

# CONTENTS

Preface.....	[5]	Learning About Your Bible .....	[17]
Constitution on Divine Revelation .....	[8]	The Holy Land .....	[26]

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

Preface to the Revised New American Bible—Old Testament.....	[44]
--	------

### THE PENTATEUCH

The Book of Genesis.....	3
The Book of Exodus.....	65
The Book of Leviticus .....	110
The Book of Numbers.....	144
The Book of Deuteronomy.....	189

### THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

The Book of Joshua .....	229
The Book of Judges .....	253
The Book of Ruth.....	278
The First Book of Samuel.....	315
The Second Book of Samuel .....	375
The First Book of Kings .....	343
The Second Book of Kings.....	375
The First Book of Chronicles.....	405
The Second Book of Chronicles .....	434
The Book of Ezra.....	467
The Book of Nehemiah .....	479

### BIBLICAL NOVELLAS

The Book of Tobit .....	495
The Book of Judith .....	510
The Book of Esther .....	527
The First Book of Maccabees.....	540
The Second Book of Maccabees .....	571

### THE WISDOM BOOKS

The Book of Job.....	596
The Book of Psalms .....	628
The Book of Proverbs .....	726
The Book of Ecclesiastes.....	765
The Song of Songs.....	775
The Book of Wisdom.....	783
The Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) .....	806

### THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The Book of Isaiah.....	862
The Book of Jeremiah .....	934
The Book of Lamentations.....	997
The Book of Baruch.....	1004
The Book of Ezekiel .....	1013
The Book of Daniel.....	1065
The Book of Hosea .....	1086
The Book of Joel.....	1098
The Book of Amos.....	1103
The Book of Obadiah .....	1112
The Book of Jonah.....	1114
The Book of Micah .....	1117
The Book of Nahum.....	1125
The Book of Habakkuk .....	1128
The Book of Zephaniah.....	1132
The Book of Haggai.....	1135
The Book of Zechariah.....	1138
The Book of Malachi .....	1150

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

Preface to the New American Bible—The New Testament .....	[3]
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### THE GOSPELS

The Gospel according to Matthew.....	6
The Gospel according to Mark.....	67
The Gospel according to Luke .....	95
The Gospel according to John .....	142
The Acts of the Apostles .....	179

### THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

The Letter to the Romans.....	221
The First Letter to the Corinthians .....	242
The Second Letter to the Corinthians....	265
The Letter to the Galatians.....	283
The Letter to the Ephesians.....	292
The Letter to the Philippians .....	300
The Letter to the Colossians.....	307

The First Letter to the Thessalonians ....	313
The Second Letter to the Thessalonians .....	317
The First Letter to Timothy .....	321
The Second Letter to Timothy .....	328
The Letter to Titus .....	332
The Letter to Philemon.....	335
The Letter to the Hebrews.....	337

### THE CATHOLIC LETTERS

The Letter of James .....	356
The First Letter of Peter .....	362
The Second Letter of Peter .....	368
The First Letter of John.....	373
The Second Letter of John.....	379
The Third Letter of John .....	380
The Letter of Jude.....	382
The Book of Revelation .....	385

## APPENDIX

List of Collaborators .....	410	Sunday Readings at Mass.....	430
Bible Dictionary.....	412	Readings for Major Feasts of the Year .....	436

## LEARNING ABOUT YOUR BIBLE

The Bible is a series of books written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit between 1200 B.C. and around 100 A.D. They were produced in a number of different forms of literature (historical accounts, poetry, letters, parables, sayings, etc.). They were written in various languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. They present different ideas about Who God is and what God wants of us. Yet, these books, which we call Sacred Scripture, form a single message that we call the Word of God. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that this Word is so powerful that it is like a two-edged sword that can separate bone from sinew. How was this collection put together? Who wrote its individual sections? Why? When? Etc.?

### The Authors of the Pentateuch

The oldest portions of the Bible are cultic hymns which celebrate momentous events in Israel's history, e.g., Ex 15 which celebrates Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea. These hymns were probably sung at shrines to commemorate how God acted in Israel's history and to instruct the next generation about Who their God was.

These hymns, however, were not enough once the Israelites conquered the land flowing with milk and honey. The nation needed an explanation as to how they had arrived at this point. Thus, a first school of authors wrote the story of God and Israel from the creation of the world up to the present day (c. 950 B.C.). These authors were called the Yahwists (for they tended to use the name "Yahweh" whenever they referred to God). Their stories are highly anthropomorphic and speak of the importance of Judah and Jerusalem and the monarchy. When they wrote of the primitive beginnings of the world (Gen 1—11), they borrowed ideas from other cultures to express their beliefs (e.g., God shaping Adam out of mud or clay, the flood, etc.). When they spoke of the patriarchal period (Gen 12—50), they depended upon stories passed down at various shrines scattered throughout the land (which would explain why some stories are doublets, once attributed to one patriarch and later to another). For more recent events, they depended upon the memory of the people and their storytellers and whatever chronicles existed at that time.

A century later, c. 850 B.C., another school of writers arose in the northern kingdom of Israel (for by now the ten northern tribes had broken away from the two southern tribes). These were called the Elohist, for they used the word Elohim when they spoke about God. They had a more spiritualized view of God. They centered their narratives on the exploits of the northern heroes: the prophets (e.g., Elijah and Elisha). Some of their stories repeat previously told Yahwist stories. The Elohist version was either placed side by side with the older Yahwist version or they were intertwined.



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**THE UPPER ROOM** — In Jerusalem an “upper room” was frequently built on the roof of houses and used in summer because it was cooler than the regular living quarters. (Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12; Acts 1:13; 20:8)

The room above is a medieval structure marking the traditional site in the southern corner of the Upper City of Jerusalem where the Last Supper took place as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. (See 14:14-17; Acts 2:1-11.)

to all his servants, he singled out the chief cupbearer and chief baker in the midst of his servants. <sup>21</sup> He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, so that he again handed the cup to Pharaoh; <sup>22</sup> but the chief baker he impaled—just as Joseph had told them in his interpretation. <sup>23</sup> Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.

## CHAPTER 41

**Pharaoh's Dream.** <sup>1</sup> \* After a lapse of two years, Pharaoh had a dream. He was standing by the Nile, <sup>2</sup> when up out of the Nile came seven cows, fine-looking and fat; they grazed in the reed grass. <sup>3</sup> Behind them seven other cows, poor-looking and gaunt, came up out of the Nile; and standing on the bank of the Nile beside the others, <sup>4</sup> the poor-looking, gaunt cows devoured the seven fine-looking, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

<sup>5</sup> He fell asleep again and had another dream. He saw seven ears of grain, fat and healthy, growing on a single stalk. <sup>6</sup> Behind them sprouted seven ears of grain, thin and scorched by the east wind; <sup>7</sup> and the thin ears swallowed up the seven fat, healthy ears. Then Pharaoh woke up—it was a dream!

<sup>8</sup> Next morning his mind was agitated. So Pharaoh had all the magicians\* and sages of Egypt summoned and recounted his dream to them; but there was no one to interpret it for him. <sup>9</sup> Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh: "Now I remember my negligence! <sup>10</sup> Once, when Pharaoh was angry with his servants, he put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the chief steward. <sup>11</sup> Later, we both had dreams on the same night, and each of our dreams had its own meaning. <sup>12</sup> There was a Hebrew youth with us, a slave of the chief steward; and when we told him our dreams, he interpreted them for us and explained for each of us the meaning of his dream. <sup>a</sup> <sup>13</sup> Things turned out just as he had told us: I was restored to my post, but the other man was impaled."

a. [41:12] Dn 1:17.—b. [41:14] Ps 105:20.—c. [41:16] Gn 40:8.

**41:1–57** Joseph correctly interprets Pharaoh's dream and becomes second in command over all Egypt.

**41:8** *Magicians*: one of the tasks of the "magicians" was interpreting dreams. The interpretation of dreams was a long-standing practice in Egypt. A manual of dream interpretation has been found, written in the early second millennium and re-published later in which typical dreams are given ("If a man sees himself in a dream. . .") followed by a judgment of "good" or "bad." Interpreters were still needed for dreams, however, and Pharaoh complains that none of his dream interpreters can interpret his unprecedented dream. The same term will be used of Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus.

<sup>14</sup> Pharaoh therefore had Joseph summoned, and they hurriedly brought him from the dungeon. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. <sup>b</sup> <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh then said to Joseph: "I had a dream but there was no one to interpret it. But I hear it said of you, 'If he hears a dream he can interpret it.'" <sup>16</sup> "It is not I," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God who will respond for the well-being of Pharaoh."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, <sup>18</sup> when up from the Nile came seven cows, fat and well-formed; they grazed in the reed grass. <sup>19</sup> Behind them came seven other cows, scrawny, most ill-formed and gaunt. Never have I seen such bad specimens as these in all the land of Egypt! <sup>20</sup> The gaunt, bad cows devoured the first seven fat cows. <sup>21</sup> But when they had consumed them, no one could tell that they had done so, because they looked as bad as before. Then I woke up. <sup>22</sup> In another dream I saw seven ears of grain, full and healthy, growing on a single stalk. <sup>23</sup> Behind them sprouted seven ears of grain, shriveled and thin and scorched by the east wind; <sup>24</sup> and the seven thin ears swallowed up the seven healthy ears. I have spoken to the magicians, but there is no one to explain it to me."

<sup>25</sup> Joseph said to Pharaoh: "Pharaoh's dreams have the same meaning. God has made known to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup> The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years—the same in each dream. <sup>27</sup> The seven thin, bad cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> Things are just as I told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> Seven years of great abundance are now coming throughout the land of Egypt; <sup>30</sup> but seven years of famine will rise up after them, when all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. When the famine has exhausted the land, <sup>31</sup> no trace of the abundance will be found in the land because of the famine that follows it, for it will be very severe. <sup>32</sup> That Pharaoh had the same dream twice means that the matter has been confirmed by God and that God will soon bring it about.

<sup>33</sup> "Therefore, let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and put him in charge

bled. <sup>17</sup> But Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stationed themselves at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, because the LORD had come down upon it in fire. The smoke rose from it as though from a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. <sup>19</sup> The blast of the shofar grew louder and louder, while Moses was speaking and God was answering him with thunder.

<sup>20</sup> \* When the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD told Moses: Go down and warn the people not to break through to the LORD in order to see him; otherwise many of them will be struck down. <sup>22</sup> For their part, the priests, who approach the LORD must sanctify themselves; else the LORD will break out in anger against them. <sup>23</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot go up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying: Set limits around the mountain to make it sacred." <sup>24</sup> So the LORD said to him: Go down and come up along with Aaron. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD; else he will break out against them." <sup>25</sup> So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

a. [20:2–17] Dt 5:6–21. — b. [20:2] Lv 26:13; Ps 81:11; Hos 13:4. — c. [20:4] Ex 34:17; Lv 26:1; Dt 4:15–19; 27:15. — d. [20:5] Ex 34:7, 14; Nm 14:18; Dt 4:24; 6:15. — e. [20:7] Lv 19:12; 24:16. — f. [20:8–11] Ex 23:12; 31:13–16; 34:21; 35:2; Lv 23:3.

**19:20–25** At this point the Priestly additions of vv. 12–13a are elaborated with further Priestly instructions, which include the priests' sanctifying themselves apart from the people (v. 22) and Aaron accompanying Moses to the top of the mountain (v. 24).

**20:1–17** The precise numbering and division of these precepts into "ten commandments" is somewhat uncertain. Traditionally among Catholics and Lutherans vv. 1–6 are considered as only one commandment, and v. 17 as two. The Anglican, Greek Orthodox, and Reformed churches count vv. 1–6 as two, and v. 17 as one. Cf. Dt 5:6–21. The traditional designation as "ten" is not found here but in 34:28 (and also Dt 4:13 and 10:4), where these precepts are alluded to literally as "the ten words." That they were originally written on two tablets appears in Ex 32:15–16; 34:28–29; Dt 4:13; 10:2–4.

The present form of the commands is a product of a long development, as is clear from the fact that the individual precepts vary considerably in length and from the slightly different formulation of Dt 5:6–21 (see especially vv. 12–15 and 21). Indeed they represent a mature formulation of a traditional morality. Why this specific selection of commands should be set apart is not entirely clear. None of them is unique in the Old Testament and all of the laws which follow are also from God and equally binding on the Israelites. Even so, this collection represents a privileged expression of God's moral demands on Israel and is here set apart from the others as a direct, unmediated communication of God to the Israelites and the basis of the covenant being concluded on Sinai.

## CHAPTER 20

Ex

**The Ten Commandments.\*** <sup>1</sup> Then God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>b</sup> out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> You shall not have other gods beside me.\* <sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself an idol <sup>c</sup> or a likeness of anything\* in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down before them or serve them. <sup>d</sup> For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation;\* <sup>6</sup> but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.\* <sup>e</sup> For the LORD will not leave unpunished anyone who invokes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy.\* <sup>9</sup> Six days you may labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God.<sup>f</sup> You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daugh-

**20:3** *Beside me:* this commandment is traditionally understood as an outright denial of the existence of other gods except the God of Israel; however, in the context of the more general prohibitions in vv. 4–5, v. 3 is, more precisely, God's demand for Israel's exclusive worship and allegiance.

The Hebrew phrase underlying the translation "beside me" is, nonetheless, problematic and has been variously translated, e.g., "except me," "in addition to me," "in preference to me," "in defiance of me," and "in front of me" or "before my face." The latter translation, with its concrete, spatial nuances, has suggested to some that the prohibition once sought to exclude from the Lord's sanctuary the cult images or idols of other gods, such as the asherah, or stylized sacred tree of life, associated with the Canaanite goddess Asherah (34:13). Over the course of time, as vv. 4–5 suggest, the original scope of v. 3 was expanded.

**20:4** *Or a likeness of anything:* compare this formulation to that found in Dt 5:8, which understands this phrase and the following phrases as specifications of the prohibited idol (Hebrew *pesel*), which usually refers to an image that is carved or hewn rather than cast.

**20:5** *Jealous:* demanding exclusive allegiance. *Inflicting punishment . . . the third and fourth generation:* the intended emphasis is on God's mercy by the contrast between punishment and mercy ("to the thousandth generation"—v. 6). Other Old Testament texts repudiate the idea of punishment devolving on later generations (cf. Dt 24:16; Jer 31:29–30; Ez 18:2–4). Yet it is known that later generations may suffer the punishing effects of sins of earlier generations, but not the guilt.

**20:7** *In vain:* i.e., to no good purpose, a general framing of the prohibition which includes swearing falsely, especially in the context of a legal proceeding, but also goes beyond it (cf. Lv 24:16; Prv 30:8–9).

**20:8** *Keep it holy:* i.e., to set it apart from the other days of the week, in part, as the following verse explains, by not doing work that is ordinarily done in the course of a week. The special importance of this command can be seen in the fact that, together with vv. 9–11, it represents the longest of the Decalogue's precepts.



**CANAAN AS DIVIDED BY JOSHUA FOR THE TWELVE TRIBES (Jos 13—19)** — (a) Judah consists of about eighty towns in the south (15:1–12). (b) Southward of it in the Negeb is Simeon with seventeen towns (19:1–19). (c) North of Judah lies Benjamin with twenty-six towns (18:11–28). (d) Dan is at first north of Judah and west of Benjamin but later part of the tribe migrates northward and settles near Leshem, henceforth called Dan (19:40–48; Jgs 18). (e) Ephraim occupies the center of the country (16:5–9). (f) Half of Manasseh lies north of Ephraim (17:1–13) and the other half in the northern part of the country east of the Jordan (13:29–31). (g) Around the plain of Esdraelon lies Issachar (19:17–23). (h) West of the Lake of Tiberias belongs to Zebulun (19:10–16). (i) Asher lies along the maritime plain of Galilee (19:24–31). (j) Naphtali occupies the northernmost part of the country (19:32–39). (k) South of the district east of Jordan dwells Reuben (13:15–23). (l) North of Reuben lies Gad (13:24–28).

- 2 How he swore an oath to the LORD,  
vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:\*  
3 "I will not enter the house where I live,<sup>a</sup>  
nor lie on the couch where I sleep;  
4 I will give my eyes no sleep,  
my eyelids no rest,  
5 Till I find a place for the LORD,  
a dwelling for the Mighty One of  
Jacob."  
6 "We have heard of it in Ephrathah;\*  
we have found it in the fields of Jaar.\*  
7 Let us enter his dwelling;  
let us worship at his footstool."<sup>b</sup>  
8 "Arise, LORD, come to your resting  
place,<sup>c</sup>  
you and your mighty ark.  
9 Your priests will be clothed with justice;  
your devout will shout for joy."  
10 For the sake of David your servant,  
do not reject your anointed.

## II

- 11 The LORD swore an oath to David in  
truth,  
he will never turn back from it:<sup>d</sup>  
"Your own offspring<sup>e</sup> I will set upon your  
throne.  
12 If your sons observe my covenant,  
and my decrees I shall teach them,  
Their sons, in turn,  
shall sit forever on your throne."  
13 Yes, the LORD has chosen Zion,  
desired it for a dwelling:  
14 "This is my resting place forever;  
here I will dwell, for I desire it.  
15 I will bless Zion with provisions;  
its poor I will fill with bread.

a. [132:3] 2 Sm 7; 1 Chr 28:2.—b. [132:7] Ps 99:5.—c. [132:8–10] Ps 2:2; 89:21; 95:11; Nm 10:35; 2 Chr 6:41–42; Sir 24:7.—d. [132:11–14] Ps 68:17; 1 Kgs 8:13; Sir 24:7.—e. [132:11] Ps 110:4; 2 Sm 7:12.—f. [132:16] 2 Chr 6:41; Is 61:10.—g. [132:17] Is 11:1; Jer 33:15; Ez 29:21; Zec 3:8; Lk 1:69.—a. [133:2] Ex 30:25, 30.—b. [133:3] Hos 14:6.—c. [133:3] Dt 28:8; 30:20.—a. [134:1] Ps 135:1–2; 1 Chr 9:33.—b. [134:2] Ps 28:2; 141:2.—c. [134:3] Ps 20:3; 128:5; Nm 6:24.

**132:2, 132:5** *Mighty One of Jacob*: one of the titles of Israel's God, cf. Gn 49:24; Is 49:26; 60:16.

**132:6** *Ephrathah*: the homeland of David, cf. Ru 4:11. *The fields of Jaar*: poetic for Kiriath-jearim, a town west of Jerusalem, where the ark remained for several generations, cf. 1 Sm 7:1–2; 2 Sm 6:2; 1 Chr 13:5–6.

**132:17** *A horn sprout for David*: the image of the horn, a symbol of strength, is combined with that of a "sprout," a term used for the Davidic descendant (cf. Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zec 3:8; 6:12). Early Christians referred the latter designation to Christ as son of David (Lk 1:69).

**Psalm 133** A benediction over a peaceful community, most probably the people Israel, but appropriate too for Israelite families (Ps 133:1). The history of Israel, whether of its ancestors in the Book of Genesis or of later periods, was a history of dis-

- 16 I will clothe its priests with salvation;  
its devout shall shout for joy.<sup>f</sup>  
17 There I will make a horn sprout for  
David;\*<sup>g</sup>  
I will set a lamp for my anointed.  
18 His foes I will clothe with shame,  
but on him his crown shall shine."

## PSALM 133\*

## A Vision of a Blessed Community

- 1 A song of ascents. Of David.  
How good and how pleasant it is,  
when brothers\* dwell together as one!  
2 Like fine oil on the head,\*<sup>a</sup>  
running down upon the beard,  
Upon the beard of Aaron,  
upon the collar of his robe.  
3 Like dew\* of Hermon\* coming down  
upon the mountains of Zion.<sup>b</sup>  
There the LORD has decreed a blessing,  
life for evermore!<sup>c</sup>

## PSALM 134\*

Exhortation to the Night Watch  
To Bless God

- 1 A song of ascents.  
O come, bless the LORD,  
all you servants of the LORD\*  
You who stand in the house of the LORD  
throughout the nights.<sup>a</sup>  
2 Lift up your hands toward the sanctu-  
ary,<sup>b</sup>  
and bless the LORD.  
3 May the LORD bless you from Zion,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.<sup>c</sup>

tinct groups struggling to live in unity. Here that unity is declared blessed, like the holy oils upon the priest Aaron or the dew of the rainless summer that waters the crops (Ps 133:2–3).

**133:1** *Brothers*: in biblical Hebrew this word includes both the male and female members of a group united by blood relationships or by shared experiences and values. In this Psalm, the term could be applied most appropriately to the people of Israel, those privileged by God to be his chosen children.

**133:2** *Oil on the head*: oil was used at the consecration of the high priest (Ex 30:22–33).

**133:3** *Dew*: dew was an important source of moisture in the dry climate (Gn 27:28; Hos 14:6). *Hermon*: the majestic snow-capped mountain visible in the north of Palestine.

**Psalm 134** A brief liturgy exhorting all those who serve in the Jerusalem Temple during the night (cf. Is 30:29) to praise God with words and gestures. Although he is the Creator of the whole universe, God's blessings emanate in a unique way from Zion, the city of Jerusalem.

**134:1** *Servants of the LORD*: priests and Levites, cf. Dt 10:8; Ps 113:1; 135:1; Dn 3:85.

- 19 None who enter there come back,  
or gain the paths of life.  
20 Thus you may walk in the way of the  
good,  
and keep to the paths of the just.  
21\* For the upright will dwell in the land, <sup>d</sup>  
people of integrity will remain in it;  
22 But the wicked will be cut off from the  
land,  
the faithless will be rooted out of it.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Confidence in God Leads to Prosperity\*

- 1 My son, do not forget\* my teaching,  
take to heart my commands;  
2 For many days, and years of life, <sup>a</sup>  
and peace, will they bring you.  
3 Do not let love and fidelity forsake you;  
bind them around your neck;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.  
4 Then will you win favor and esteem  
before God and human beings.  
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
on your own intelligence do not rely;  
6 In all your ways be mindful of him,  
and he will make straight your paths.  
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes, <sup>b</sup>  
fear the LORD and turn away from evil;  
8 This will mean health for your flesh  
and vigor for your bones.

d. [2:21] Prv 10:7, 30; Jb 18:17; Ps 21:9–13; 37:22, 28.—  
a. [3:2] Prv 4:10; 9:11; 10:27.—b. [3:7] Rom 11:25; 12:16.—  
c. [3:9] Ex 34:26; Lv 27:30; Dt 26:2; Sir 7:31; 35:7.—d. [3:11]  
Heb 12:5–6.—e. [3:12] Jdt 8:27; Rev 3:19.—f. [3:13] Prv  
8:34–35.—g. [3:15] Prv 8:11, 19; Wis 7:8–11.—h. [3:18] Prv  
4:13; 8:35; 11:30; Gn 2:9; 3:22.

2:21–22 Verses 21–22 echo the ending of Wisdom's speech in 1:32–33, in which refusing Wisdom's invitation meant death and obedience to her meant life. The same set of ideas is found in Ps 37 (especially vv. 3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34, and 38): to live on (or inherit) the land and to be uprooted from the land are expressions of divine recompense.

3:1–12 The instruction consists of a series of six four-line exhortations in which the second line of each exhortation mentions a reward or benefit. In the first five exhortations, the teacher promises a reward: long life, a good name, divine protection, health, abundant crops. The last exhortation, vv. 11–12, departs from the command-reward scheme, implying that being a disciple of the Lord does not guarantee unalloyed bliss: one must allow God freedom to "reprove" or educate. The process of education is like that described in chap. 2: the father first invites his son (or disciple) to memorize his teaching (v. 1), then to enter upon a relationship of trust with him (v. 3), and finally to place his trust in God, who takes up the parental task of education (v. 5). Education begun by the parent is brought to full completion by God.

3:1 *Do not forget*: this word and several others in the section such as "teaching," "commands," "years of life," and the custom of affixing written teaching to one's body, occur also in Deuteronomy. This vocabulary suggests that Proverbs and Deuteronomy had a common origin in the scribal class of Jerusalem. This section (and vv. 21–34) subtly elaborates Dt 6:5–9, "You shall love the LORD with all your heart (v. 5) . . . Take to heart these words (v. 1) . . . Recite them when you are at home

- 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth,  
with first fruits of all your produce; <sup>c</sup>  
10 Then will your barns be filled with  
plenty,  
with new wine your vats will overflow.  
11 The discipline of the LORD, my son, do  
not spurn; <sup>d</sup>  
do not disdain his reproof;  
12\* For whom the LORD loves he reproves,  
as a father, the son he favors. <sup>e</sup>

#### The Benefits of Finding Wisdom\*

- 13 Happy the one who finds wisdom,  
the one who gains understanding! <sup>f</sup>  
14 Her profit is better than profit in silver,  
and better than gold is her revenue;  
15 She is more precious than corals,  
and no treasure of yours can compare  
with her. <sup>g</sup>  
16 Long life is in her right hand,  
in her left are riches and honor;  
17 Her ways are pleasant ways,  
and all her paths are peace;  
18 She is a tree of life\* to those who grasp  
her,  
and those who hold her fast are happy. <sup>h</sup>  
19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth,  
established the heavens by under-  
standing;  
20 By his knowledge the depths\* are split,  
and the clouds drop down dew.

and when you are away (v. 23) . . . when you lie down (v. 24) . . . Bind them (v. 3) on your arm as a sign and let them be a pendant on your forehead" (v. 21).

3:12 One might be tempted to judge the quality of one's relationship to God by one's prosperity. It is an inadequate criterion, for God as a teacher might go counter to student expectations. The discipline of God can involve suffering.

3:13–20 An encomium of Wisdom through the listing of her benefits to the human race and the depiction of her role in creation. Wisdom, or understanding, is more valuable than silver and gold. Its fruit is long life, riches, honor and happiness (vv. 13–18). Even the creation of the universe and its adornment (Gn 1) were not done without wisdom (vv. 19–20). The praise of Wisdom foreshadows the praise of a noble wife in the final poem (31:10–31), even to the singling out of the hands extended in a helpful way toward human beings.

3:18 *A tree of life*: in the Old Testament this phrase occurs only in Proverbs (11:30; 13:12; 15:4) and Genesis (2:9; 3:22, 24). The origins of the concept are obscure; there is no explicit mention of it in ancient Near Eastern literature, though on ancient seals trees are sometimes identified as trees of life. When the man and the woman were expelled from the garden, the tree of life was put off limits to them, lest they "eat of it and live forever" (Gn 3:22). The quest for wisdom gives access to the previously sequestered tree of life. The tree of life is mentioned also in the apocryphal work 1 Enoch 25:4–5. Rev 2 and 22 mention the tree of life as a source of eternal life.

3:20 *Depths*: for the Hebrews, the depths enclosed the great subterranean waters; the rain and dew descended from the waters above the firmament; cf. Gn 1:6–10; Jb 26:8, 12; Ps 18:15; 24:2. The cosmogony provides the reason why Wisdom offers such benefits to human beings: the world was created in wisdom so that all who live in accord with wisdom live in tune with the universe.



27 Why, O Jacob, do you say,\*  
and declare, O Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my  
God”?

28 Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is God from of old,  
creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny.

29 He gives power to the faint,  
abundant strength to the weak.

30 Though young men faint and grow  
weary,  
and youths stagger and fall,

31 They that hope in the LORD will renew  
their strength,  
they will soar on eagles’ wings;  
They will run and not grow weary,  
walk and not grow faint.

### CHAPTER 41

#### The Liberator of Israel

1 Keep silence before me, O coastlands;\*  
let the nations renew their strength.  
Let them draw near and speak;  
let us come together for judgment.

2 Who has stirred up from the East the  
champion of justice,  
and summoned him to be his atten-  
dant?  
To him he delivers nations  
and subdues kings;  
With his sword he reduces them to dust,  
with his bow, to driven straw.

3 He pursues them, passing on without  
loss,  
by a path his feet scarcely touch.

4 Who has performed these deeds?  
Who has called forth the generations  
from the beginning?<sup>a</sup>  
I, the LORD, am the first,  
and at the last\* I am he.

5 The coastlands see, and fear;  
the ends of the earth tremble:  
they approach, they come on.

6 Each one helps his neighbor,  
one says to the other, “Courage!”

7 The woodworker encourages the gold-  
smith,  
the one who beats with the hammer,  
him who strikes on the anvil,  
Saying of the soldering, “It is good!”  
then fastening it with nails so it will not  
totter.

8 But you, Israel, my servant,<sup>b</sup>  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
offspring of Abraham my friend—

9 You whom I have taken from the ends of  
the earth  
and summoned from its far-off places,  
To whom I have said, You are my servant;  
I chose you, I have not rejected you—

10 Do not fear: I am with you;  
do not be anxious: I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious  
right hand.

11 Yes, all shall be put to shame and disgrace  
who vent their anger against you;  
Those shall be as nothing and perish  
who offer resistance.

12 You shall seek but not find  
those who strive against you;  
They shall be as nothing at all  
who do battle with you.

13 For I am the LORD, your God,  
who grasp your right hand;  
It is I who say to you, Do not fear,  
I will help you.

14 Do not fear, you worm Jacob,  
you maggot Israel;  
I will help you—oracle of the LORD;  
the Holy One of Israel is your  
redeemer.\*

15 I will make of you a threshing sledge,  
sharp, new, full of teeth,  
To thresh the mountains and crush them,  
to make the hills like chaff.

16 When you winnow them, the wind shall  
carry them off,  
the storm shall scatter them.  
But you shall rejoice in the LORD;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall  
glory.

a. [41:4] Is 44:7; 46:10. —b. [41:8-9] Is 44:1-2, 21; 45:4.

**40:27-28** The exiles, here called Jacob-Israel (Gn 32:29), must not give way to discouragement: their Lord is the eternal God.

**41:1-4** Earlier prophets had spoken of the Assyrians and Babylonians as the Lord’s instruments for the punishment of Israel’s sins; here the Lord is described as raising up and giving victory to a foreign ruler in order to deliver Israel from the Babylonian exile. The ruler is Cyrus (44:28; 45:1), king of Anshan in Persia, a vassal of the Babylonians. He rebelled against the Babylonian overlords in 556 B.C., and after a series of victories, entered Babylon as victor in 539; the following year he issued a decree which allowed the Jewish captives to return to their homeland (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezr 1:1-4). For Second Isaiah, the meteoric success of Cyrus was the work of the Lord to accomplish the deliverance promised by earlier prophets.

**41:4** *The first . . . the last*: God as the beginning and end encompasses all reality. The same designation is used in 44:6 and 48:12.

**41:14** *Redeemer*: in Hebrew, *go’el*, one who frees others from slavery and avenges their sufferings; cf. Lv 25:48; Dt 19:6, 12. Cf. note on Ru 2:20.

hurled him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging. <sup>16</sup> Seized with great fear of the LORD, the men offered sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

**CHAPTER 2**

**Jonah's Prayer.** <sup>1</sup> But the LORD sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he remained in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. <sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> Jonah prayed to the LORD, his God, from the belly of the fish:

<sup>3\*</sup> Out of my distress I called to the LORD,  
and he answered me;  
From the womb of Sheol\* I cried for help,  
and you heard my voice. <sup>b</sup>

<sup>4</sup> You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea,  
and the flood enveloped me;  
All your breakers and your billows passed over me. <sup>c</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Then I said, "I am banished from your sight!  
How will I again look upon your holy temple?" <sup>d</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The waters surged around me up to my neck;  
the deep enveloped me;  
seaweed wrapped around my head. <sup>e</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I went down to the roots of the mountains;  
to the land whose bars closed behind me forever,  
But you brought my life up from the pit,  
O LORD, my God. <sup>f</sup>

<sup>8</sup> When I became faint,  
I remembered the LORD;  
My prayer came to you  
in your holy temple. <sup>g</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Those who worship worthless idols  
abandon their hope for mercy. <sup>h</sup>

<sup>10</sup> But I, with thankful voice,  
will sacrifice to you;  
What I have vowed I will pay:  
deliverance is from the LORD. <sup>i</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD commanded the fish to vomit Jonah upon dry land.

**CHAPTER 3**

**Jonah's Obedience and the Ninevites' Repentance.** <sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you. <sup>3</sup> So Jonah set out for Nineveh, in accord with the word of the

LORD. Now Nineveh was an awesomely great city; it took three days to walk through it. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began his journey through the city, and when he had gone only a single day's walk announcing, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown," <sup>5</sup> the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small,\* put on sackcloth. <sup>a</sup>

<sup>6</sup> When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh:\* "By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast, no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. <sup>8</sup> Man and beast alike must be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; they all must turn from their evil way and from the violence of their hands. <sup>9\*</sup> Who knows? God may again repent and turn from his blazing wrath, so that we will not perish." <sup>b</sup> <sup>10</sup> When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.

**CHAPTER 4**

**Jonah's Anger and God's Reproof.** <sup>1</sup> But this greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.\* <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said while I was still in my own country? This is why I fled at first toward Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, repenting of punishment.\* <sup>a</sup> <sup>3</sup> So now, LORD, please take my life

a. [2:1] Mt 12:40; 16:4; Lk 11:30; 1 Cor 15:4.—b. [2:3] Ps 18:7; 120:1.—c. [2:4] Ps 42:8.—d. [2:5] Ps 31:23; Is 38:11.—e. [2:6] Ps 18:5; 69:2.—f. [2:7] Ps 16:10; 30:4.—g. [2:8] Ps 5:8; 18:7; 88:3.—h. [2:9] Ps 31:7.—i. [2:10] Ps 50:14.—a. [3:5] Mt 12:41; Lk 11:32.—b. [3:9] Jl 2:14.—a. [4:2] Ex 34:6-7; Ps 86:5; Jl 2:13.

**2:3-10** These verses, which may have originally been an independent composition, are a typical example of a song of thanksgiving, a common psalm genre (e.g., Ps 116; Is 38:9-20). Such a song is relevant here, since Jonah has not drowned, and the imagery of vv. 4, 6 is appropriate.

**2:3** *Sheol*: cf. note on Ps 6:6.

**3:5** *Great and small*: the contrast can refer to distinctions of social class (prominent citizens and the poor).

**3:7-8** Fasting and wearing sackcloth are signs of human repentance; here they are legislated even for the animals—a humorous touch, perhaps anticipating 4:11.

**3:9-10** Scripture frequently presents the Lord as repenting (or, changing his mind) of the evil that he threatens; e.g., Gn 6:6-7; Jer 18:8.

**4:1** *He became angry*: because of his narrow vindictiveness, Jonah did not wish the Lord to forgive the Ninevites.

**4:2** *Punishment*: lit., "evil"; see 1:2, 7, 8; 3:8, 10; 4:1.

peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.<sup>s</sup> <sup>28</sup> \* You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.'<sup>t</sup> If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.<sup>29</sup> And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.<sup>u</sup> <sup>30</sup> I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world\* is coming. He has no power over me,<sup>31</sup> but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me. Get up, let us go.<sup>v</sup>

## CHAPTER 15

**The Vine and the Branches.** <sup>1</sup> \* "I am the true vine,\* and my Father is the vine grower.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes\* so that it bears more fruit.<sup>3</sup> You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.<sup>6</sup> \* <sup>c</sup> Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.<sup>7</sup> If you remain

s. [14:27] 16:33; Eph 2:14-18.—t. [14:28] 8:40.—u. [14:29] 13:19; 16:4.—v. [14:31] 6:38.—a. [15:1] Ps 80:9-17; Is 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ez 15:2; 17:5-10; 19:10.—b. [15:3] 13:10.—c. [15:6] Ez 15:6-7; 19:10-14.—d. [15:7] 14:13; Mt 7:7; Mk 11:24; 1 Jn 5:14.—e. [15:8] Mt 5:16.—f. [15:9] 17:23.—g. [15:10] 8:29; 14:15.—h. [15:11] 16:22; 17:13.—i. [15:12] 13:34.—j. [15:13] Rom 5:6-8; 1 Jn 3:16.—k. [15:15] Dt 34:5; Jos 24:29; 2 Chr 20:7; Ps 89:21; Is 41:8; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:7; Jas 2:23.—l. [15:16] 14:13; Dt 7:6.—m. [15:17] 13:34; 1 Jn 3:23; 4:21.—n. [15:18] 7:7; 14:17; Mt 10:22; 24:9; Mk 13:13; Lk 6:22; 1 Jn 3:13.—o. [15:19] 17:14-16; 1 Jn 4:5.—p. [15:20] 13:16; Mt 10:24.—q. [15:21] 8:19; 16:3.

**14:28** *The Father is greater than I:* because he *sent, gave,* etc., and Jesus is "a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God" (8:40).

**14:30** *The ruler of the world:* Satan; cf. 12:31; 16:11.

**15:1—16:4** Discourse on the union of Jesus with his disciples. His words become a monologue and go beyond the immediate crisis of the departure of Jesus.

**15:1—17** Like 10:1-5, this passage resembles a parable. Israel is spoken of as a vineyard at Is 5:1-7; Mt 21:33-46 and as a vine at Ps 80:9-17; Jer 2:21; Ez 15:2; 17:5-10; 19:10; Hos 10:1. The identification of the vine as the Son of Man in Ps 80:15 and Wisdom's description of herself as a vine in Sir 24:17 are further background for portrayal of Jesus by this figure. There may be secondary eucharistic symbolism here; cf. Mk 14:25, "the fruit of the vine."

in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.<sup>d</sup> <sup>8</sup> By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.<sup>e</sup> <sup>9</sup> As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.<sup>f</sup> <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.<sup>h</sup> <sup>12</sup> This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.<sup>i</sup> <sup>13</sup> \* No one has greater love than this,<sup>j</sup> to lay down one's life for one's friends.<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you.<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends,\* because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.<sup>k</sup> <sup>16</sup> It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.<sup>l</sup> <sup>17</sup> This I command you: love one another.<sup>m</sup>

**The World's Hatred.** \* <sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first.<sup>n</sup> <sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.<sup>o</sup> <sup>20</sup> Remember the word I spoke to you,\* 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.<sup>p</sup> <sup>21</sup> And they will do all these things to you on account of my name,\* because they do not know the one who sent me.<sup>q</sup> <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spo-

**15:2** *Takes away . . . prunes:* in Greek there is a play on two related verbs.

**15:6** Branches were cut off and dried on the wall of the vineyard for later use as fuel.

**15:13** *For one's friends:* or: "those whom one loves." In vv. 9-13a, the words for love are related to the Greek *agapaō*. In vv. 13b-15, the words for love are related to the Greek *phileō*. For John, the two roots seem synonymous and mean "to love"; cf. also 21:15-17. The word *philos* is used here.

**15:15** *Slaves . . . friends:* in the Old Testament, Moses (Dt 34:5), Joshua (Jos 24:29), and David (Ps 89:21) were called "servants" or "slaves of Yahweh"; only Abraham (Is 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; cf. Jas 2:23) was called a "friend of God."

**15:18—16:4** The hostile reaction of the world. There are syntopic parallels, predicting persecution, especially at Mt 10:17-25; 24:9-10.

**15:20** *The word I spoke to you:* a reference to 13:16.

**15:21** *On account of my name:* the idea of persecution for Jesus' name is frequent in the New Testament (Mt 10:22; 24:9; Acts 9:14). For John, association with Jesus' name implies union with Jesus.

<sup>33</sup> \* Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! <sup>z</sup>

<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord\*

or who has been his counselor?” <sup>a</sup>

<sup>35</sup>\* “Or who has given him anything <sup>b</sup> that he may be repaid?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. <sup>c</sup>

## VI. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS\*

### CHAPTER 12

**Sacrifice of Body and Mind.** <sup>1</sup> \* I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. <sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. <sup>b</sup>

**Many Parts in One Body.** <sup>3</sup> <sup>c</sup> For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each

z. [11:33] Jb 11:7-8; Ps 139:6, 17-18; Wis 17:1; Is 55:8-9.—a. [11:34] Jb 15:8; Wis 9:13; Is 40:13; Jer 23:18; 1 Cor 2:11-16.—b. [11:35] Jb 41:3; Is 40:14.—c. [11:36] 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17.—a. [12:1] 2 Cor 1:3 / Rom 6:13; 1 Pt 2:5.—b. [12:2] Eph 4:17, 22-23; 1 Pt 1:14 / Eph 5:10, 17; Phil 1:10.—c. [12:3] 15:15 / Phil 2:3 / 1 Cor 12:11; Eph 4:7.—d. [12:4-5] 1 Cor 12:12, 27; Eph 4:25.—e. [12:6-8] 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-31; Eph 4:7-12; 1 Pt 4:10-11 / 2 Cor 9:7.—f. [12:9] 2 Cor 6:6; 1 Tm 1:5; 1 Pt 1:22 / Am 5:15.—g. [12:10] Jn 13:34; 1 Thes 4:9; 1 Pt 2:17; 2 Pt 1:7 / Phil 2:3.—h. [12:11] Acts 18:25.—i. [12:12] 5:2-3; Col 4:2; 1 Thes 5:17.—j. [12:13] Heb 13:2; 1 Pt 4:9.—k. [12:14-21] Mt 5:38-48; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Pt 3:9.—l. [12:14] Lk 6:27-28.—m. [12:15] Ps 35:13; Sir 7:34; 1 Cor 12:26.—n. [12:16] 15:5; Phil 2:2-3 / Rom 11:20; Prv 3:7; Is 5:21.

**11:33-36** This final reflection celebrates the wisdom of God's plan of salvation. As Paul has indicated throughout these chapters, both Jew and Gentile, despite the religious recalcitrance of each, have received the gift of faith. The methods used by God in making this outreach to the world stagger human comprehension but are at the same time a dazzling invitation to abiding faith.

**11:34** The citation is from the Greek text of Is 40:13. Paul does not explicitly mention Isaiah in this version, nor Job in v. 35.

**11:35** Paul quotes from an old Greek text of Jb 41:3a, which differs from the Hebrew text (Jb 41:11a).

**12:1-13:14** Since Christ marks the termination of the Mosaic law as the primary source of guidance for God's people (10:4), the apostle explains how Christians can function, in the light of the gift of justification through faith, in their relation to one another and the state.

**12:1-8** The Mosaic code included elaborate directions on sacrifices and other cultic observances. The gospel, however, invites believers to present their *bodies as a living sacrifice* (v. 1).

according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. <sup>d</sup> For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ\* and individually parts of one another. <sup>6</sup> <sup>e</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them:\* if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; <sup>7</sup> if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others,\* with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

**Mutual Love.** <sup>9</sup> Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; <sup>f</sup> <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. <sup>g</sup> <sup>11</sup> Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>h</sup> <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. <sup>i</sup> <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, <sup>j</sup> exercise hospitality. <sup>14</sup> \* Bless those who persecute [you], <sup>k</sup> bless and do not curse them. <sup>l</sup> <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>m</sup> <sup>16</sup> Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. <sup>n</sup> <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for

Instead of being limited by specific legal maxims, Christians are liberated for the exercise of good judgment as they are confronted with the many and varied decisions required in the course of daily life. To assist them, God distributes a variety of gifts to the fellowship of believers, including those of prophecy, teaching, and exhortation (vv. 6-8). Prophets assist the community to understand the will of God as it applies to the present situation (v. 6). Teachers help people to understand themselves and their responsibilities in relation to others (v. 7). One who *exhorts* offers encouragement to the community to exercise their faith in the performance of all that is pleasing to God (v. 8). Indeed, this very section, beginning with v. 1, is a specimen of Paul's own style of exhortation.

**12:5** *One body in Christ:* on the church as the body of Christ, see 1 Cor 12:12-27.

**12:6** Everyone has some gift that can be used for the benefit of the community. When the instruction on justification through faith is correctly grasped, the possessor of a gift will understand that it is not an instrument of self-aggrandizement. Possession of a gift is not an index to quality of faith. Rather, the gift is a challenge to faithful use.

**12:8** *Over others:* usually taken to mean “rule over” but possibly “serve as a patron.” Wealthier members in Greco-Roman communities were frequently asked to assist in public service projects. In view of the references to contributing in *generosity* and to *acts of mercy*, Paul may have in mind people like Phoebe (16:1-2), who is called a *benefactor* (or “patron”) because of the services she rendered to many Christians, including Paul.

**12:14-21** Since God has justified the believers, it is not necessary for them to take justice into their own hands by taking vengeance. God will ultimately deal justly with all, including those who inflict injury on the believers. This question of personal rights as a matter of justice prepares the way for more detailed consideration of the state as adjudicator.

disobedient.<sup>b</sup> <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the desires of our flesh, following the wishes of the flesh and the impulses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest.<sup>c</sup> <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us,<sup>d</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ\* (by grace you have been saved),<sup>e</sup> raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus,<sup>e</sup> <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.<sup>f</sup> <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God;<sup>g</sup> <sup>9</sup> it is not from works, so no one may boast.<sup>h</sup> <sup>10</sup> For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.<sup>i</sup>

**One in Christ.\*** <sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that at one time you, Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by those called the circumcision, which is done in the flesh by human hands,<sup>12</sup> were at that time without Christ, alienated from the community of Israel\* and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>j</sup> <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.<sup>k</sup>

b. [2:2] 6:12; Jn 12:31; Col 1:13.—c. [2:3] Col 3:6–7.—d. [2:5] Rom 5:8; 6:13; Col 2:13.—e. [2:6] Rom 8:10–11; Phil 3:20; Col 2:12.—f. [2:7] 1:7.—g. [2:8] Rom 3:24; Gal 2:16.—h. [2:9] 1 Cor 1:29.—i. [2:10] 4:24; Ti 2:14.—j. [2:12] Rom 9:4; Col 1:21, 27.—k. [2:13] 2:17; Is 57:19; Col 1:20.—l. [2:14] Gal 3:28.—m. [2:15] 2 Cor 5:17; Col 2:14.—n. [2:16] Col 1:20, 22.—o. [2:17] Is 57:19; Zec 9:10.—p. [2:18] 3:12.—q. [2:19] Heb 12:22–23.—r. [2:20] Is 28:16; Rev 21:14.—s. [2:21] 1 Cor 3:16; Col 2:19.—t. [2:22] 1 Pt 2:5.—a. [3:1] Phil 1:7, 13; Col 1:24–29; 4:18; Phlm 9; 2 Tm 2:9.

**2:5** Our relation through baptism *with Christ*, the risen Lord, is depicted in terms of realized eschatology, as already exaltation, though v. 7 brings in the future aspect too.

**2:11–22** The Gentiles lacked Israel's messianic expectation, lacked the various *covenants* God made with *Israel*, lacked *hope* of salvation and knowledge of the true *God* (vv. 11–12); but through Christ all these religious barriers between Jew and Gentile have been transcended (vv. 13–14) by the abolition of the Mosaic covenant-law (v. 15) for the sake of uniting Jew and Gentile into a single religious community (vv. 15–16), imbued with the same holy *Spirit* and worshipping the same *Father* (v. 18). The Gentiles are now included in God's *household* (v. 19) as it arises upon the *foundation* of *apostles* assisted by those endowed with the prophetic gift (3:5), the preachers of Christ (v. 20; cf. 1 Cor 12:28). With Christ as the *capstone* (v. 20; cf. Is 28:16; Mt 21:42), they are being built into the holy *temple* of God's people where the divine presence dwells (vv. 21–22).

**2:12** *The community of Israel*: or "commonwealth"; cf. 4:18. *The covenants*: cf. Rom 9:4; with Abraham, with Moses, with David.

**2:14–16** The elaborate imagery here combines pictures of Christ as *our peace* (Is 9:5), his crucifixion, the ending of the

<sup>14</sup> \* For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh,<sup>l</sup> <sup>15</sup> abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person\* in place of the two, thus establishing peace,<sup>m</sup> <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it.<sup>n</sup> <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,<sup>o</sup> <sup>18</sup> for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God,<sup>q</sup> <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,<sup>r</sup> with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.\* <sup>21</sup> Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord;<sup>s</sup> <sup>22</sup> in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.<sup>t</sup>

### III. WORLD MISSION OF THE CHURCH

#### CHAPTER 3

Eph

#### Commission to Preach God's Plan.\*

<sup>1</sup> Because of this,<sup>a</sup> I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ\* [Jesus] for you Gentiles—<sup>2</sup> if, as I suppose, you have heard of the stewardship\* of God's grace that was given to me for your

Mosaic law (cf. Col 2:14), reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18–21), and the destruction of the *dividing wall* such as kept people from God in the temple or a barrier in the heavens.

**2:15** *One new person*: a corporate body, the Christian community, made up of Jews and Gentiles, replacing ancient divisions; cf. Rom 1:16.

**2:20** *Capstone*: the Greek can also mean cornerstone or key-stone.

**3:1–13** Paul reflects on his mission to the Gentiles. He alludes to his call and appointment to the apostolic office (vv. 2–3) and how his *insight* through revelation, as well as that of the other apostles and charismatic prophets in the church (vv. 4–5), has deepened understanding of God's plan of salvation in Christ. Paul is the special herald (v. 7) of a new *promise* to the *Gentiles* (v. 6): that the divine plan includes them in the spiritual benefits promised to Israel. Not only is this unique apostolic role his; Paul also has been given the task of explaining to all the divine *plan* of salvation (vv. 8–9), once *hidden*. Through the *church*, God's plan to save through Christ is becoming manifest to angelic beings (v. 10; cf. 1:21), in accord with God's *purpose* (v. 11). The fulfillment of the plan in Christ gives the whole church more *confidence* through *faith* in God (v. 12). The readers of this letter are also thereby encouraged to greater confidence despite Paul's imprisonment (v. 13).

**3:1** *A prisoner of Christ*: see Introduction. Paul abruptly departs from his train of thought at the end of v. 1, leaving an incomplete sentence.

**3:2** *Stewardship*: the Greek is the same term employed at 1:10 for the *plan* that God administers (Col 1:25) and in which Paul plays a key role.

**GATE.** This word often indicates the city or stronghold (Ps 87:2). It also designates the public square (usually situated near the city gate) where all public affairs were carried on (Ru 4); Jesus used this word in a symbolic sense. He is the "gate for the sheep" by which the sheep reenter the sheepfold (Jn 10:7).

**GEHENNA.** This comes from the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom," a place near Jerusalem where ritual infant-sacrifices had been practiced (2 Chr 28:3). This place was later used as a depot for refuse. The word became synonymous with place of malediction (Jer 7:31) and then in the New Testament with the abode of the damned, a place of torment, unquenchable fire and the consuming worm (Mt 5:29; 10:28; 18:8f; Mk 9:44ff). See **SHEOL**.

**GENNESARET.** Plain to the northwest of the Sea of Tiberias. It gave its name to a town close to Capernaum. Jesus sojournd there for a long time (Mt 14:34).

**GENTILES.** See **NATIONS**.

**GETHSEMANE.** This word, which signifies "oil press," became the name for a plantation of olive trees located opposite the temple of Jerusalem, east of the torrent of Kidron. This is the "mount of Olives," scene of Christ's agony and betrayal (Mt 26:36-56).

**GIBEON.** Hivite city north of Jerusalem. Joshua concluded a pact there (Jos 9). It also was the location for a sanctuary that remained in use until the construction of the temple of Jerusalem by Solomon (1 Kgs 3:4-5).

**GILEAD.** The name of the western part of the plateau east of the Jordan, sometimes signifying the whole region from the Yarmuk to the Jordan, sometimes only the northern part of this region, and sometimes only its southern part (Gn 31:21-25; Nm 32:1).

**GILGAL.** A place east of Jericho, which served as the location for the stone monument erected in memory of the crossing of the Jordan (Jos 4:20). Later, it became a center of idolatrous worship often condemned by the prophets (Am 4:4). There also was a Gilgal near Shechem (Dt 11:30) and one about seven miles from Bethel (2 Kgs 2:1).

**GLORY.** A very important notion in biblical theology. In Hebrew (*kabod*), the word designates "to be heavy," "to be illustrious." It often denotes the radiant manifestation of God in his grandeur (Ez 1:28). This divine glory is possessed by Jesus (Jn 1:14). According to St. Paul, every Christian shares in this divine glory already here below (Phil 3:21).

**GOEL.** See **KIN, NEXT OF**.

**GOG.** Symbolic name probably taken from that of Gyges, king of Lydia, used by the prophet Ezekiel (38:2) to represent a bar-

baric conqueror rising up to threaten Israel. He is portrayed as living in the land of Magog. The Book of Revelation then uses the expression "Gog and Magog" as symbols of all pagan nations (Rev 20:8).

**GOIIM.** Hebrew word signifying peoples, nations. It is used to designate all peoples *other than* the Israelites. In English, it is often rendered as nations or Gentiles (Is 62:2). See **FOREIGNERS, NATIONS**.

**GOLD PIECE.** See **MONEY**.

**GOLGOTHA.** Aramaic word signifying "skull place." It was the name of a little hill located northwest of the city of Jerusalem. Those condemned were executed there, and it was here that Jesus suffered crucifixion (Mt 27:33). The Latin rendering of this word is *Calvaria*, which is the origin of our "Calvary."

**GOMORRAH.** City south of the Dead Sea destroyed by God because of the perversity of its inhabitants (Gn 19).

**GOOD NEWS.** See **GOSPEL**.

**GOSPEL.** In Greek, this word signifies good news, and specifically the good news of the Kingdom of God (Heb 4:2; Mt 4:23). St. Paul uses the word to indicate his preaching; later, the same word will be applied to the accounts of Christ's life (1 Cor 9:16; Rom 1:3).

**GRACE.** This word (in Greek: *doxa*) has a great variety of meanings: favor, benevolence, benefit. Hence, it signifies God's gratuitous love, which makes the creature its acceptable beneficiary (Rom 11:5, 6). The grace par excellence is salvation, justification (Eph 2:5). In the plural—graces—it signifies the supernatural gifts and helps given to each one by the Holy Spirit.

**GRINDSTONE.** A flat, circular stone, revolving on an axle, for grinding, shaping, or smoothing objects (Lk 17:35).

**HASIDEANS.** This word is derived from the Hebrew word *hasidim*, "pious ones," and designates the faithful servants of God. They are mentioned in the Book of Proverbs (2:8) and in the Psalms (40:5; 50:5; 148:14). They played a leading part during the resistance directed by Judas Maccabeus (1 Mc 2:42 and 7:6; 2 Mc 14:6). They are undoubtedly at the origin of the Essenes, the brotherhood established in the monastery of Qumran, which left us the famous Dead Sea Scrolls.

**HEART.** The Hebrews regarded the heart as the seat not only of emotions but also of thoughts and voluntary acts. Thus, the heart represents the whole person (Jl 2:13; 1 Pt 3:4).

**HEAVEN.** This word has several meanings: (1) the firmament in which the stars are perceived (Gn 1:14-17); (2) the region of the atmosphere where the birds fly (Dt 4:17); (3) the place of God's residence, the throne-room where the

Everlasting One is seated surrounded by the angels (Mt 5:12; 24:36). Jewish tradition had imagined several heavens or firmaments superimposed on one another populated with various kinds of angels. It is in this sense that they spoke of the "heavenly host" and that St. Paul spoke of having been caught up in ecstasy "to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2).

**HEBRON.** Ancient Canaanite city located on one of the highest points of the Judean ridge, twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It was greatly frequented by the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), their families, and descendants (Gn 13:18; 23:19; 35:27). After the Israelite conquest of Palestine, it was set apart as a city of refuge (Jos 23:7) and later David reigned there seven and a half years over Judah before capturing Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:5).

**HELL.** The place of eternal punishment, also called Gehenna. See **GEHENNA, SHEOL**.

**HELLENIST.** A Jew, or a Jew turned Christian, living in a foreign land and speaking Greek (Acts 6:1).

**HERITAGE.** See **INHERITANCE**.

**HERMON.** A mountain chain constituting the frontier north of Palestine. The highest point is often called "the mount of God" (Dt 3:8).

**HEROD.** The Herodian family, though Jewish in religion, was Idumean in origin. Herod "the Great" (B.C. 62 to 4) was appointed by Rome as king of Judea in B.C. 40, to the exclusion of the native Hasmonean line. He rebuilt the temple, and was in general an efficient ruler, but his cruelties made him odious. He slaughtered the infants at Bethlehem (Mt 2:16-18). Four of his children are mentioned in the New Testament: Archelaus, Antipas, and two named Philip.

Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea (4 B.C.-6 A.D.), was deposed on account of his cruelty and exiled to Vienne in Gaul.

Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, was deposed in 39 A.D. He divorced his wife, the daughter of King Aretas, and married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, who resided in Rome. He imprisoned and later beheaded John the Baptist (Mt 14:1ff). He was present in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's trial (Lk 23:7-12).

Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis (4 B.C.-34 A.D.) unlike his brothers, was a moderate and peaceful ruler.

Two other descendants of Herod are also mentioned in the New Testament. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, was king of all Palestine from 41 to 44 A.D. He was a strict observer of Judaism, and a persecutor of Christianity (Acts 12:1ff). His death is mentioned in Acts 12:23. His son Agrippa II, ruled in Tra-

**Cycle C**

<b>2013</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2031</b>	<b>2037</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2034</b>	<b>2040</b>

## GUIDE—

1- refers to Reading I

2- refers to Reading II

3- refers to Gospel

	Old Test.	New Test.
<b>ADVENT SEASON</b>		
<b>1st Sunday of Advent</b>		
1- Jer 33:14-16 .....	974	
2- 1 Thes 3:12—4:2 .....		315
3- Lk 21:25-28, 34-36 .....		135
<b>2nd Sunday of Advent</b>		
1- Bar 5:1-9 .....	1010	
2- Phil 1:4-6, 8-11 .....		302
3- Lk 3:1-6 .....		102
<b>3rd Sunday of Advent</b>		
1- Zep 3:14-18a .....	1135	
2- Phil 4:4-7 .....		306
3- Lk 3:10-18 .....		103
<b>4th Sunday of Advent</b>		
1- Mi 5:1-4a .....	1122	
2- Heb 10:5-10 .....		349
3- Lk 1:39-45 .....		98
<b>CHRISTMAS SEASON</b>		
<b>Christmas Vigil</b>		
1- Is 62:1-6 .....	929	
2- Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 .....		198
3- Mt 1:1-25 .....		11
<b>Christmas (At Midnight)</b>		
1- Is 9:1-6 .....	873	
2- Ti 2:11-14 .....		334
3- Lk 2:1-14 .....		100
<b>Christmas (At Dawn)</b>		
1- Is 62:11-12 .....	929	
2- Ti 3:4-7 .....		334
3- Lk 2:15-20 .....		101
<b>Christmas (During the Day)</b>		
1- Is 57:7-10 .....	923	
2- Heb 1:1-6 .....		339
3- Jn 1:1-18 .....		145
<b>Sunday After Christmas (Holy Family)</b>		
1- 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28 .....	283	
2- 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24 .....		372
3- Lk 2:41-52 .....		102
<b>January 1 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)</b>		
1- Nm 6:22-27 .....	152	
2- Gal 4:4-7 .....		289
3- Lk 2:16-21 .....		101
<b>2nd Sunday After Christmas</b>		
1- Sir 24:1-2, 8-12 .....	829	
2- Eph 1:3-6, 15-18 .....		293
3- Jn 1:1-18 .....		145
<b>Epiphany</b>		
1- Is 60:1-6 .....	927	
2- Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 .....		295
3- Mt 2:1-12 .....		12

	Old Test.	New Test.
<b>Sunday After Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord)</b>		
1- Is 40:1-5, 9-11 .....	904	
2- Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7 .....		334
3- Lk 3:15-16, 21-22 .....		103
<b>LENTEN SEASON</b>		
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>		
1- Jl 2:12-18 .....	1100	
2- 2 Cor 5:20—6:2 .....		272
3- Mt 6:1-6, 16-18 .....		18
<b>1st Sunday of Lent</b>		
1- Dt 26:4-10 .....	216	
2- Rom 10:8-13 .....		235
3- Lk 4:1-13 .....		104
<b>2nd Sunday of Lent</b>		
1- Gn 15:5-12, 17-18 .....	21	
2- Phil 3:17—4:1 .....		306
3- Lk 9:28b-36 .....		116
<b>3rd Sunday of Lent</b>		
1- Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15 .....	67	
2- 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12 .....		254
3- Lk 13:1-9 .....		123
<b>4th Sunday of Lent</b>		
1- Jos 5:9a, 10-12 .....	233	
2- 2 Cor 5:17-21 .....		272
3- Lk 15:1-3, 11-32 .....		126
<b>5th Sunday of Lent</b>		
1- Is 43:16-21 .....	909	
2- Phil 3:8-14 .....		305
3- Jn 8:1-11 .....		157
<b>Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)</b>		
Procession Lk 19:28-40 .....	132	
1- Is 50:4-7 .....	917	
2- Phil 2:6-11 .....		303
3- Lk 22:14—23:56 .....		137
<b>EASTER TRIDUUM AND EASTER SEASON</b>		
<b>Holy Thursday</b>		
<b>Chrism Mass</b>		
1- Is 61:1-3ab, 6a, 8b-9 .....	928	
2- Rev 1:5:8 .....		387
3- Lk 4:16-21 .....		105
<b>Mass of Lord's Supper</b>		
1- Ex 12:1-8, 11-14 .....	77	
2- 1 Cor 11:23-26 .....		257
3- Jn 13:1-15 .....		166
<b>Good Friday</b>		
1- Is 52:13—53:12 .....	919	
2- Heb 4:4-16; 5:7-9 .....		342
3- Jn 18:1—19:42 .....		172
<b>Easter Vigil</b>		
1- Gn 1:1—2:2 .....	6	
Gn 22:1-18 .....	29	
Ex 14:15—15:1 .....	81	

	Old Test.	New Test.
Is 54:5-14 .....	921	
Is 55:1-11 .....	921	
Bar 3:9-15, 32—4:4 .....	1007	
Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28 .....	1051	
2- Rom 6:3-11 .....		229
3- Lk 24:1-12 .....		140
<b>Easter Sunday</b>		
1- Acts 10:34a, 37-43 .....	195	
2- Col 3:1-4 .....	311	
or 1 Cor 5:6b-8 .....	248	
3- Jn 20:1-9 .....	176	
or Lk 24:1-12 .....	140	
Evening 3- Lk 24:13-35 .....	141	
<b>2nd Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 5:12-16 .....	186	
2- Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19 .....	387	
3- Jn 20:19-31 .....	177	
<b>3rd Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41 .....	187	
2- Rev 5:11-14 .....	392	
3- Jn 21:1-19 .....	177	
<b>4th Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 13:14, 43-52 .....	198	
2- Rev 7:9, 14b-17 .....	394	
3- Jn 10:27-30 .....	162	
<b>5th Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 14:21-27 .....	198	
2- Rev 21:1-5a .....	407	
3- Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35 .....	167	
<b>6th Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 .....	201	
2- Rev 21:10-14, 22-23 .....	407	
3- Jn 14:23-29 .....	169	
<b>Ascension of the Lord</b>		
1- Acts 1:1-11 .....	180	
2- Eph 1:17-23 .....	294	
or Heb 9:24-28; 10:19-23 .....	348	
3- Lk 24:46-53 .....	142	
<b>7th Sunday of Easter</b>		
1- Acts 7:55-60 .....	190	
2- Rev 22:12-14, 16-17, 20 .....	409	
3- Jn 17:20-26 .....	172	
<b>Pentecost</b>		
<b>Vigil</b>		
1- Gn 11:1-9 .....	13	
or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b .....	77	
or Ez 37:1-14 .....	1007	
or Jl 3:1-5 .....	1056	
2- Rom 8:22-27 .....	232	
3- Jn 7:37-39 .....	157	