose words are sure.
⁵ They will receive the Lord's blessing
 and righteousness given by the Savior-God.
⁶ They will stand before God,
 for they seek the pleasure of God's face,^e the God of Jacob.

Pause in his presence

⁷ So wake up, you living gateways!
 Lift up your heads, you ageless doors of destiny!
 Welcome the King of Glory,
 for he is about to come through you.
⁸ You ask, "Who is this Glory-King?"
 The Lord, armed and ready for battle,
 the Mighty One, invincible in every way!

^a 23:4 Or "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

^b 23:5 The word *oil* becomes a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

^c The Septuagint adds "for the Sabbath."

^d 24:3 Or "hill of the Lord."

^e 24:6 The Hebrew is plural ("faces").

that I have heard you speak.

⁵They too will sing of your wonderful ways,
for your ineffable glory is great!

⁶For though you are lofty and exalted,
you stoop to embrace the lowly.

Yet you keep your distance from those filled with pride.

⁷By your mighty power I can walk through any devastation
and you will keep me alive, reviving me.

Your power set me free from the hatred of my enemies.

⁸You keep every promise you've ever made to me!

Since your love for me is constant and endless,

I ask you, Lord, to finish every good thing that you've begun in me!

139 YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT ME

For the Pure and Shining One

King David's poetic song

¹Lord, you know everything there is to know about me.

²You perceive every movement of my heart and soul,
and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind.

³⁻⁴You are so intimately aware of me, Lord.

You read my heart like an open book
and you know all the words I'm about to speak
before I even start a sentence!

You know every step I will take before my journey even begins.

⁵You've gone into my future to prepare the way,
and in kindness you follow behind me
to spare me from the harm of my past.^a
With your hand of love upon my life,
you impart a blessing to me.

⁶This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible!
Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength.^b

⁷Where could I go from your Spirit?
Where could I run and hide from your face?

⁸If I go up to heaven, you're there!

If I go down to the realm of the dead, you're there too!

⁹If I fly with wings into the shining dawn, you're there!

If I fly into the radiant sunset, you're there waiting!^c

^a 139:5 Or "You hem me in [lit., "beseige me"] before and behind." The implication is that God protects him from what may come in the future and what has happened in the past.

^b 139:6 As translated from the Septuagint. The Hebrew reads "too high to understand."

^c 139:9 Implied in the Hebrew, which states, "the remote parts of the sea" or "beyond the horizon to the west." The sea is west of Israel.

- ¹⁰ Wherever I go, your hand will guide me;
your strength will empower me.
- ¹¹ It's impossible to disappear from you
or to ask the darkness to hide me,
for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night.
- ¹² There is no such thing as darkness with you.
The night, to you, is as bright as the day;
there's no difference between the two.
- ¹³ You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside
and my intricate outside,
and wove them all together in my mother's womb. ^a
- ¹⁴ I thank you, God, for making me so mysteriously complex!
Everything you do is marvelously breathtaking.
It simply amazes me to think about it!
How thoroughly you know me, Lord!
- ¹⁵ You even formed every bone in my body
when you created me in the secret place, ^b
carefully, skillfully shaping me ^c from nothing to something.
- ¹⁶ You saw who you created me to be before I became me! ^d
Before I'd ever seen the light of day,
the number of days you planned for me
were already recorded in your book. ^e
- ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Every single moment you are thinking of me!
How precious and wonderful to consider
that you cherish me constantly in your every thought!
O God, your desires toward me are more
than the grains of sand on every shore!
When I awake each morning, you're still with me.
- ¹⁹ O God, come and slay these bloodthirsty, murderous men!
For I cry out, "Depart from me, you wicked ones!"
- ²⁰ See how they blaspheme your sacred name
and lift up themselves against you, but all in vain!
- ²¹ Lord, can't you see how I despise those who despise you?
For I grieve when I see them rise up against you.
- ²² I have nothing but complete hatred and disgust for them.
Your enemies shall be my enemies!

^a 139:13 The Hebrew word for "knit" or "wove" can also be translated "to cover" or "to defend." God places an eternal spirit inside the conceived child within the womb of a mother and covers that life, sends the child a guardian angel, and watches over him or her.

^b 139:15 The Hebrew text is literally "the depths of the earth."

^c 139:15 Or "embroidered me."

^d 139:16 The Hebrew could be translated "as an embryo."

^e 139:16 See Ps. 69:28.

- ²³ God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart.
 Examine me through and through;
 find out everything that may be hidden within me.
 Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares.
- ²⁴ See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on,
 and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting ways—
 the path that brings me back to you.

140 A PRAYER FOR PROTECTION

For the Pure and Shining One

King David's poetic song

- ¹ Lord, protect me from this evil one!

Rescue me from these violent schemes!

- ² He concocts his secret strategy to divide and harm others,
 stirring up trouble one against another.

- ³ They are known for their sharp rhetoric
 of poisonous, hateful words.

Pause in his presence

- ⁴ Keep me safe, Lord, out of reach from these wicked and violent men,
 and guard me, God, for they have plotted an evil scheme
 to ruin me and bring me down.

- ⁵ They are proud and insolent; they've set an ambush for me in secret.
 They are determined to snare me in their net like captured prey.

Pause in his presence

- ⁶⁻⁷ O Lord, you are my God and my saving strength!
 My Hero-God, you wrap yourself around me to protect me.
 For I'm surrounded by your presence in my day of battle.
 Lord Yahweh, hear my cry.

May my voice move your heart to show me mercy.

- ⁸ Don't let the wicked triumph over me,
 but bring down their every strategy to subdue me
 or they will become even more arrogant!

Pause in his presence

- ⁹ Those who surround me are nothing but proud troublemakers.
 May they drink the poison of their own poisonous words.

- ¹⁰⁻¹¹ May their slanderous lives never prosper!
 Let evil itself hunt them down and pursue them relentlessly
 until they are thrown into fiery pits
 from which they will never get out!
 Let burning coals of hellfire fall upon their heads!

- ¹² For I know, Lord, that you will be the hero
 of all those they persecute,
 and you will secure justice for the poor.

The Rewards of Wisdom

3¹⁻²My child, if you truly want a long and satisfying life,
never forget the things that I've taught you.

Follow closely every truth that I've given you.

Then you will have a full, rewarding life.

³Hold on to loyal love and don't let go,
and be faithful to all that you've been taught.

Let your life be shaped by integrity,^a
with truth written upon your heart.

⁴That's how you will find favor and understanding
with both God and men—
you will gain the reputation of living life well.

Wisdom's Guidance

⁵Trust in the Lord completely,
and do not rely on your own opinions.
With all your heart rely on him to guide you,
and he will lead you in every decision you make.

⁶Become intimate with him in whatever you do,
and he will lead you wherever you go.^b
Don't think for a moment that you know it all,^c

⁷for wisdom comes when you adore him with undivided devotion
and avoid everything that's wrong.

⁸Then you will find the healing refreshment
your body and spirit long for.^d

⁹Glorify God with all your wealth,
honoring him with your very best,^e
with every increase that comes to you.

¹⁰Then every dimension of your life will overflow with blessings
from an uncontainable source of inner joy!

Wisdom's Correction

¹¹My child, when the Lord God speaks to you,
never take his words lightly,
and never be upset when he corrects you.

a 3:3 Or "Tie them around your neck." The neck is a symbol of our will and conscience.

b 3:6 Or "He will cut a straight path before you."

c 3:6 We should always be willing to listen to correction and instruction.

d 3:8 Literally "healing to your navel and moistening to your bones." The blood supply for a baby in the womb comes through the navel. New cells are made in the marrow of our bones. As the navel and bones picture the life flow of our bodies, so the navel and bones are a picture of our inner being. See John 7:37–39.

e 3:9 Or "the firstfruits."



SONG OF SONGS

Divine Romance

1 The most amazing song of all, by King Solomon.

The Shulamite^a

² Let him^b smother me with kisses—his Spirit-kiss divine.^c

So kind are your caresses,^d

I drink them in like the sweetest wine!^e

³ Your presence releases a fragrance so pleasing—
over and over poured out.

For your lovely name is “Flowing Oil.”^f

No wonder the brides-to-be adore you.^g

⁴ Draw me into your heart.

We will run away together into the king’s cloud-filled chamber.^h

^a 1:2 The word for *Shulamite* and the word for *Solomon* are taken from the same Hebrew root word; one is masculine, the other feminine. The name *Solomon* occurs seven times in this book, which points us to the perfect King, Jesus Christ. We are one spirit with our King, united with him. You have become the *Shulamite*.

^b 1:2 To enter the doorway of Jesus’ heart we must begin by saying, “Let him.” We only bring him a yielded heart and must “let him” do the rest. God’s loving grace means that he will be enough for us. We can “let him” be everything to us. We don’t begin by doing but by yielding.

^c 1:2 This Spirit kiss is what made Adam, the man of clay, into a living expression of God. Dust and deity met when the Maker kissed his Spirit wind into Adam. The Word of God is the kiss from the mouth of our Beloved, breathing upon us the revelation of his love.

^d 1:2 Or “your breasts” or “your loves.” This speaks of his saving love, keeping love, forgiving love, and embracing love. The love of Jesus cannot be singular; it is so infinite it must be described in the plural.

^e 1:2 There is a wordplay in the Hebrew, similar to a pun. The word for “kisses” and the word for “take a drink [wine]” is nearly the same. The implication, as seen by ancient expositors, is that God’s lovers will be drunk with love, the intoxicating kisses of his mouth. The Hebrew word for “kiss” is *nashaq*, which can also mean “to equip” or “to arm (for battle).” We need his kisses to become equipped warriors for him.

^f 1:3 The Hebrew contains a wordplay with the words “name” (*shem*) and “oil” (*shemen*).

^g 1:3 Because of the order of the consonants, some Jewish sources translate this “The maidens love you unto death.” See Goldin, *Song*, 116; J. Sason, “On Pope’s Song,” 191.

^h 1:4 The Hebrew text literally means “the king’s chamber inside of a chamber.” This points us to the Holy of Holies inside the temple chamber.

loveable? Don't even the tax collectors^a do that?⁴⁷ How are you any different from others if you limit your kindness^b only to your friends? Don't even the ungodly^c do that?⁴⁸ Since you are children of a perfect Father in heaven, you are to be perfect^d like him."

Giving with Pure Motives

6 "Examine your motives to make sure you're not showing off when you do your good deeds, only to be admired by others; otherwise, you will lose the reward of your heavenly Father.² So when you give to the poor, don't announce it and make a show of it just to be seen by people,^e like the hypocrites^f in the streets and in the marketplace.^g They've already received their reward!³ But when you demonstrate generosity, do it with pure motives and without drawing attention to yourself.^h ⁴ Give secretly and your Father, who sees all you do, will reward you openly."ⁱ

Prayer

⁵ "Whenever you pray, be sincere and not like the pretenders who love the attention they receive while praying before others in the meetings and on street corners. Believe me, they've already received in full their reward.⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your innermost chamber and be alone with Father God,^j praying to him in secret. And your Father, who sees all you do, will reward you openly.⁷ When you pray, there is no need to repeat empty phrases, praying like those who don't know God,^k for they expect God to hear them because of their many words.⁸ There is no need to imitate them, since your Father already knows what you need before you ask him.⁹ Pray like this:

‘Our Father, dwelling in the heavenly realms,
may the glory of your name

^a 5:46 The Hebrew Matthew is “transgressors.”

^b 5:47 Or “ask for the peace of your brothers” (Hebrew Matthew and Aramaic).

^c 5:47 Or “gentiles” (who worship other gods).

^d 5:48 The Greek and Aramaic words for “perfect” can also mean “whole, complete, fully mature, lacking nothing, all-inclusive, well rounded.”

^e 6:2 Or “blow your own horn.”

^f 6:2 The Greek word *hypokrites* is not only used for people with double standards, it actually means “overcritical,” “nitpicking,” “splitting hairs over religious issues.”

^g 6:2 As translated from Aramaic and Hebrew Matthew. The Greek is “synagogues.”

^h 6:3 Or “Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” This is a figure of speech for giving with pure motives, not to be seen and applauded by others.

ⁱ 6:4 As translated from the Aramaic and Hebrew Matthew. Most Greek manuscripts do not include the word *openly*.

^j 6:6 Or “Go into your inner room [storehouse], close the door, and pray.” This “inner room” can also be a metaphor for praying from the heart, from our innermost being, our storehouse.

^k 6:7 Or “gentiles.”

be the center on which our lives turn.^a

¹⁰ Manifest your kingdom realm,^b
and cause your every purpose to be fulfilled on earth,
just as it is fulfilled in heaven.

¹¹ We acknowledge you as our Provider
of all we need each day.^c

¹² Forgive us the wrongs we have done^d as we ourselves
release forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

¹³ Rescue us every time we face tribulation^e
and set us free from evil.^f

For you are the King who rules
with power and glory forever. Amen.^g

¹⁴ “*And when you pray*, make sure you forgive the faults of others so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you withhold forgiveness from others, your Father withholds forgiveness from you.”

Fasting

¹⁶ “When you fast, don’t look like those who pretend to be spiritual. They want everyone to know they’re fasting, so they appear in public looking miserable, gloomy, and disheveled.^h Believe me, they’ve already received their reward in full. ^{17–18} When you fast, don’t let it be obvious, but instead, wash your faceⁱ and groom yourself and realize that your Father in the secret place is the one who is watching all that you do in secret and will continue to reward you openly.”

a 6:9 An alternate reading of the Aramaic text. The Aramaic word for “name” is *shema* (the Hebrew word, *shem*), a word with multiple meanings. It can also be translated “light,” “sound,” or “atmosphere.” Placing a light, like a lantern, in an enclosed space magnifies that light. This is the meaning here of God’s name being made sacred and magnified as we focus our lives on him. The Greek is “treated as holy.”

b 6:10 Or “Come and begin your kingdom reign.”

c 6:11 Or “Give us bread [or life] today for the coming day.” Bread becomes a metaphor of our needs (physically, spiritually, and emotionally). Jesus is teaching us to acknowledge Father God as our Provider of all we need each day. Both the Greek and Hebrew Matthew can be translated “Give us this day our bread for tomorrow” (or “our continual bread”).

d 6:12 Or “Send away the results of our debts (shortcomings),” used as a metaphor for our sins. The Aramaic can be translated “Give us serenity as we also allow others serenity.”

e 6:13 Or “Do not let us be put into the ordeal of testing.” God never tempts man. See James 1:13–14.

f 6:13 Or “the Evil One.”

g 6:13 As translated from the Aramaic, Hebrew Matthew, and most Greek manuscripts. The Aramaic word for “forever” means “until the end of all the universes.”

h 6:16 Or “disfigure their faces.” Some of them would put saffron on their faces to make them appear a sickly yellow color in order to be seen as though they had been fasting.

i 6:17–18 Or “put oil on your head.”

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹ “Don’t keep hoarding for yourselves earthly treasures that can be stolen by thieves. Material wealth eventually rusts, decays, and loses its value. ^a ²⁰ Instead, stockpile heavenly treasures^b for yourselves that cannot be stolen and will never rust, decay, or lose their value. ²¹ For your heart will always pursue what you value as your treasure. ^c

²² “The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light^d to enter into your being. If your heart is unclouded, the light floods in! ²³ *But if your eyes are focused on money,* ^e the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. ^f How profound will be the darkness within you^g if the light of truth cannot enter!

²⁴ “How could you worship two gods at the same time? You will have to hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You can’t worship the true God while enslaved to the god of money!”^h

Don’t Worry

²⁵ “This is why I tell you to never be worried about your life, for all that you need will be provided, such as food, water, clothing—everything your body needs. Isn’t there more to your life than a meal? Isn’t your body more than clothing?

²⁶ “Look at all the birds—do you think they worry about their existence? They don’t plant or reap or store up food, yet your heavenly Father provides them each with food. Aren’t you much more valuable to your Father than they?

²⁷ So, which one of you by worrying could add anything to your life?ⁱ

²⁸ “And why would you worry about your clothing? Look at all the

^a 6:19 Or “where rust and moth destroy.”

^b 6:20 Heavenly treasures are eternal realities, such as loving others and doing good, revealing truth, and bringing Christ’s light to the lost. None of these “treasures” can be stolen or ever lose their value.

^c 6:21 Or “For your thoughts [heart] will always be focused on your treasure.”

^d 6:22 The teachings of Jesus are the “revelation-light” referred to here. Some scholars see “healthy eyes” as a Semitic figure of speech for generosity, due to the context of giving and money in the verses before and after. Or “Your eye is like a lamp for your body.”

^e 6:23 An “evil” eye can also be associated with being stingy and greedy.

^f 6:23 Or “If your eye is healthy [focused], your whole body is full of light; but if it is sick (evil), your body is full of darkness.” The “eye” becomes a metaphor for spiritual perception. The “body” is our spirit. The “light” is Jesus’ teachings. The “darkness” is formed by the lies and opinions that blind us. These obvious metaphors have been made explicit in the translation.

^g 6:23 Hebrew Matthew is “All your ways are dark.”

^h 6:24 Or “God and mammon.” Mammon is an Aramaic term for money. See 1 Tim. 6:6–10. There is found after v. 24 a part of the *agrapha* that reads, “If you do not fast from the world, you will never discover the kingdom of God” (*Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655*, pOxy 1:4–11).

ⁱ 6:27 The Aramaic and Hebrew Matthew is “add a cubit to your height.” The Greek is “add one hour to your lifespan.”

beautiful flowers of the field. They don't work or toil, ²⁹and yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was robed in beauty more than one of these! ³⁰So if God has clothed the meadow with hay, which is here for such a short time and then dried up and burned, won't he provide for you the clothes you need—even though you live with such little faith?

³¹“So then, forsake your worries! Why would you say, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³²For that is what the unbelievers chase after. Doesn't your heavenly Father already know the things your bodies require?”

³³“So above all, constantly chase after the realm of God's kingdom^b and the righteousness that proceeds from him. Then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly.^c ³⁴Refuse to worry about tomorrow, but deal with each challenge that comes your way, one day at a time.^d Tomorrow will take care of itself.”

Do Not Judge

7“Refuse to be a critic full of bias toward others, and judgment^e will not be passed on you. ²For you'll be judged by the same standard that you've used to judge others. The measurement you use on them will be used on you.^f ³Why would you focus on the flaw in someone else's life and yet fail to notice the glaring flaws of your own?^g ⁴How could you say to your friend, ‘Let me show you where you're wrong,’ when you're guilty of even more? ⁵You're being hypercritical and a hypocrite! First acknowledge your own ‘blind spots’ and deal with them, and then you'll be capable of dealing with the ‘blind spot’ of your friend.^h

⁶“Who would hang earrings on a dog's ear or throw pearlsⁱ in front of

a 6:32 There is a part of the agrapha inserted here, which is confirmed by a number of church fathers who had access to more ancient manuscripts, that reads “So if you ask for the great things, God will add to you the little things.” This is most likely from a variation of the Hebrew Matthew. (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.24.158; Origen, *Commentary on the Pss.* 4.4; *De Oratone* 2.2; 14.1; Eusebius, *Commentary on the Pss.* 16.2. See also Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* [IVP Press, 2006], 236–238.)

b 6:33 The Hebrew Matthew is “Above all, pray for the kingdom realm of God.”

c 6:33 As translated from the Aramaic.

d 6:34 Or “One day's trouble is enough for one day.”

e 7:1 It is God's judgment that is being implied by the passive verbs.

f 7:2 See Rom. 2:1.

g 7:3 Or “Why do you see a speck in your brother's eye but fail to see the beam of wood sticking out of your own eye?”

h 7:5 Or “You hypocrite, why don't you first remove the beam sticking out of your own eye? Then you can see clearly to remove the small speck out of your brother's eye.” Jesus is clearly teaching that our blind spots prevent us from accurately evaluating the needs of others.

i 7:6 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek is “Don't let the dogs have consecrated [holy]



LUKE

Introduction

AT A GLANCE

Author: Luke, beloved physician, friend, and companion to Paul

Audience: Theophilus, and all “lovers of God”

Date: Late-AD 60s, though possibly 70–85

Type of Literature: Ancient historical biography

Major Themes: Jesus’ person, Jesus’ works, the kingdom realm, the Christian life, social dimensions, and the Holy Spirit

Outline:

Luke’s Preface — 1:1–4

Jesus’ Birth and Childhood — 1:5–2:52

Jesus’ Ministry Preparation — 3:1–4:13

Jesus’ Galilean Ministry — 4:14–9:50

Jesus Heads to Jerusalem — 9:51–19:44

Jesus Teaches in Jerusalem — 19:45–21:38

Jesus’ Suffering and Death — 22:1–23:56

Jesus’ Resurrection and Exaltation — 24:1–24:53

ABOUT LUKE

You are about to read the biography of the wonderful Man Jesus Christ. This glorious Gospel was penned by one of his early followers, a physician named Luke. All four Gospels in our New Testament are inspired by God, but Luke’s is unique. I believe that this could be described as the loveliest book ever written.

Luke’s pen was anointed by the Holy Spirit and his book is still read today by the lovers of God, because it is the mercy Gospel. It is a book for everybody, for we all need mercy. Luke writes clearly of the humanity of Jesus—as the servant of all and the sacrifice for all. Every barrier is broken down in Luke’s Gospel: between Jew and gentile, men and women, rich and poor. In Luke we see Jesus as the Savior of all who come to him.

Luke, being a physician, learned the need to exhibit compassion and mercy toward others. It comes through in every chapter. Luke’s Gospel is perhaps the most compassionate and love-filled account of Jesus’ life ever written.

Luke shares Jesus’ teachings on prayer, forgiveness, and our obligation

to demonstrate mercy and grace in dealings with others. Luke provides us with rich details of Jesus' love of children and the forsaken. Luke writes more about Jesus' ministry to women than the other Gospel authors. This was somewhat controversial in the culture of his day. In fact, Luke uses an alternating narrative of one story about a man and the next story about a woman. Luke begins with the story of Zechariah, then moves to Mary. A focus on Simeon, then on Anna. The Roman centurion, then the widow of Nain. The good Samaritan, then Mary and Martha. This pattern continues throughout his Gospel.

A large amount of Luke's Gospel is not found in any other Gospel narrative. If we did not have the book of Luke, we wouldn't know about the stories of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the wedding banquet, and other amazing teachings. Only in the book of Luke do we find the stories of the shepherds at Bethlehem, the ten lepers who were healed, the young man from Nain who was raised from the dead, and the dying thief on the cross next to Jesus. How thankful I am for the Gospel of Luke!

My heart overflows with the joy of seeing the Word of God being translated with all its passion and fire into contemporary English. Unveiled before your eyes will be the glorious Man, Jesus Christ, and the revelation of his undying love for you.

I present to you, and to every lover of God, the Gospel of Luke.

PURPOSE

This world is a far better place because of the revelation Luke shares with us in his Gospel. He gives us a full picture of Jesus' life and ministry, applying scrupulous accuracy to all he wrote to ensure that what we read is factual. In fact, Luke uses the Greek word for "autopsy" (1:2) for investigating with firsthand knowledge those who had seen what Jesus did and heard what Jesus taught.

Dr. Luke performed an "autopsy" on the facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, tracing them all back to their source to make sure what he compiled was of the highest degree of accuracy. He takes "Theophilus" through Jesus' entire ministry career to reveal how God worked to show Jesus to be true and the hope of the world. He also shows how God has been faithful to Israel and the promises he's given her, while inviting the nations to the table of Christ's love and hope.

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

We know little about Luke, the human author of this Gospel. He was a companion of the apostle Paul for some of his missionary journeys and was possibly one of Paul's early converts. Luke was a literary genius and writes with powerful prose. Some believe Luke was possibly the only non-Jewish writer of the New Testament. Others believe that he was a Syrian Jew who took upon himself

a gentile name. It is obvious that he knew firsthand many of the early followers of Jesus, even the apostles who were chosen to preach his name throughout the nations. Near the end of the apostle Paul's life, when he was facing martyrdom, Paul wrote of his trusted friend, "only Luke [is] with me" (2 Tim. 4:11).

The opening line of the Gospel indicates Luke wrote to the "most excellent Theophilus" (see the first footnote on Luke 1:1–4). The name Theophilus means "friend of God" or "lover of God." The Greek word means "most honorable" or "mightiest." Some scholars suggest there was no individual named Theophilus mentioned in Luke's writings. Regardless, Luke's Gospel is a greeting to all the lovers of God. He especially wrote it to non-Jewish lovers of God who may have felt out of place in the originally Jewish movement.

MAJOR THEMES

The Person and Work of Jesus. As you can imagine, a historical biography of Jesus will feature him and his work, front and center! In Luke's Gospel, he is the sent one who is both Lord and Messiah. He is uniquely and intimately connected to God, transcending any portrait of him as simply a human figure and agent. He is also the one who acts, as the promised Messiah anointed by the Spirit to bring in the new era—God's heavenly kingdom realm to earth. His ultimate act was on behalf of every person on the planet, bearing the sins of the world as he hung on the Roman cross. And in the end, this Lord Messiah was vindicated by the Father through the resurrection and exalted to his right hand through the ascension.

The Promised Kingdom Realm. In Jesus Christ, all of God's promises are fulfilled. Chief among them is God's promised kingdom realm. God's kingdom realm is both present and coming. Jesus commands his disciples to proclaim that it has "come near" and is within peoples' reach in the present. The promises of the last days have started to be fulfilled, and yet those promises haven't been ultimately fulfilled. The full manifestation of the kingdom realm is still anticipated, when all the hoped-for prophecies of restoration will be realized.

Women and the Poor. Women are a crucial part of Jesus' story—now and then. In Luke's Gospel they provide examples of deep piety and devotion. They are both of humble means and wealthy. At every turn women are part of Jesus' ministry: Elizabeth, Anna, and of course Mary play important roles in his infancy; women are healed, comforted, and forgiven in Galilee; on the way to Jerusalem, we meet Mary and Martha; and during Christ's most desperate hours, women weep at his feet, stand with him faithfully; finally, they receive the first revelation of Jesus' resurrection. Then there are the poor. Throughout Luke, the poor receive special attention too, showing that God deliberately reaches out to those whom society casts away. He makes clear the good news of Jesus and his love is for people like them, which means the gospel truly is for everybody!

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit plays a major role in Luke's Gospel, where he is referenced nearly twenty times. The Spirit is the driving force in the picture Luke paints of God's coming salvation. He is the architect, the maestro guiding and energizing the events that transpire throughout the life of Jesus. We find him present from the very beginning with his conception and birth on to Christ's baptism in the Spirit and through to his powerful miracle ministry. One of the most important texts in all the Gospels is Luke 3:15–16, where John says one "mightier" than he would come baptizing with "the Spirit of holiness and . . . fire." This Spirit of fire is the sign and seal of the new era of the Messiah, come to rescue and re-create the world!

delegates to ask for the terms of peace. ³³ Likewise, unless you surrender all to me, giving up all you possess, you cannot be one of my disciples.

³⁴ “Salt is good for seasoning. But if salt were to lose its flavor,^a how could it ever be restored? ³⁵ It will never be useful again, not even fit for the soil or the manure pile!^b If you have ears opened by the Spirit, then hear the meaning of what I have said *and apply it to yourselves.*”

The Parable of the Lost Lamb

15 Many dishonest tax collectors and other notorious sinners often gathered around to listen as Jesus taught the people. ² This raised concerns with the Jewish religious leaders and experts of the law. Indignant, they grumbled and complained, saying, “Look at how this man associates with all these notorious sinners and welcomes them all to come to him!”

³ In response, Jesus gave them this illustration:

⁴⁻⁵ “There once was a shepherd with a hundred lambs, but one of his lambs wandered away and was lost. So the shepherd left the ninety-nine lambs out in the open field and searched in the wilderness for that one lost lamb. He didn’t stop until he finally found it. With exuberant joy he raised it up and placed it on his shoulders,^c carrying it back with cheerful delight! ⁶ Returning home, he called all his friends and neighbors together and said, ‘Let’s have a party! Come and celebrate with me the return of my lost lamb. It wandered away, but I found it and brought it home.’”

⁷ Jesus continued, “In the same way, there will be a glorious celebration in heaven over the rescue of one lost sinner who repents, comes back home, and returns to the fold—more so than for all the righteous people who never strayed away.”

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ Jesus gave them another parable:

“There once was a woman who had ten^d valuable silver coins. When

^a 14:34 Or “become foolish.” Both Greek and Aramaic use a word that can mean “foolish.” If salt that has lost its flavor is foolish, then the salt that keeps its flavor is equal to wisdom. Rabbinical literature equates salt with wisdom. (Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.) After speaking of salt, Jesus, in Matthew 5:13–15, goes on to refer to lighting a lamp. It was a common practice in the time of Jesus to put salt on the wick of a lamp to increase its brightness. The “salt” of wisdom will make our light shine even brighter. (W. A. Elwell and P.W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale reference library, Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2001, 797–798.)

^b 14:35 Followers of Jesus who are unwilling to pay the price of discipleship are like worthless salt, unable to affect anything or anyone.

^c 15:4–5 What a wonderful picture this gives us of our “Good Shepherd.” He doesn’t beat the lost sheep for wandering away. He raises it up and carries it home!

^d 15:8 The silver coin was a *zuza* (Aramaic). Although there are differing opinions as to its

she lost one of them, she swept her entire house, diligently searching every corner of her house for that one lost coin. ⁹ When she finally found it, she gathered all her friends and neighbors for a celebration, telling them, ‘Come and celebrate with me! I had lost my precious silver coin, but now I’ve found it.’ ¹⁰ That’s the way God responds ^a every time one lost sinner repents and turns to him. He says to all his angels, ‘Let’s have a joyous celebration, for that one who was lost I have found!’ ^{11b}

The Loving Father

¹¹ Then Jesus said, “Once there was a father with two sons. ¹² The younger son came to his father and said, ‘Father, don’t you think it’s time to give me the share of your estate that belongs to me?’ ^c So the father went ahead and distributed among the two sons their inheritance. ^d ¹³ Shortly afterward, the younger son packed up all his belongings and traveled off to see the world. He journeyed to a far-off land where he soon wasted all he was given in a binge of extravagant and reckless living.

¹⁴ “With everything spent and nothing left, he grew hungry, for there was a severe famine in that land. ¹⁵ So he begged a farmer in that country to hire him. The farmer hired him and sent him out to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The son was so famished, he was willing to even eat the slop given to the pigs, ^e because no one would feed him a thing.

¹⁷ “Humiliated, the son finally realized what he was doing and he thought, “There are many workers at my father’s house who have all the food they want with plenty to spare. They lack nothing. Why am I here dying of hunger, feeding these pigs and eating their slop? ¹⁸ I want to go back home to my father’s house, and I’ll say to him, “Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. ¹⁹ I’ll never be worthy to be called your son. Please, Father, just treat me like one of your employees.”

value, it could be equal in today’s currency to more than twelve hundred US dollars. Notice the change of numbers in the three parables in this chapter: one out of a hundred for the sheep, one out of ten for the coins, and one out of two for the sons. This progressively shows the extraordinary value that Jesus places on every lost soul. Although the coin was lost, it never lost its value.

^a 15:10 Jesus used the woman in this parable as a metaphor for God. This alone would incite anger from the Pharisees. In the next parable, God is unveiled as the extravagant Father who forgives his wayward son.

^b 15:10 The silver coin had an image of Roman authority on it. We have been stamped with the image of God. Even when we are “lost,” that image is still present, needing only to be “found” by grace and redeemed.

^c 15:12 In the light of Middle Eastern culture, it was a great offense for a son to ask his father for his inheritance. It would be equivalent to saying, “I wish you were already dead!”

^d 15:12 The Greek is literally “He gave them his life” (Greek *bios*).

^e 15:16 This would be degrading to anyone, but especially to a Jew, who was forbidden to raise swine.

²⁰ “So the young son set off for home. From a long distance away, his father saw him coming, *dressed as a beggar*,^a and great compassion swelled up in his heart for his son who was returning home. So the father raced out to meet him. He swept him up in his arms, hugged him dearly, and kissed him over and over with tender love.

²¹ “Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be—’

“The father interrupted and said,^b ‘Son, you’re home now!’

²² “Turning to his servants, the father said, ‘Quick, bring me the best robe, my very own robe, and I will place it on his shoulders. Bring the ring, the seal of sonship,^c and I will put it on his finger. And bring out the best shoes^d you can find for my son. ²³ Let’s *prepare a great feast*^e and celebrate. ²⁴ For this beloved son of mine was once dead, but now he’s alive again. Once he was lost, but now he is found!’ And everyone celebrated with overflowing joy.

²⁵ “Now, the older son was out working in the field when his brother returned, and as he approached the house he heard the music of celebration and dancing. ²⁶ So he called over one of the servants and asked, ‘What’s going on?’

²⁷ “The servant replied, ‘It’s your younger brother. He’s returned home and your father is throwing a party to celebrate his homecoming.’

²⁸ “The older son became angry and refused to go in and celebrate. So his father came out and pleaded with him, ‘Come and enjoy the feast with us!’^f

²⁹ “The son said, ‘Father, listen! How many years have I been working like a slave for you, performing every duty you’ve asked as a faithful son?^g And I’ve never once disobeyed you. But you’ve never thrown a party for me because of my faithfulness. Never once have you even given me a goat that I could feast on and celebrate with my friends like he’s doing now. ³⁰ But look at this son of yours! He comes back after wasting your wealth on prostitutes and reckless living, and here you are throwing a great feast to celebrate—for him!’

³¹ “The father said, ‘My son, you are always with me by my side.

a 15:20 Implied in the context of the Greek text and stated more explicitly in the Aramaic.

b 15:21 This poetic description is made explicit from the cultural and spiritual implication of the text.

c 15:22 Culturally, this ring was an emblem of authority, giving the son authority to transact business in the father’s name. This was a picture of the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:14).

d 15:22 Or “bring sandals for his feet.” Slaves were barefoot.

e 15:23 The Greek text is “kill the grain-fatted calf.” This is a picture of feasting upon Christ, who was sacrificed for us.

f 15:28 In the culture of that era, hospitality was of supreme importance. To refuse to go in to the feast, when it was his responsibility culturally to cohost the event with his father, was a humiliating rejection of the father.

g 15:29 While the younger brother pursued self-discovery, the older brother believed in moral conformity, earning favor from his father. Both needed the revelation of grace.

Everything I have is yours to enjoy.³² It's only right to celebrate like this and be overjoyed, because this brother of yours was once dead and gone, but now he is alive and back with us again. He was lost but now he is found!"^a

The Dishonest Manager

16 Jesus taught his disciples using this story:

"There was once a very rich man who hired a manager to run his business and oversee all his wealth. But soon a rumor spread that the manager was wasting his master's money.² So the master called him in and said, 'Is it true that you are mismanaging my estate? You need to provide me with a complete audit of everything you oversee for me. I've decided to dismiss you.'

³ "The manager thought, 'Now what am I going to do? I'm finished here. I can't hide what I've done,^b and I'm too proud to beg to get my job back. 'I have an idea that will secure my future. It will win me favor and secure friends who can take care of me and help me when I get fired!'

⁵ "So the dishonest manager hatched his scheme. He went to everyone who owed his master money, one by one, and he asked them, 'How much do you owe my master?'⁶⁻⁷ One debtor owed twenty thousand dollars, so he said to him, 'Let me see your bill. Pay me now and we'll settle for twenty percent less.' The clever manager scratched out the original amount owed and reduced it by twenty percent. And to another who owed two hundred thousand dollars, he said, 'Pay me now and we'll reduce your bill by fifty percent.' And the clever manager scratched out the original amount owed and reduced it by half.

⁸ "Even though his master was defrauded, when he found out about the shrewd way this manager had feathered his own nest, he congratulated the clever scoundrel for what he'd done to lay up for his future needs."

Jesus continued, "Remember this: The sons of darkness are more shrewd than the sons of light in their interactions with others.⁹ It is important that you use the wealth of this world to demonstrate your friendship with God

^a 15:32 Jesus spoke three parables unveiling and revealing how the Trinity desires to bring people back through the Son, by the Spirit, to the Father. The Son came as a shepherd, seeking and sacrificing to find the lost sinner. The Spirit seeks the lost like the woman with the light of illumination for the lost coin until she found it. And the Father welcomes the returning sinner back to his house. It is the work of the Trinity to bring us back to God. In Matt. 28:19, it is the sequence of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. Here in Luke 15, it is the Son, the Spirit, and the Father.

^b 16:3 The manager's words include an ancient Aramaic figure of speech, "I can't dig," which means it can't be buried or hidden.

into his hands.^a ³⁶Those who trust in the Son possess eternal life; but those who don't obey^b the Son will not see life, and God's anger will rise up against them."^c

A Thirsty Savior

4 Soon the news reached the Jewish religious leaders known as the Pharisees that Jesus was drawing greater crowds of followers coming to be baptized than John.² (Although Jesus didn't baptize, but had his disciples baptize the people.)³ *Jesus*^d heard what was being said and abruptly left Judea and returned to the province of Galilee,⁴ and he had to pass through Samaritan territory.

⁵Jesus arrived at the Samaritan village of Sychar,^e near the field that Jacob had given to his son, Joseph, long ago.⁶⁻⁸ Wearing by his long journey, he sat on the edge of Jacob's well.^f He sent his disciples into the village to buy food, for it was already afternoon.

Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink of water."^g

⁹Surprised, she said, "Why would a Jewish man ask a Samaritan woman for a drink of water?"

¹⁰Jesus replied, "If you only knew who I am and the gift that God wants to give you—you'd ask me for a drink, and I would give to you living water."

¹¹The woman replied, "But sir,^h you don't even have a bucket and this well is very deep. So where do you find this 'living water'? ¹²Do you really think that you are greater than our ancestor Jacob who dug this well and drank from it himself, along with his children and livestock?"

¹³Jesus answered, "If you drink from Jacob's well you'll be thirsty again

a 3:35 The text is simply "he has given all into his hands." The "all" can be all things, or "all authority," but can also mean "all people."

b 3:36 The Aramaic can be translated "those who do not cling to the Son."

c 3:36 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek is "wrath rests upon them."

d 4:3 Some manuscripts have "The Lord." This is included here from v. 1 for the sake of the English narrative.

e 4:5 This is near modern-day Nablus in the northern region of the West Bank. There is a village named Askar, which was formerly known as Sychar, about one kilometer north of the well.

f 4:6-8 The well was "a spring-fed well." This becomes a picture of the "spring" of the Jacob-life inside of every one of us. Fed by Adam's fall, this spring has flowed through all of humanity. But Jesus sat as a "lid" to Jacob's well, sealing its polluted stream. In Christ, Jacob's clever striving has ended. A living well became a lid to Jacob's well as Jesus sat there ready to give his living water to all who would come and drink. A well sitting upon a well.

g 4:6-8 The "water" Jesus wanted was the refreshing, satisfying pleasure of her devotion. He says to each one of us, "Nothing satisfies me except you." The sinner drank of the Savior and the Savior drank of the sinner and both were satisfied. Neither ate or drank, but both were satisfied.

h 4:11 The woman used the Greek title *kurios* when she addressed Jesus. *Kurios* is the Greek word for "lord." However, *kurios* is not a word used for "exalted or sovereign Lord," but more like "sir."

and again,¹⁴ but if anyone drinks the living water I give them, they will never thirst again and will be forever satisfied! For when you drink the water I give you it becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit, springing up and flooding you with endless life!”^a

¹⁵ The woman replied, “Let me drink that water so I’ll never be thirsty again and won’t have to come back here to draw water.”

¹⁶ Jesus said, “Go get your husband and bring him back here.”

¹⁷ “But I’m not married,” the woman answered.

“That’s true,” Jesus said, ¹⁸ “for you’ve been married five times^b and now you’re living with a man who is not your husband. You have told the truth.”^c

¹⁹ The woman said, “You must be a prophet!” ²⁰ So tell me this: Why do our fathers worship God here on this nearby mountain,^d but your people teach that Jerusalem is the place where we must worship. Which is right?”

Jesus responded, ²¹ “Believe me, dear woman, the time has come when you won’t worship^e the Father on a mountain nor in Jerusalem, *but in your heart*. ²² Your people don’t really know the One they worship. We Jews worship out of our experience, for it’s from the Jews that salvation is made available.^f ^{23–24} From here on, worshiping the Father will not be a matter of the right place but with the right heart. For God is a Spirit,^g and he longs to have sincere worshipers who worship and adore him in the realm of the Spirit and in truth.”

²⁵ The woman said, “*This is all so confusing*, but I do know that the Anointed One is coming—the true Messiah. And when he comes, he will tell us everything we need to know.”

a 4:14 The Greek verb used for “springing up” is *hallomenou*, and is never used for inanimate objects (water). It is a verb used for people (living things) and means “jumping,” or “leaping up.” The Septuagint translates this verb elsewhere as an activity of the Holy Spirit.

b 4:18 In a sense, every one of us has been married to our five husbands: our five senses. The six men speak of our fallen humanity, for six is the number of man who was created on the sixth day. Our heart can never be satisfied with what is on this earth; we must have the living water that comes from heaven. Christ is the seventh husband, the only One who satisfies. Christ is the real husband. See 2 Cor. 11:2.

c 4:18 After offering her living water, Jesus first confronts her with her sin and steers her away from religious debates (the proper place to worship, v. 20). Then he unveils himself to her as the true Messiah. Jesus does the same thing to everyone who comes to him.

d 4:20 This is most likely Mt. Gerizim where the Samaritans had a shrine to worship God. However, Jacob’s well is located at the base of Mt. Ebal, the mountain the Levites were told to curse. See Deut. 27:12–26; Josh. 8:33. Both Gerizim and Ebal are mountains in Samaria.

e 4:21 The Aramaic word for “worship,” *seged*, means “to bow down” or “to surrender.”

f 4:22 Or “the life-givers are from the Jews.”

g 4:23–24 Or “God is breath,” or “God is wind.” Jesus refers to “Spirit” more than one hundred times in the four Gospels.

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “You don’t have to wait any longer, the Anointed One is here speaking with you—I am the One you’re looking for.”^a

²⁷ At that moment the disciples returned and were stunned to see Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman. Yet none of them dared to ask him why or what they were discussing. ²⁸ All at once, the woman dropped her water jar and ran off to her village and told everyone, ²⁹ “Come and meet a man at the well who told me everything I’ve ever done!”^b He could be the Anointed One we’ve been waiting for.” ³⁰ Hearing this, the people came streaming out of the village to go see Jesus.^c

The Harvest Is Ready

³¹ Then the disciples began to insist that Jesus eat some of the food they brought back from the village, saying, “Teacher, you must eat something.” ³² But Jesus told them, “Don’t worry about me. I have eaten a meal^d you don’t know about.”

³³ Puzzled by this, the disciples began to discuss among themselves, “Did someone already bring him food? Where did he get this meal?”

³⁴ Then Jesus spoke up and said, “My food is to be doing the will of him who sent me and bring it to completion.”

³⁵ *As the crowds emerged from the village, Jesus said to his disciples, “Why would you say, ‘The harvest is another four months away’? Look at all the people coming—now is harvest time! For their hearts are like vast fields of ripened grain—ready for a spiritual harvest. ³⁶ And everyone who reaps these souls for eternal life will receive a reward. And those who plant spiritual seeds and those who reap the harvest will celebrate together with great joy! ³⁷ And this confirms the saying, ‘One sows the seed and another reaps the harvest.’^e ³⁸ I have sent you out to harvest a field that you haven’t planted, where many others have labored long and hard before you. And now you are privileged to profit from their labors and reap the harvest.”*

a 4:26 Or “I am the I AM who speaks to you.”

b 4:29 No doubt, this woman was the talk of the town. Having five marriages, she was well known for what she had done. For her to say these words was an honest confession of her past. The miracle here is that the people believed her and went out to see for themselves.

c 4:30 Although unnamed in the biblical account, church tradition identifies the Samaritan woman to be Photini. An internet search of her name will yield many interesting stories about her post-conversion ministry, including her being named as an “apostle” of Jesus and her eventual martyrdom. Regardless of the validity of the extrabiblical references, she will go down in history as the first New Testament evangelist to win a city to Christ. God is faithful to use anyone to reach others when we are honest to tell others that Jesus knows everything we’ve ever done and still loves us.

d 4:32 There is a fascinating word play here in the Aramaic. The word Jesus uses isn’t the common word for “food,” but is actually a word that means “nutrients.” It is also a homonym that is more commonly translated “kingdom.” Jesus has a kingdom feast that no one else knows about. He feasts upon the devotion of his bride. See Song. 4:15; 5:1. The church is truly the “woman at the well.”

e 4:37 See Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15.

³⁹ So there were many from the Samaritan village who became believers in Jesus because of the woman's testimony: "He told me everything I ever did!"

⁴⁰ Then they begged Jesus to stay with them, so he stayed there for two days,

⁴¹ resulting in many more coming to faith in him because of his teachings.

⁴² Then the Samaritans said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you told us, but now we've heard him ourselves and are convinced that he really is the true Savior of the world!"^a

Jesus Returns to Galilee

⁴³ On the third day Jesus left there and walked to the province of Galilee, *where he was raised*.^b ⁴⁴ Now Jesus knew that prophets are honored everywhere they go except in their own hometown. ⁴⁵ Even so, as Jesus arrived in the province of Galilee, he was welcomed by the people with open arms. Many of them had been in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival and had witnessed firsthand the miracles he had performed.^c

⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ Jesus entered the village of Cana of Galilee where he had transformed water into wine. And there was a governmental official in Capernaum who had a son who was very sick and dying. When he heard that Jesus had left Judea and was staying in Cana of Galilee, he decided to make the journey to Cana.^d When he found Jesus he begged him, "You must come with me to Capernaum and heal my son!"

⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, "You ^e never believe unless you see signs and wonders."^f

⁴⁹ But the man continued to plead, "You have to come with me to Capernaum before my little boy dies!"

⁵⁰ Then Jesus looked him in the eyes and said, "Go back home now. I promise you, your son will live and not die."

The man believed in his heart the words of Jesus and set off for home.

⁵¹ When he was still a distance from Capernaum, his servants met him on the road and told him the good news, "Your son is healed! He's alive!"

⁵² Overjoyed, the father asked his servants, "When did my son begin to recover?"

"Yesterday," they said, "at one in the afternoon. All at once his fever broke—and now he's well!"

a 4:42 They acknowledge Jesus not just as the Messiah, but the "Savior of the world," including the Samaritan people who were outcasts from Judaism. The word *Savior* in Aramaic is literally translated "Life-Giver."

b 4:43 See v. 44.

c 4:45 See John 2:23.

d 4:46–47 The distance from Capernaum to Cana was about twenty miles.

e 4:48 Or "You all."

f 4:48 The Samaritans believed without seeing miracles.

what my moral instincts condemn. ¹⁶ And if my behavior is not in line with my desire, my conscience still confirms the excellence of the law. ¹⁷ And now I realize that it is no longer my true self doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin in my humanity. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good lives within the flesh of my fallen humanity. The longings to do what is right are within me, but will-power is not enough to accomplish it. ^a ¹⁹ My lofty desires to do what is good are dashed when I do the things I want to avoid. ²⁰ So if my behavior contradicts my desires to do good, I must conclude that it's not my true identity doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin *hindering me from being who I really am*.

²¹ Through my experience of this principle, I discover that even when I want to do good, evil is ready to sabotage me. ²² Truly, deep within my true identity, I love to do what pleases God. ²³ But I discern another power operating in my humanity, waging a war against the moral principles of my conscience^b and bringing me into captivity as a prisoner to the “law” of sin—this unwelcome intruder in my humanity. ²⁴ What an agonizing situation I am in! So who has the power to rescue this miserable man from the unwelcome intruder of sin and death?^c ²⁵ I give all my thanks to God, for his mighty power has finally provided a way out through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One! So if left to myself, the flesh is aligned with the law of sin, but now my renewed mind is fixed on and submitted to God's righteous principles.^d

Living by the Power of the Holy Spirit

O So now the case is closed. There remains no accusing voice of condemnation against those who are joined in life-union with Jesus, the Anointed One.^e ² For the “law” of the Spirit of life flowing through the anointing of Jesus has liberated us^f from the “law” of sin and death. ³ For God achieved what the law was unable to accomplish, because the law was limited by the weakness of human nature.^g

Yet God sent us his Son in human form to identify with human weakness. Clothed with humanity, God's Son gave his body to be the sin-offering so that

experienced all of these things, but a rhetorical device of solidarity with the experience of those who live under the law. Romans ch. 7 is not the present experience of any one person, but the testimony of a delivered person describing the condition of an unde-livered one.

a 7:18 Some Greek manuscripts have “but I don't know how to do it.”

b 7:23 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek is “warring against the law of my mind.”

c 7:24 Or “Who will free me from this body of death?”

d 7:25 Or “God's law.”

e 8:1 Or “Those who are in Christ Jesus cannot be condemned.” Although there are some manuscripts that add to this verse, “for those who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,” the addition is not supported by the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts.

f 8:2 Some Greek manuscripts have “sets me free” or “sets you [singular] free.”

g 8:3 Or “weakness of the flesh.”

God could once and for all condemn the guilt and power of sin. “So now every righteous requirement of the law can be fulfilled through the Anointed One living his life in us. And we are free to live, not according to our flesh, but by the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit!”^a

⁵ Those who are motivated by the flesh only pursue what benefits themselves. But those who live by the impulses of the Holy Spirit are motivated to pursue spiritual realities.^b ⁶ For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set controlled by the Spirit finds life and peace.

⁷ In fact, the mind-set focused on the flesh fights God’s plan and refuses to submit to his direction,^c because it cannot! ⁸ For no matter how hard they try, God finds no pleasure with those who are controlled by the flesh. ⁹ But when the Spirit of Christ empowers your life,^d you are not dominated by the flesh but by the Spirit. And if you are not joined to the Spirit of the Anointed One, you are not of him.^e

¹⁰ Now Christ lives his life in you! And even though your body may be dead because of the effects of sin, his life-giving Spirit imparts life to you because you are fully accepted by God.^f ¹¹ Yes, God raised Jesus to life! And since God’s Spirit of Resurrection lives in you, he will also raise your dying body to life by the same Spirit that breathes life into you!

¹² So then, beloved ones, the flesh has no claims on us at all, and we have no further obligation to live in obedience to it. ¹³ For when you live controlled by the flesh, you are about to die. But if the life of the Spirit puts to death the corrupt ways of the flesh, we then taste his abundant life.

Sons and Daughters Destined for Glory

¹⁴ The mature children of God are those^g who are moved by the impulses of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁵ And you did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,”^h leading you back into the fear of *never being good enough*.ⁱ But you have received the

^a 8:4 What joyous truths are found in Rom. 8! All that God requires of us has been satisfied by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus in us is enough to satisfy God. The power of our new life is not the works of our weak humanity, but the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit released in us.

^b 8:5 Or “the things of the [Holy] Spirit”; that is, doing what pleases God. The Aramaic can be translated “Those who are in the flesh see him only in the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit see him in the Spirit.”

^c 8:7 Or “refuses to submit to his law.”

^d 8:9 Or “makes his home in you.”

^e 8:9 This is an unusual Greek clause that can be translated “If anyone is not joined to the Spirit of Christ, he cannot be himself.” A similar construction is used in Luke 15:17: “The prodigal son came to himself.”

^f 8:10 The Aramaic can be translated “for the cause of righteousness.”

^g 8:14 The Greek is quite emphatic: “those and only those.”

^h 8:15 Or “spirit of slavery.”

ⁱ 8:15 Implied in both the text and the greater context of finding our true life in the “Spirit

First apostles,
 second prophets,
 third teachers,
 then those with gifts of miracles, gifts of divine healing,
 gifts of revelation knowledge,^a gifts of leadership,^b
 and gifts of different kinds of tongues.

²⁹ Not everyone is an apostle or a prophet or a teacher. Not everyone performs miracles ³⁰ or has gifts of healing or speaks in tongues or interprets tongues. ³¹ But you should all constantly boil over with passion in seeking the higher gifts.

And now I will show you a superior way to live that is beyond comparison!^c

Love, the Motivation of Our Lives

13 If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels,^d yet I didn't express myself with love,^e my words would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal.

² And if I were to have *the gift of prophecy*^f with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains,^g but have never learned to love, then I am nothing.

³ And if I were to be so generous as to give away everything I owned to feed the poor, and to offer my body to be burned *as a martyr*,^h without the pure motive of love, I would gain nothing of value.

a 12:28 Most translations render the Greek word *antilēmpsis* (a hapax legomenon) as "helps." However, it is literally "laying hold of" (revelation) or "apprehending" (perception).

b 12:28 This is a hapax legomenon that can be translated "guidance" or "one who steers the ship."

c 12:31 Or "a path corresponding to transcendence."

d 13:1 The implication is that the angels speak a distinct language among themselves that is not known on earth.

e 13:1 The Aramaic word for love is *hooba*, and it is a homonym that also means "to set on fire." It is difficult to fully express the meaning of this word and translate it into English. You could say the Aramaic concept is "burning love" or "fiery love," coming from the inner depths of the heart as an eternal energy, an active power of bonding hearts and lives in secure relationships. The Greek word is *agapē*, which describes the highest form of love. It is the love God has for his people. It is an intense affection that must be demonstrated. It is a loyal, endless, and unconditional commitment of love. Feelings are attached to this love. It is not abstract, but devoted to demonstrating the inward feelings of love toward another with acts of kindness and benevolence.

f 13:2 Or "prophetic powers."

g 13:2 The Greek present infinitive indicates a continuous aspect, which means a faith to keep on removing mountains or to remove one mountain after another.

h 13:3 The Aramaic word used here is a homonym that can mean either "to burn" or "to boast." Because of this, some Greek manuscripts have "I offer my body in order to boast [glory]."

^a Love is *large and* incredibly patient. ^a Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous ^b *when blessing comes to someone else*. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. ^c Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated ^d or quick to take offense. ^e ^f Love joyfully celebrates honesty ^g and finds no delight in what is wrong. ^h Love is a safe place of shelter, ⁱ for it never stops believing the best for others. ^j Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up.

Perfect Love

^k Love never stops loving. ^l It extends beyond the gift of prophecy, which eventually fades away. ^m It is more enduring than tongues, which will one day fall silent. Love remains long after *words of knowledge* are forgotten. ⁿ ^o Our present knowledge and our prophecies are but partial, ^p but when love's perfection arrives, the partial will fade away. ^q ^r When I was a child, I spoke about childish matters, for I saw things like a child and reasoned like a child. But the day came when I matured, and I set aside my childish ways.

^s For now we see but a faint reflection of riddles and mysteries ^t as though

a 13:4 Or "Love patiently endures mistreatment" could mean that love is incredibly patient *even in difficult relationships*. The Aramaic can be translated "Love transforms the spirit."

b 13:4 Or "boil with jealousy."

c 13:5 Or "overly sensitive" (having sharp edges).

d 13:5 Or "resentful" or "does not keep score." The Aramaic can be translated "Love does not stare at evil." Love will overlook offenses and remain focused on what is good, refusing to hold resentment in our hearts.

e 13:6 Or "reality" (or "truth").

f 13:6 Or "injustice" or "unrighteousness."

g 13:7 Or "Love bears all things." Although commonly understood to mean that love can bear hardships of any kind, the nominalized form of the verb (*stego*) is actually the word for "roof" found in Mark 2:4. Paul is saying that love covers all things, like a roof covers the house. See 1 Peter 4:8. Love does not focus on what is wrong but will bear with the shortcomings of others. And like a roof protects and shields, you could say that love springs no leak. It is a safe place that offers shelter, not exposure.

h 13:7 Or "it never loses faith."

i 13:8 Or "Love never, not even once, fails [lapses]" or "Love never falls down" (it keeps going higher).

j 13:8 The Aramaic can be translated "prophecy comes to pass."

k 13:8 That is, the gift of the word of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8). Knowledge itself will not pass away or be set aside, for we will learn of God's mercies throughout eternity. This is the gifts of knowledge Paul refers to.

l 13:9 Or "in fragments."

m 13:10 Perfect love diminishes the importance of prophecy and tongues. Paul could be saying that they will cease being important when compared with perfect love. That which is perfect is love and is greater than the gifts. Perfect love puts everything else in second place, for God is love. See 1 John 4:8, 18. Paul is contrasting spiritual gifts with love, saying, "Gifts will fail, but love will never fail." Like leaves falling to the ground, something greater will one day take their place: the love of God.

n 13:12 The Greek word *ainigma* used here is equal to our English word *enigma*.

reflected in a mirror, but one day we will see face-to-face.^a My understanding is incomplete now, but one day I will understand everything, just as everything about me has been fully understood.¹³ Until then, there are three things that remain: faith, hope, and love—yet love surpasses them all.^b So above all else, let love be the beautiful prize for which you run.^c

Proper Use of Spiritual Gifts

14 It is good that you are enthusiastic and passionate about spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.^{d,2} When someone speaks in tongues, no one understands a word he says, because he's not speaking to people, but to God—he is speaking intimate mysteries in the Spirit.^{e,3} But when someone prophesies, he speaks to encourage people, to build them up, and to bring them comfort.^{f,4} The one who speaks in tongues advances his own spiritual progress,^g while the one who prophesies builds up the church.⁵ I would be delighted if you all spoke in tongues, but I desire even more that you impart prophetic revelation to others. Greater gain comes through the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless there is interpretation so that it builds up the entire church.

⁶My dear friends, what good is it if I come to you always speaking in tongues? But if I come with a clear revelation from God, or with insight,^h or with a prophecy, or with a clear teaching, *I can enrich you.*^{i,7} Similarly, if musical instruments, such as flutes or stringed instruments, are out of tune and don't play the arrangement clearly, how will anyone recognize the melody? ⁸If the bugle

^a 13:12 Paul is referring to God speaking to Moses “face-to-face” (Hebrew “mouth-to-mouth”), and not using dreams and figures of speech (Num. 12:8). Transforming love will bring us all face-to-face, mouth-to-mouth with God.

^b 13:13 Faith and hope both spring from love, which makes love the greatest virtue of all. Faith and hope are temporary, but love is eternal. Paul gives us ten characteristics of divine love in this chapter. Love (1) is patient under stress, (2) is kind at all times, (3) is generous, not envious, (4) is humble, not self-promoting, (5) is never rude, (6) does not manipulate by using shame, (7) is not irritable or easily offended, (8) celebrates honesty, (9) does not focus on what is flawed, and (10) is loyal to the end.

^c 13:13 Unfortunately, there is a chapter break before this line. Chapter headings are not part of the inspired text. The translator has chosen to insert the partial text of 14:1 here in conclusion to Paul's masterful treatise on love.

^d 14:1 Or “that you crave spiritual things” or “that you crave spiritual realities.”

^e 14:2 This verse makes it clear that the tongues Paul refers to are not known languages but Spirit-inspired utterances.

^f 14:3 The Greek word *paramythia* (a hapax legomenon) could also be translated “soothing, calming speech” or “affirmation.” Paul does not describe prophecy here as predictive, but as influential to advance the spiritual welfare of the body.

^g 14:4 See Rom. 8:26.

^h 14:6 Or “intimate knowledge through experience.”

ⁱ 14:6 Paul uses these four ministries as examples of what builds up the church. Every congregation needs to focus on all four (revelation from God, insights of truth, prophecy, and teaching), as they are all necessary today.



EPHESIANS

Heaven's Riches

Paul's Introduction

1 *Dear friends,*

My name is Paul, and I was chosen by God to be an apostle of Jesus, the Messiah. ²I'm writing this letter to all the devoted believers^a who have been made holy^b by being one with Jesus, the Anointed One.

May God himself, the heavenly Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, release grace over you and impart total well-being^c into your lives.

Our Sonship and the Father's Plan

³Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm has already been lavished upon us as a love gift from our wonderful heavenly Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus—all because he sees us wrapped into Christ. This is why we celebrate him^d with all our hearts!

⁴And he chose us to be his very own, joining us to himself even before he laid the foundation of the universe!^e Because of his great love, he ordained^f us, so that we would be seen as holy in his eyes with an unstained innocence.

^a 1:2 Recent manuscripts add the words “those who are in Ephesus.” The oldest manuscripts have “to the Ephesians” written in the margin. This would reinforce the theory that it is meant to be read and distributed to all the churches. Although the book bears the name “Ephesians,” some scholars believe that this letter could be the missing letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in Col. 4:16. Regardless, Ephesians contains crucial truths for believers worldwide.

^b 1:2 Or “to the saints [holy ones] and the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Notice that God is the one who makes us holy, but our response is to be “faithful” (or “devoted”).

^c 1:2 Or “peace.” The Hebrew concept of peace means much more than tranquility.

^d 1:3 Or “bless” (or “blessed be God”).

^e 1:4 As translated from the Aramaic. There is an alternate Greek translation of the unique wording of this verse that could be translated “He chose us to be a ‘word’ before the fall of the world.” The Greek word for “chose” is *eklegomai*, which is a form of *lego* (speak). The word for “fall” (Adam’s fall) is *kataboles*, which can mean “falling down,” but is usually translated as “foundation” (of the world).

^f 1:4 As translated from the Aramaic. One Eastern Aramaic text can be translated “He marked us with his love.” The Greek text states “predestined us” or “set us apart.”

⁵⁻⁶ For it was always in his perfect plan^a to adopt^b us as his delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that his tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify his grace^c—for the same love he has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us. And this unfolding plan brings him great pleasure!

⁷ Since we are now joined to Christ, we have been given the treasures of redemption by his blood—the total cancellation^d of our sins—all because of the cascading riches^e of his grace. ⁸ This superabundant grace is already powerfully working in us,^f releasing within us all forms of wisdom and practical understanding. ⁹ And through the revelation of the Anointed One, he unveiled his secret desires to us—the hidden mystery of his long-range plan, which he was delighted to implement from the very beginning of time. ¹⁰ And because of God's unfailing purpose, this detailed plan will reign supreme through every period of time until the fulfillment of all the ages finally reaches its climax—when God makes all things new^g in all of heaven and earth through Jesus Christ.

¹¹ Through our union with Christ we too have been claimed by God as his own inheritance.^h Before we were even born, he gave us our destiny;ⁱ that we would fulfill the plan of God who always accomplishes every purpose and plan in his heart. ¹² God's purpose was that we *Jews*, who were the first to long for the messianic hope, would be the first to believe in the Anointed One and bring great praise and glory to God!

¹³ And because of him, when you *who are not Jews* heard the revelation^j of truth, you believed in the wonderful news of salvation. Now we have been stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.^k

¹⁴ He is given to us like an engagement ring^l is given to a bride, as the first

a 1:5–6 Or “He marked out our horizon [destiny] beforehand.”

b 1:5–6 The Aramaic reads “to establish us.”

c 1:5–6 Or “to the praise of the glory of his grace.”

d 1:7 Or “forgiveness.” The Greek word *aphesis*, means “to send away” or “to set free” (from bondage).

e 1:7 The Greek word for riches (*ploutos*) is also used to describe God's wisdom and knowledge in Rom. 11:33. Just as God is all-knowing and has all-wisdom, so he has untold riches of grace available for his children.

f 1:8 Or “lavished on us.”

g 1:10 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek text states “God will gather together all things in fulfillment in Christ.” That is, God will unite all things under the headship of Christ.

h 1:11 The Greek construction of this phrase can mean either that God appointed us (Gr. *klēroō*, chosen by casting lots) to be his inheritance, or that we have been appointed an inheritance.

i 1:11 Or “estate.”

j 1:13 The Greek text is *logos* or “word of God.”

k 1:13 Some Aramaic manuscripts add here “who was announced by the angels.”

l 1:14 The Greek word used here can be translated “pledge,” “down payment” or “engagement ring.”

installment of what's coming! He is our hope-promise of a future inheritance^a which seals us until we have all of redemption's promises and experience complete freedom—all for the supreme glory and honor of God!

Paul Prays for the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

¹⁵ Because of this, since I first heard about your strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your tender love toward all his devoted ones, ¹⁶ my heart is always full and overflowing with thanks to God for you as I constantly remember you in my prayers. ^b ¹⁷ I pray that the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would impart to you the riches of the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation^c to know him through your deepening intimacy with him.

¹⁸ I pray that the light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination,^d flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling^e—that is, the wealth of God's glorious inheritances that he finds in us, his holy ones!

¹⁹ I pray that you will continually experience the immeasurable greatness of God's power made available to you through faith. Then your lives will be an advertisement of this immense power as it works through you! This is the mighty power ²⁰ that was released when God raised Christ from the dead and exalted him^f to the place of highest honor and supreme authority^g in the heavenly realm! ²¹ And now he is exalted as first above every ruler, authority, government, and realm of power in existence! He is gloriously enthroned over every name that is ever praised,^h not only in this age,ⁱ but in the age that is coming!^j

²² And he alone is the leader and source of everything needed in the church. God has put everything beneath the authority of Jesus Christ^k *and has given him the highest rank above all others.* ²³ And now we, his church, are his body on the earth and that which fills him who is being filled by it!^l

a 1:14 The Aramaic word used for "inheritance" can also be translated "dividend."

b 1:16 The literal Aramaic text can be translated "I began confessing on your behalf and praying."

c 1:17 Or "discovery."

d 1:18 Or "innermost" (heart).

e 1:18 Or "to which he is calling you."

f 1:20 Or "he seated him" (enthroned).

g 1:20 Or "at his right hand," a metaphor for the place of honor and authority.

h 1:21 As translated from the Aramaic.

i 1:21 The Aramaic word can be translated "universe."

j 1:21 As translated from the Aramaic.

k 1:22 Both Greek and Aramaic texts use the figure of speech "under his feet," which means he has conquered, subdued, and now rules over them.

l 1:23 That is, as we are those who are filled (completed) by Christ, we also complete (fill) him. What a wonderful and humbling mystery is revealed by this verse.

²⁰For you were included in the death of Christ and have died with him to the religious system and powers of this world. Don't retreat back to being bullied by the standards and opinions of religion—²¹*for example, their strict requirements, "You can't associate with that person!" or, "Don't eat that!" or, "You can't touch that!"* ²²These are the doctrines of men and corrupt customs that are worthless to help you spiritually. ²³For though they may appear to possess the promise of wisdom in their submission to God through the deprivation of their physical bodies, it is actually nothing more than empty rules rooted in religious rituals!

One with Christ in Glory

3 Christ's resurrection is your resurrection too. This is why we are to yearn for all that is above, for that's where Christ sits enthroned at the place of all power, honor, and authority!^a ²Yes, *feast on all the treasures of the heavenly realm* and fill your thoughts with heavenly realities, and not with the distractions of the natural realm.

³Your crucifixion^b with Christ has severed the tie to this life, and now your true life is hidden away in God in Christ. ⁴And as Christ himself is seen for who he really is, who you really are will also be revealed, for you are now one with him in his glory!

New Creation Life

⁵Live as one who has died to every form of sexual sin and impurity. Live as one who died to diseases,^c and desires for forbidden things,^d including the desire for wealth, which is the essence of idol worship. ⁶When you live in these vices you ignite the anger of God against these acts of disobedience.^e

⁷⁻⁸That's how you once behaved, characterized by your evil deeds. But now it's time to eliminate them from your lives once and for all—anger, fits of rage, all forms of hatred,^f cursing,^g filthy speech,^h and lying.ⁱ Lay aside¹ your old Adam-self with its masquerade and disguise.

¹⁰For you have acquired new creation life which is continually being

a 3:1 The "right hand of God," is an obvious metaphor for the place of power, authority, honor, and glory.

b 3:3 The Aramaic could be translated "Your death and your life are both hidden with the Messiah in God."

c 3:5 This is only found in the Aramaic manuscripts. It is omitted in the Greek.

d 3:5 The Aramaic word implies "magic."

e 3:6 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek states "the sons of disobedience," but it is actually the "deeds" which are punished as seen in verses 7–9. The Aramaic word used here is a homonym that can mean either "sons" or "deeds," which may explain the variation within Greek manuscripts.

f 3:7–8 Including self-hatred.

g 3:7–8 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek means "slander."

h 3:9 Or "living a lie."

i 3:9 As translated from the Greek. The Aramaic has a command, "take off the old life."

renewed into the likeness of the One who created you; giving you the full revelation of God. ¹¹ In this new creation life, your nationality makes no difference, or your ethnicity, education, or economic status—they *matter nothing*. For it is Christ that means everything as he lives in every one of us!^a

Love One Another

¹² You are always and dearly loved by God! So robe yourself *with virtues of God*, since you have been divinely chosen to be holy. Be merciful as you endeavor to understand others, and be compassionate, showing kindness toward all. Be gentle and humble, unoffendable in your patience with others. ¹³ Tolerate the weaknesses of those in the family of faith, forgiving one another in the same way you have been graciously forgiven by Jesus Christ. If you find fault with someone, release this same gift of forgiveness to them. ¹⁴ For love is supreme and must flow through each of these virtues. Love becomes the mark^b of true maturity.^c

¹⁵ Let your heart be always guided^d by the peace of the Anointed One, who called you to peace as part of his one body. And always be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ live^e in you richly, flooding you with all wisdom. *Apply the Scriptures* as you teach and instruct one another with the Psalms, and with festive praises,^f and with prophetic songs given to you spontaneously by the Spirit, so sing to God with all your hearts!

¹⁷ Let every activity^g of your lives and every word^h that comes from your lips be drenched with the beauty of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. And bring your constant praise to God the Father *because of what Christ has done for you!*

Loving Relationships

¹⁸ Let every wife be supportive and tenderly devotedⁱ to her husband, *for this is a beautiful illustration* of our devotion to Christ. ¹⁹ Let every husband be filled with cherishing love for his wife and never be insensitive^j toward her.

²⁰ Let the children respect and pay attention to their parents in everything for this pleases our Lord Jesus. ²¹ And fathers, don't have unrealistic expectations^k for your children or else they may become discouraged.

a 3:11 Or "there is neither Jew or Scythians, circumcision or uncircumcision, neither Greek nor barbarian, neither slave nor free, but the Messiah is all and in all."

b 3:14 The Aramaic can be translated "the girdle of maturity."

c 3:14 Or "perfection."

d 3:15 The Greek literally means "let peace be the umpire of your minds."

e 3:16 Or "grow."

f 3:16 Or "hymns."

g 3:17 The Aramaic can be translated "commitment."

h 3:17 The Aramaic can be translated "oath."

i 3:18 The Greek word, *hupotasso*, can be translated "submitted," "attached," or "supportive."

j 3:19 Or "bitter."

k 3:21 Or "exasperate your children."



REVELATION

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ

John's Introduction

1 This is the unveiling of Jesus Christ,^a which God gave him to share with his loving servants^b what must occur swiftly.^c He clearly made it known^d by sending his angel^e to his loving servant John.^{f 2} I, John, bore witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.³ A joyous blessing^g rests upon the one who reads *this message* and upon those who hear and embrace the words of this prophecy, for the appointed time is in your hands.^h

^a 1:1 The Greek noun *apokalypsis* is a compound word found eighteen times in the New Testament. It combines *apo* (to lift) with *lypsis* (veil, covering), and so could be translated “the lifting of the veil” or “the unveiling.” The implication could be stated as simply, “Here he is!” It is not primarily lifting the veil off coming events, but the unveiling of Jesus.

^b 1:1 This is the Greek word *doulos*, which means “bond servant,” a slave who willingly remains with his master even after being given his freedom.

^c 1:1 This does not necessarily mean “soon” from the writer’s perspective, but that once the time comes it will quickly happen. The Greek phrase *en tachos* (similar to “tachometer”) means that once something starts, it will take place swiftly.

^d 1:1 The Greek is “signified” or “miracle-sign.” The word for miracle-sign is the Greek verb *sēmainō*, which means “to give a sign.” The noun form is *sēmeion* and is the word used most often (seventy-seven times) in the New Testament for “miracle.” In the Septuagint of Dan. 2:45 the word *sēmainō* is used, which indicates the meaning of “to symbolize.” The Aramaic likewise can be translated “symbolized.” The book of Revelation is a book full of symbols.

^e 1:1 Angels were instrumental in imparting divine revelation to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the prophets, the kings, and the apostles of Jesus. This angel sent from Jesus was on a mission to give John insights into the meaning of the visions within the book of Revelation (22:6, 8, 16).

^f 1:1 Notice the chain of communication: (1) God gave the revelation directly to Jesus. (2) Jesus gave it to an angel. (3) The angel explained it to John. (4) John gives it to us (v. 2), God’s servants. Many don’t realize that the book of Revelation came from a direct encounter with an angel sent by Jesus to give the contents to John.

^g 1:3 Or “happiness to one who reads.” The book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a rich blessing to those who read and obey what it states. The word *blessing* can mean “happiness.” There are six other “blessings” found in Revelation (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:5; 22:7, 14).

^h 1:3 Or “at hand.” The Greek adverb *eggus* is taken from a primary verb *agcho*, which means “to squeeze” (in your hands) or “to hold the reigns” (or “throttle” in your hands). There is a sense in which the full understanding of the book of Revelation is ready to be unveiled

^aFrom John to the seven churches^a in western Turkey:^b May the kindness of God's grace and peace overflow to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come,^c and from the seven spirits^d who are in front of his throne, ^e and from Jesus Christ the Faithful Witness,^e the Firstborn from among the dead^f and the ruling King, who rules over the kings of the earth!^g

Now to the one who constantly loves us and has loosed us from our sins^h by his own blood,ⁱ ^j and to the one who has made us to rule as a kingly priesthood^j to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and dominion throughout the eternity of eternities! Amen!

^kBehold! He appears^k within the clouds,ⁱ and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.^m And all the people groups of the earth will weep with sorrow because of him. And so it is to be! Amen.

ⁿ"I am the Aleph and the Tav,"ⁿ says the Lord God, "who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

when the reader is ready to receive it. The time for this revelation is now, not the past nor the distant future. See also 1 Peter 1:5.

^a 1:4 The seven churches become a representation of all the churches, for the number seven denotes completeness, fullness, wholeness, and perfection.

^b 1:4 Or "Asia" (Minor), which is modern-day western Turkey.

^c 1:4 The God who dwells in these three realms (present, past, and future) is described by John as "who is, who was, and who is to come."

^d 1:4 Or "the seven-fold Spirit"; that is, the Holy Spirit. If God is three in one, the Holy Spirit can be seven in one. See Isa. 11:2–3; Zech. 4:1–10; Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.

^e 1:5 Jesus was a Faithful Witness to the truth while on earth (John 18:37) and is now a Faithful Witness to all that he revealed to John in this book.

^f 1:5 Or "the First Begotten from the dead." He is the Firstborn who conquers death.

^g 1:5 As the *Prophet*, Jesus is the Faithful Witness who only speaks the Father's words. As the *High Priest*, Jesus is the Firstborn from the dead, and as the *King*, Jesus is the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

^h 1:5 Or "washed us from our sins."

ⁱ 1:5 Or "in his own blood."

^j 1:6 Or "a kingdom of priests" or "kings and priests." We have the nature of both a king and a priest embedded within us in Christ. Christ is the one who "made us" into this holy order and union. It is already done. See also Rev. 5:10.

^k 1:7 Or "comes." The Greek verb tense of *erchomai* ("appears" or "comes") is in the third-person singular, present indicative, which is a present-tense reality, not a distant one. It can be translated "He is now coming" or "He is in the act of coming and continues to come."

^l 1:7 Or "He will appear [be surrounded] with [Gr. *meta*] clouds," or "He appears by means of clouds" or "with clouds" or "between clouds." See also Isa. 60:8; Dan. 7:13–14; Heb. 12:1. The cloud of glory is now plural—clouds, a company of clouds (Dan. 7:13–14; Matt. 26:64; 1 Thess. 4:17).

^m 1:7 Every one of us has "pierced" his side with the spear of our unbelief and sin.

ⁿ 1:8 As translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic. The Greek is "the Alpha and Omega," Alpha being the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega the last letter. Jesus affirms that he has all knowledge and is the sum of all truth.

⁹I, John, am your brother and companion in tribulation,^a the kingdom,^b and the patience that are *found* in Jesus.^c I was *exiled* on the island of Patmos^d because of *the ministry* of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.^e I was in the spirit realm^c on the Lord's day,^f and I heard behind^g me a loud voice sounding like a trumpet,^h ¹¹saying to me:

Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches:ⁱ to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

¹²When I turned^j to see the voice that was speaking to me, I saw seven golden lampstands.^k ¹³And walking among the lampstands, I saw someone like a son of man,^l wearing a full-length robe^m with a golden sash over his chest.ⁿ

a 1:9 Or "persecution." The Greek word for tribulation is *thlipsis* and means "great pressure." It refers to the pressure (tribulation) that all believers experience.

b 1:9 As a fellow companion in the kingdom, John verifies that the kingdom of God formally began after Christ was raised from the dead and continues to expand until now (Isa. 9:7). John was *on* Patmos but *in* the kingdom. See Acts 14:22.

c 1:9 Or "the one who co-shares [joint partner] with you in Jesus."

d 1:9 Patmos was a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea roughly ten miles long and five miles wide, believed to be a Roman penal colony. This vision came to John while he was an exile on Patmos, which means "my crushing" or "my killing." But we must remember, our "killing" took place on the cross (Gal. 2:20).

e 1:10 Or "I came to be in [with] spirit" or "I became in union with the Spirit." This was John's "rapture," most likely a trance. The realm of the Spirit was John's vantage point. The same Spirit that inspired this book must interpret it, for it is what the Spirit is saying to the churches. See Job 32:8.

f 1:10 This was not Sunday, nor a twenty-four-hour day, but "the Lord's day." Nowhere in Scripture is Sunday called "the Lord's day." The Aramaic can be translated "on the lordly [majestic] day."

g 1:10 A voice "behind" us can be that which speaks about our past—about all that God has already done for us.

h 1:10 Or "shofar." The trumpet sound always carries a message (1 Cor. 14:8). The voice sounding like a trumpet blast would point us to a fresh proclamation heralding a new message to us today.

i 1:11 The number seven is the number of God and his perfection. The seven churches make up one perfect and complete church in his eyes. These seven churches speak of completeness or fullness; just like the seven Spirits are full and complete so the church is full and complete in Christ. We are the "seven in one" bride, just as the Holy Spirit is "seven in one."

j 1:12 John was in the spirit. This was more than a physical turning, but an inward turning to withdraw from the natural and see into the spiritual. The same Greek word is used for "converted" in Acts 3:19.

k 1:12 These seven golden lampstands represent seven churches (Rev. 1:20). The "lampstand" (or menorah) becomes a symbol of the burning presence of Christ. They are golden, for Christ has purified and made holy his church.

l 1:13 See Dan. 7:13. This is the ascended Christ appearing as King and High Priest. Part of the priestly duties involved tending the lampstands, filling them with fresh oil.

m 1:13 The Aramaic can be translated "the robe of the ephod" (priest's robe).

n 1:13 The Greek word used here is *mastos* and is used exclusively for a woman's breasts. Over

¹⁴ His head and his hair were white like wool—white as glistening snow.^a And his eyes were like flames of fire!^b ¹⁵ His feet were gleaming like bright metal,^c as though they were glowing in a fire,^d and his voice was like the roar of many rushing waters.^e ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword.^f And his face was shining like the brightness of the blinding sun!^g ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell down at his feet as good as dead,^h but he laid his right hand on meⁱ and *I heard his reassuring voice saying:*

Don't yield to fear. I am the Beginning and I am the End,¹⁸ the Living One! I was dead, but now look—I am alive forever and ever. And I hold the keys^j that unlock death and the unseen world.^k ¹⁹ Now I want you to write what you have seen, what is, and what will be after the things *that I reveal to you.* ²⁰ The mystery of the lampstands^l and the seven stars is this: the seven lampstands are the seven churches,

the heart of the glorified Jesus is a golden sash of compassionate love for his bride. The Aramaic can be translated “between his breasts a golden harness.” It was made of pure gold, for the divine nature holds everything together in divine order.

^a 1:14 The head (or headship) speaks of Christ's authority. White speaks of the righteousness of God and an emblem of his wisdom, omniscience, justice, and leadership. This is similar to Dan. 7:9, which would equate Jesus with the Ancient of Days.

^b 1:14 See Dan. 10:6.

^c 1:15 Or “burnished [fine] brass.” However, the Greek is somewhat confusing with a feminine noun and genitive case. The Aramaic can be translated “the brass of Lebanon.” Lebanon was known for the quality of its fine brass. Brass is a biblical symbol of passing through judgment. Jesus went through judgment for our sins, and with feet on fire he is now kindling fires wherever he walks.

^d 1:15 See Ezek. 1:27; Dan. 3:25.

^e 1:15 See Ps. 29:3; Ezek. 1:24; 43:2. Waters are emblematic of “multitudes of people” (Rev. 17:15). It is not simply a voice of “waters,” but the voices of many sons coming into his likeness (Rev. 14:1–3).

^f 1:16 The sword from his mouth is a metaphor for the Word of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). The message of Revelation comes as a sword from the mouth of Jesus. The Aramaic can be translated “a fervent spirit came from his mouth.”

^g 1:16 See Ps. 84:11; Matt. 17:1–2; John 8:12.

^h 1:17 John had walked with Jesus for nearly three years and even leaned upon his chest. Now he sees Jesus not as he was, but as he is, and seeing him in his glory John fell at his feet “as good as dead.”

ⁱ 1:17 In v. 16 Jesus holds the seven stars in his right hand, and now he lays his right hand upon John. The right hand speaks of power, authority, and blessing (Pss. 16:11; 118:15–16; Isa. 41:10; Col. 3:1).

^j 1:18 Through the victory of Christ's death and resurrection he now holds the keys of death and the unseen world. There is nothing to fear, for he holds all authority (keys).

^k 1:18 Or “Hades.” Originally used in Greek as the god of the underworld, Hades became identified simply with “the unseen world” (Aramaic for Hades) or “the place of the dead.” See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed.

^l 1:20 The lampstand becomes a powerful metaphor of the churches of Jesus. They burn, bringing light and illumination to the city as a witness of God's glory (Matt. 5:14–16). It

and the seven stars in my right hand are the seven messengers^a of the seven churches.^b

Christ's Letter to Ephesus

2 Write the following to the messenger of the congregation in Ephesus.^c For these are the words of the one who holds the seven stars firmly in his right hand,^d who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

² I know all that you've done for me—you have worked hard and persevered. I know that you don't tolerate evil. You have tested those who claimed to be apostles and *proved* they are not, *for they were imposters*.

³ I also know how you have bravely endured *trials and persecutions* because of my name, yet you have not become discouraged.^e ⁴ But I have this against you: you have abandoned the passionate love you had for me at the beginning.^f ⁵ Think about how far you have fallen! Repent^g

stood in the Holy Place, giving light for the priests to minister. Even with their problems these seven churches were “golden” (v. 12) in God's eyes.

^a 1:20 It is likely that these “messengers” represent the human leadership of the churches, who would be accountable to God to ensure that this message was presented to the churches. Heavenly angels would have no need for letters as a form of communication, nor would the reprimands in these letters apply to angels. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 69; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7 Exegetical Commentary and Revelation 8–22 Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 1995; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, 1963.

^b 1:20 The messages to the seven churches from Jesus Christ found in chs. 2–3 have at least four applications: (1) a local application to the specific cities and believers in the church; (2) to all the churches of all generations; (3) a prophetic application unveiling seven distinct phases of church history from the days of the apostle John until today; (4) a personal application to individual believers who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.

^c 2:1 The meaning of *Ephesus* is “desirable” or “darling.” Every church and every believer is desirable to Jesus Christ, for we are his bride. This is the word a Greek bridegroom would use for the girl he desired to marry. See Song of Songs.

^d 2:1 It is good to remember that church leaders are “stars” who are firmly held in the right hand (authority and power) of Jesus Christ. He cares for both his churches and his leaders.

^e 2:3 The Aramaic can be translated “You endured suffering without complaining.” Every church should be known for these five qualities: (1) working for the kingdom, (2) persevering, (3) not being tolerant of sin, (4) examining the claims of ministries, and (5) enduring trials bravely. Yet doing all this without a passionate love for Jesus Christ weakens our power and witness in the world.

^f 2:4 Or “you have abandoned your first love.” The Greek word for “first” (*protos*) means “foremost,” “best,” “paramount,” “supreme,” “crowning,” “number one.” Jesus is referring to exclusive love that has first place in our hearts above all else.

^g 2:5 The Greek word for “repent” is *metanoia* and means more than simply changing one's mind. It means “to take another mind.” Every believer needs to turn from his or her error and take “another mind,” the mind of Christ.



ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Dr. Brian Simmons is known as a passionate lover of God. After a dramatic conversion to Christ, Brian knew that God was calling him to go to the unreached people of the world and present the gospel of God's grace to all who would listen. With his wife, Candice, and their three children, he spent nearly eight years in the tropical rain forest of the Darien Province of Panama as a church planter, translator, and consultant. Brian was involved in the Paya-Kuna New Testament translation project. He studied linguistics and Bible translation principles with New Tribes Mission. After their ministry in the jungle, Brian was instrumental in planting a thriving church in New England (USA) and now travels full-time as a speaker and Bible teacher. He has been happily married to Candice since 1971 and boasts regularly of his three children and eight grandchildren.

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