

## 4 Opening Doors to Discourses

### *Philemon*

*Philemon* is our example for studying discourses. It is representative of the letters in the New Testament that missionary pastors wrote to young, first-generation churches between AD 45-85. They deal with such "modern" problems that we get the feeling the writer had our local church in mind! *Philemon*, for instance, deals with the pervasive problem of forgiveness between Christians.



"Did Paul's letters to the Corinthians go by regular mail, FedEx, or E-mail?"

#### **Personal study: O - I - A with different emphases**

In narratives **actions** are primary--and concrete. In discourses (teaching, argument) **ideas** are primary--and abstract. Using the same keys of O-I-A, watch how the writer seeks to **persuade** his readers to change their belief and behavior. He uses personal appeals, logic, comparisons, allusions to Christian doctrines, common sense, historical precedents, illustrations - any valid appeal to influence the mind, heart and will. *And always the writers in biblical discourses aim to help their readers to see their situation as part of the big story of God's redemption of humanity.*

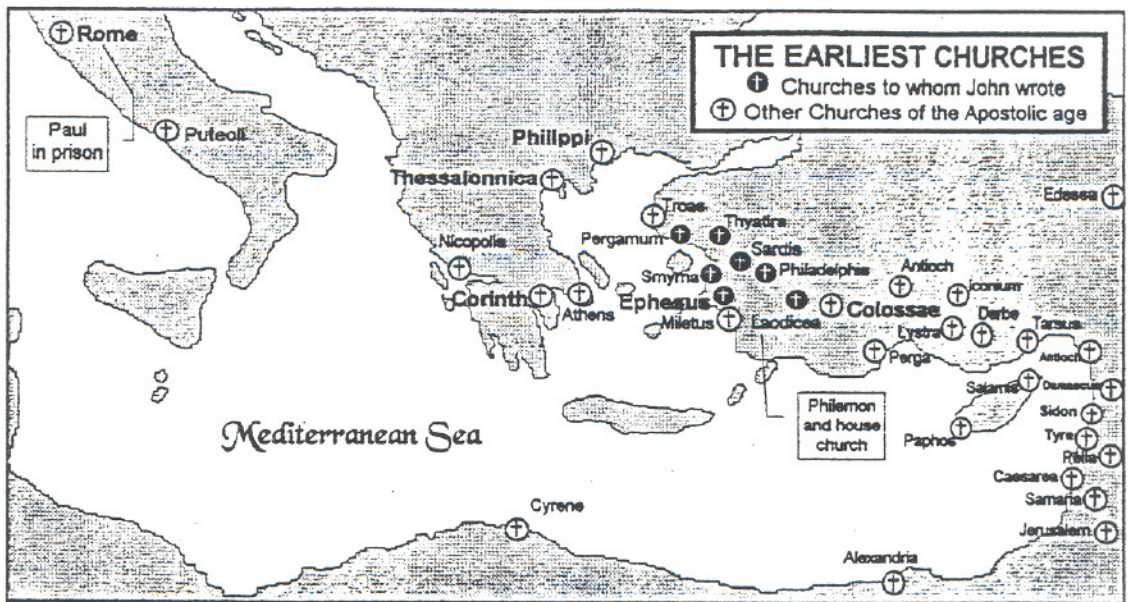
Watch how Paul presents his argument to Philemon, who faced the thorny problem of whether or not to receive back a runaway slave. Paul argues sensitively, progressively to a climax. He hints at the alternatives of negative or positive results, depending on Philemon's obedience to the Gospel.

**Read *Philemon* three times.** In the first reading try to identify with Philemon. In the second reading try to identify with Paul. In the third reading try to identify with Onesimus. *Read also Colossians 4:10-18, which is a parallel passage to Philemon with most of the same people involved.*

#### **Observe the background--historical, cultural, personal elements.**

1. **Who** is the writer? **Where** is he? **Why** is he there? (1, 7, 9, 10, 13, 17, 22, 23; also Acts 28:30-31.) *Paul the apostle is in prison in Rome (capital of the Roman Empire). He is Caesar's prisoner because of his faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel.*
2. **Who** are the recipients? **Where** are they? **What kind of relationship** do they have with the writer? (1, 2, 5-7, 16, 22. See also Colossians 4:10-18.)

Philemon and the church in his house are the recipients. They are evidently in Laodicea or a nearby town in Asia Minor. Philemon, converted through Paul, is a highly respected and well-loved leader of the church in his home and a wealthy slave owner. The members of the church seem to be healthy believers. Paul and Philemon have a close, mutually respectful relationship.



### Identify the problem(s).

1. **What is/are the problems? How** did it/they arise? (10, 12, 18)

**Problem(s)?** 1) Paul wants Philemon to receive back Onesimus, a runaway slave. To keep him in Rome would be illegal, since slaves were personal property. But he knows he can't force Philemon to do "the Christian thing". 2) Philemon is also in a bind. He has a right to punish or kill Onesimus. This is what other slave owners would do. But he is now a Christian—and the leader in the Christian community.

**How?** Paul makes no reference to how Onesimus ended up in Rome, about 1000 miles away from home in Asia Minor. But verse 18 implies Onesimus had stolen goods from his master.

2. **How** does the writer approach the problem? Note how carefully Paul does this. (1-11)

- He begins by reminding Philemon he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus. (He repeats this several times throughout the letter!)
- He re-establishes their close relationship—"our dear friend and fellow-worker".

### Observe how he then seeks to solve the problem.

1. **How** does he proceed step by step? What different appeals does he use to persuade his readers? (12-22)

- v 12a, He totally identifies with Onesimus—a very personal appeal.
- v 12b, He's doing the right thing by sending Onesimus back to Philemon—the legal aspect.



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2. What good results does Paul point to or imply if Philemon follows his counsel/instructions?

- vs 1, 7 *Their close friendship and partnership in the Gospel can continue and grow stronger.*
- vs 6, 7 *Philemon now has another opportunity to show "love for all the saints and refresh the hearts of the saints."*
- v 11 *Onesimus will become useful to both Philemon and Paul.*

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3. What dangers does Paul imply if Philemon does not forgive Onesimus?

- vs 5-7 *Philemon's reputation as a Christian leader is at stake!*
- vs 8, 13, 17 *Their close relationship is bound to be affected negatively.*

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### **Application - Be honest, personal and concrete.**

1. In what ways is/are Paul and Philemon's problem(s) similar to ours? How are they like us?
2. What practical guidelines does this letter give to our church/fellowship for how to handle hostile relationships among church members?
3. What is my part in solving these problems? What in this letter inspires you to obey the Lord in this difficult situation?

## Group Study of Philemon - *Cooperative thinking in O-I-A*

### **PHILEMON: "Problems in Forgiveness"**

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- Purpose**
- \* To learn from Paul how to mediate between Christians in a hostile relationship
  - \* To check ourselves for unhealthy attitudes as the offended party

**Bridge** *Why is it so hard for us to forgive someone who has offended us?*

We can find more books on forgiveness now than 10 years ago in Christian and secular bookstores. People are admitting they must take care of this common but often hidden poisonous sin. *Philemon* is one of the most practical books on the subject.

**Background of the problem** A few years before this letter Paul had evangelized Asia Minor where Philemon lived. (Near Colossae, perhaps Laodicea—*Col* 4:16) Philemon, one of his converts (*v* 19b), became a valued friend and co-worker (*vs* 1, 17). The local church met in his home. He gained a reputation as a loving, faithful brother and leader (*vs* 1-2, 4-7).

One of his house slaves, however, had run away (*vs* 15-16). Onesimus escaped to Rome, apparently with goods stolen from Philemon (*v* 18). Then probably down and out in the capital he met Paul again in prison. There he became a Christian through Paul (*vs* 10-14).

#### **Problems for Paul**

1. *What do you generally know about slaves in the ancient world? Does someone happen to know the Roman law regarding a runaway slave?*
2. *Imagine Paul's dilemma as a Roman citizen and a Christian! If you were in Paul's sandals, what factors must you consider in sending Onesimus back to Philemon?*
3. *Paul has to be extremely tactful in asking Philemon to take back his runaway slave. He doesn't mention the problem till verse 10. What does he first establish in verses 1-7?*
4. *What further appeals of Paul do you see in verses 11-14?*

#### **Problems for Philemon**

1. *Philemon is also in a difficult position. If he reinstates Onesimus with forgiveness, what would be the probable reaction of other slave owners?*

**Note** E. Gibbons in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* estimated that about 95% of the Roman empire were made up of slaves. The economic system depended totally on slavery.

2. *On the other hand, suppose Philemon doesn't forgive Onesimus. What would be the implications for Onesimus? for the church? for Philemon himself? for the pagan society watching the new Christian church?*

**Note** Letters were read aloud to the whole church. See *verse 2* and *Col. 4:16*.

3. *How does Paul show in verses 15-20 that he is sensitive to Philemon's struggle?*

**Note** Verse 19a with Paul's signature was a legal promissory note, an IOU. Up till that point Paul had a scribe writing the letter, as was his custom.

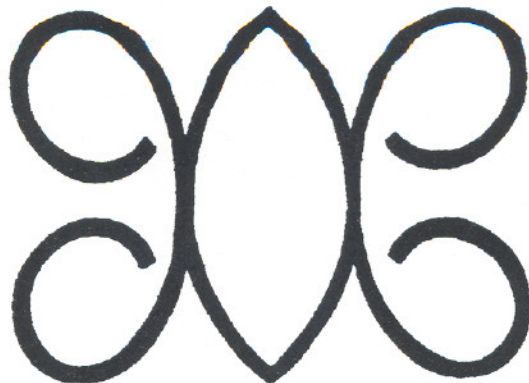
## To forgive or not forgive?

1. Look at Paul's last appeals in *verses 21-22*! *If you were Philemon at this point, how persuaded would you be?*
2. *How would you describe Paul's probable frame of mind as he ends his letter of appeal to Philemon? (vs 21-25)*
3. We are not told anywhere if Philemon forgave Onesimus. *On the basis of this letter, what do you think probably happened?*

## Reflection for Application

1. *What happens to us when we hang on to past grievances and refuse to forgive an offender?*
2. *What can we learn from Paul's example about being a mediator? Could God be calling you to be a mediator between two hostile Christians?*

**For further consideration:** What Jesus said about forgiving or not forgiving our fellow believers - *Matthew 6:14; 18:21-35*.



West African symbol for forgiveness



## 5 Opening Doors to Poetry

### *The PSALMS*

**The psalms are the heart of the Bible.** *First*, they are found in the center of the Bible. *Secondly*, more than any other part of the Bible they express the believer's deepest feelings and loftiest thoughts about God and life. *Thirdly*, their accumulative message is the heart of the Bible. All major teachings of the Bible are there in direct or veiled form. *The psalms are a vital part of God's big story of redemption of our humanity.*

**All of life is here!** You will find every human experience and emotion described in the psalms. Look at the illustrations here. *What feelings do you perceive?*



### Seven types of psalms

Bible scholars have detected seven types of psalms. *You can discern them more by their dominant mood than by their subjects.* (Subjects overlap in all types of psalms.)

1. **Hymns** are full of praise for God—his nature, his character, his works.  
**Mood:** Joyous! Exuberant! Awed! *Examples: Psalms 8, 19, 103.*
2. **Laments** (community and individual) complain about troubles, but usually end in praise!  
**Mood:** Stressful...anxious...sometimes vindictive. *Examples: Psalms 3, 43, 69, 137.*
3. **Thanksgiving psalms** express gratitude for God's deliverance from a disaster.  
**Mood:** Thoughtful, humble, grateful. *Examples: Psalms 32, 124.*
4. **Confidence psalms** come out of deep experiences of learning to trust God in all circumstances.  
**Mood:** Calm, peaceful, quietly joyful. *Examples: Psalms 23, 27, 91.*
5. **Remembrance psalms** remind the nation how good and faithful God has been to them.  
**Mood:** Sobering, awesome, expansive, faith-confirming. *Examples: Psalms 78, 105, 106.*
6. **Wisdom psalms** flow from practiced observations of human nature and God's ways.  
**Mood:** Reflective, practical. *Examples: Psalms 1, 37, 73.*
7. **Kingship/Messianic psalms** are primarily celebration songs of a royal event but also point to the True King who is coming. **Mood:** Joyous, festive, "patriotic". *Examples: Psalm 2, 45, 110.*

## Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry

- \* They are *personal* in nature.
- \* They use *parallelisms* in thought.
- \* They use *picture language*.
- \* Their theme *progresses* by stanzas to a climax.

**1. Personal in nature** The psalms arose out of a believer's deep experience and deep reflection. Even when he refers to history or the monarchy, it is an intimate experience.

**Try it!** *What feelings and possible experience does each text suggest?*

8:1 O Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
4 What is man that you are mindful of him?  
the son of man that you care for him?

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22:6 But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by man and despised by people.

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23:1 The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall not be in want.

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38:4 My guilt has overwhelmed me  
like a burden too heavy to bear.

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40:17 Yet I am poor and needy;  
may the Lord think of me,

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67:4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you rule the peoples justly  
and guide the nations of the earth.

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73:3 For I envied the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

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13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure;  
in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.

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90:12 Teach us to number our days aright,  
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

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116:1 I love the Lord,  
for he heard my voice;  
he heard my cry for mercy.

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12 How can I repay the Lord  
for all his goodness to me?

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- 137:8 O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,  
           happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us--  
   9 he who seizes your infants  
  10 and dashes them against the rocks.

- 139:5 You hem me in--behind and before;  
           you have laid your hand upon me,  
   6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
           too lofty for me to attain.

**2. Picture language** The psalmist uses concrete realities familiar to his readers to illustrate his ideas. These may be physical objects and activities, historical items or personal experiences.

**Try it!** Read *Psalm 23* (p.21). Underline all the word pictures you observe. Reflect on these pictures. How do these pictures make the writer's idea more personal to you?

**3. Parallelisms** This most unique aspect of Hebrew literature has rhythm in thought rather than rhythm in meter (as in western poetry). Two (sometimes three) lines relate to each other in one of several ways. In most Bibles you can see this by the indentation of the second and third lines.

*The following are the most common types of parallelisms.*

- **Synonymous (=)** Line A expresses a thought. Line B gives the **same** thought in a different way. E.g., *Psalm 3:1*

A O Lord, how many are my foes!  
           B How many rise up against me!

- **Antithetic (≠)** Line A expresses a thought. Line B gives the **opposite** idea. E.g., *Psalm 1:6*

A For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
           B but the way of the wicked will perish.

- **Symbolic (\*)** Either line gives the thought. The other line **illustrates** that thought. E.g., *Psalm 42:1*

A As the deer pants for streams of water,  
           B so my soul pants for you, O God.

- **Synthetic (+)** Line A expresses a thought. Line B (and sometimes C) **adds** to that thought. E.g., *Psalm 23:5*

A You prepare a table before me  
           B in the presence of my enemies.



- **Climactic (!)** Line A expresses a thought. Line B (or C) *brings it to a climax*.  
E.g., *Psalm 23:6*

**A** *Surely goodness and love will follow me*

**B** *all the days of my life.*

**A** *And I will dwell in the house of the Lord*

**B** *forever.*

**Try it!** Identify the parallelisms of the couplets in *Psalm 23* below.

**4. Progression of theme by stanzas** The writer (**A**) announces his theme in the first one or two verses; (**B**) develops his theme in each succeeding stanza; then (**C**) concludes his theme in the last one or two verses. See example of *Psalm 23* below.

## Demonstration and Practice

### Psalm 23

A Psalm of David

*Observe how the main idea in each stanza develops the psalmist's theme.*

1 The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall lack nothing.

**A. Theme:** *My Perfect Shepherd*

2 He makes me lie down  
in green pastures,  
He leads me beside quiet waters.

**B. Development of Theme**

1. *In daily life*

3 He restores my soul.  
He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk  
through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
Your rod and staff,  
they comfort me.

2. *In any crisis*

5 You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies,  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

3. *In success/victory*

6 Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.

**C. Conclusion:** *For Time and Eternity*

**Try it! Read Psalm 32.** Use all the tools you have learned for studying the psalms—noting picture language, identifying parallelisms, giving to each stanza a title that shows the progression of the psalmist's thoughts and feelings. Psalm 32 is one of four or five penitential psalms that David wrote after he acknowledged his double sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. (*II Samuel 11 - 12*)

### Psalm 32

A psalm of David. A *maskil*.

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered,
- 2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him,  
and in whose spirit is not deceit.
- 3 When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long,
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me,  
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. *Selah*
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*
- 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you  
while you may be found;  
Surely when the mighty waters rise,  
they will not reach him.
- 7 You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*
- 8 I will instruct you,  
and teach you in the way that you should go;  
I will counsel you  
and watch over you.
- 9 Do not be like the horse or the mule  
which have no understanding,  
but must be controlled by bit and bridle  
or they will not come to you.
- 10 Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.  
Rejoice in the Lord,  
and be glad, you righteous;  
sing, all you who are upright in heart!



Several people have chosen a psalm and jotted down the thoughts and emotions that came to them as they read in their quiet time. HIS will print one each month for a while.

We hope the experiences of these men will help you relate God to your daily life as you study the Bible alone.

James Nyquist

## PSALM 43

- I believe in a God who takes an active part in my affairs
- 1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men. *They're too strong for me!* *They make it hard for those who do right and congratulate those who do wrong!*
- I know God well enough to know my cause is the same as his
- 2 You are God my stronghold.
- Why have you rejected me? - you used to help me, why not now?
- Why must I go about mourning, - no hope left
- I'm pinned down oppressed by the enemy?
- 3 Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; *It's dark here, Lord*  
*you always speak the truth, but I can't hear you now*  
 let them bring me to your holy mountain. *I'm willing to follow away from lies, my lies & yours!*  
*can't get there under my own power*  
 to the place where you dwell. *I remember that an altar had a burnt offering. I'm prepared to go, Lord. Burn what you want to*
- 4 Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.
- I will praise you with the harp, - instruments help!
- O God, my God.
- mine: long ago you told me you wanted me. And I desperately want you
- 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? *sometimes I have to get out of this existential bind and give myself a good talking to*  
Why so disturbed within me?  
 Put your hope in God, *don't you know He's heard you in #2?*  
*give me one reason* for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. *my faith is strong now. Come on feelings, catch up!*

### STANZA TITLES

#1 (v. 1~2) Here's my problem, God

#2 (v. 3~4) Here's what I want you to do

#3 (v. 5) Now all I need is faith that you'll do it

**Psalm 32** - Dialogue with the Lord as in the example of *Psalm 43* on p. 27.

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered,
- 2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him,  
and in whose spirit is not deceit.
- 3 When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long,
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me,  
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. *Selah*
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*
- 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you  
while you may be found;  
Surely when the mighty waters rise,  
they will not reach him.
- 7 You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*



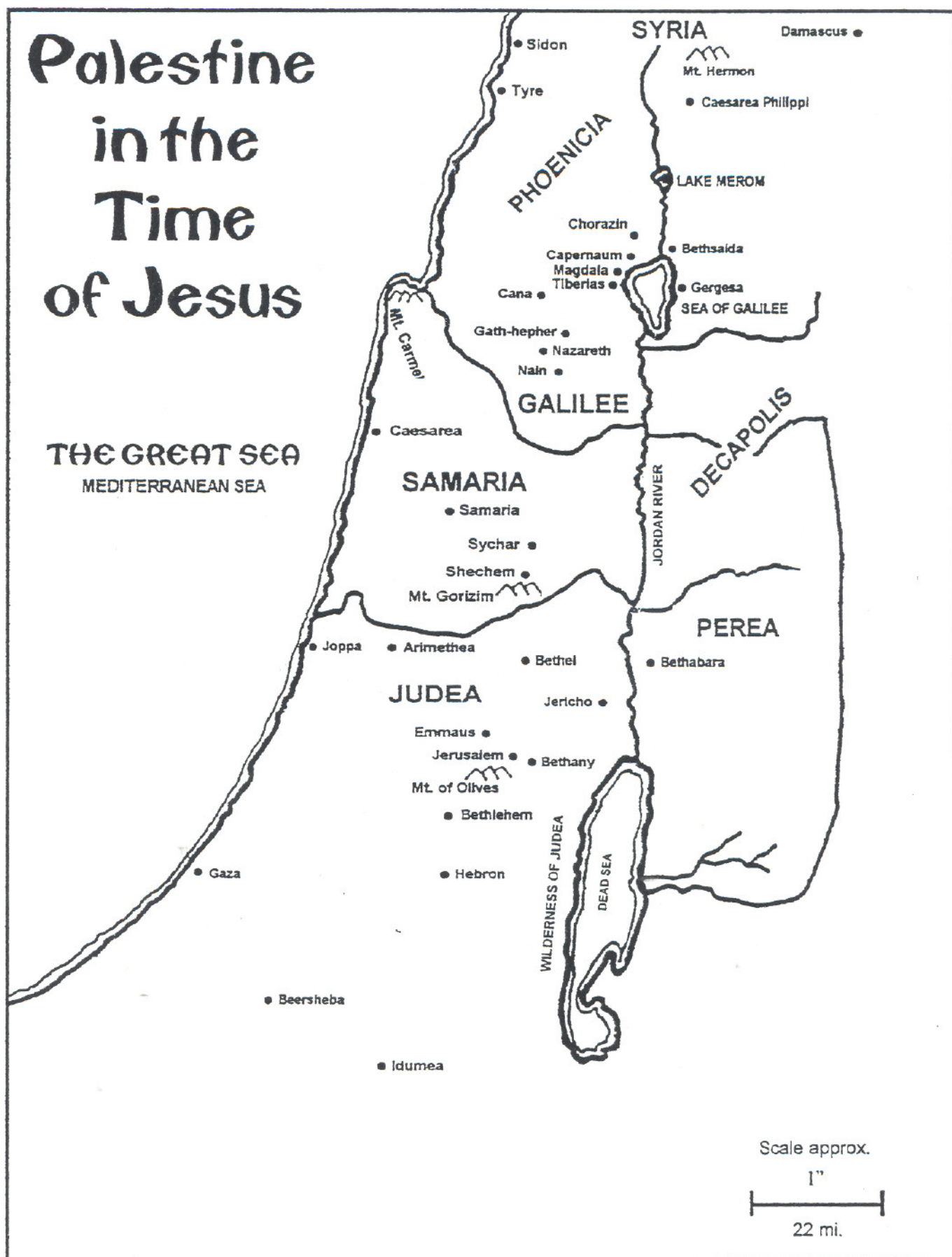
## 6 Appendices

### *Opening Closets and Drawers*

Palestine in the Time of Jesus

Word List for *Mark's Gospel*

# Palestine in the Time of Jesus





## Word List for Gospel of Mark

(An *italicized word* indicates it is also defined elsewhere in this Word List.)

**Abraham** (2000-1800 BC) The father of the Hebrews (Jews) whom God called from his pagan culture to begin a new nation through whom he (God) would bless the rest of the world (*Gen. 12*).

**age to come** When Jesus Christ makes all things new in his visible, universal kingdom.

**angel** Spiritual beings created by God, endowed with high intelligence and free will, and therefore capable of sinning against him. Good angels are God's messengers to his people (*Hebrews 1:14*). Fallen angels are those who rebelled against God under the leadership of Satan (*Isaiah 14:12-15*; *Matthew 25:41*, *Jude 6*). See *evil spirits*.

**apostle** Missionary; one sent by an official to represent his purposes. Apostles begin as *disciples*. The twelve disciples that Jesus chose became his special apostles to the Roman world (*Mark 3:14*). The New Testament refers to others like Paul and Barnabas as apostles in a more generic sense.

**blasphemy** To speak and/or act arrogantly towards God so as to incur damnation.

**Capernaum** A major fishing town on the NW shore of the Sea of *Galilee*, important enough to have a Roman military post and tax office Jesus made it his base of ministry after his own people in *Nazareth* rejected him. It was more cosmopolitan than Nazareth or the capital of *Jerusalem*.

**chief priests** The most influential religious leaders based in *Jerusalem* and its *temple*, mainly the aristocratic *Sadducees*, who maintained their high positions because they were pro-Roman. They greatly feared that Jesus' popularity would lead to a rebellion against Caesar's authority in Palestine.

**Christ** See *Messiah*. It is a title, but became used as part of Jesus' name.

**Decapolis** The *Gentile* "Ten Cities", SE of the *Sea of Galilee*.

**demons** See *evil spirits*.

**devil** See *Satan*.

**disciple** A learner, student, follower of a recognized teacher. In pre-modern times a disciple lived with his master, making his work and family secondary to following his master.

**eternal life** The indestructible and highest quality of life which begins when people put their trust in God; the timeless multi-dimensional life continuing hereafter in the direct presence of the holy and personal God. Jesus defined it like this: *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)*

**elders** Experienced men who governed the town and made all major decisions. Selected elders, priests and teachers of the law made up Israel's national council, the *Sanhedrin*, which condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy and treason.



**evil spirits** Depraved spirits under the rule of *Satan*. As fallen angels, they are invisible and purely spiritual, possessing limited but shrewd superhuman knowledge. They violate their victims mentally, emotionally, physically, morally. With *Satan* they will be ultimately destroyed. Delivering demons from people was considered a sure sign of God's power.

**forgive, forgiveness** To give up resentment or claim to revenge on account of an offense. The normal conditions of forgiveness are genuine repentance and willingness to make reparation/restitution or atonement. The effect of forgiveness is the reconciliation of the two parties, the offended and the offender, whether this be God with persons, or person with person.

**Galilee** Jesus' province in northern Israel, where he concentrated his ministry the first two years of his 3-year ministry. Most of his disciples came from Galilee, which was considered unsophisticated and prophetically inferior by the aristocratic Judeans in the south. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, near Jerusalem in Judea, because it was his parents' ancestral town. He was brought up in Nazareth of Galilee, where his Mary and Joseph lived.

**Galilee, Sea of** The major body of water, also referred to as the Sea of Tiberias or Lake of Genneseret, bordered by the towns of Capernaum, Bethsaida and other towns mentioned in *Mark's Gospel*. It was a rich source of fish, and at least five of Jesus' disciples were fishing businessmen here. The sea or lake is some 13 miles long and 7 miles broad, surrounded by low mountains with valleys through which powerful winds from different directions could cause sudden, violent storms.

**Gentiles** "Nations", "people". From a common Jewish point of view this would be anyone outside their chosen community, alien to God's covenant and therefore inferior. But from the beginning God considered Gentiles as much loved and valuable as Jews. (See *Abraham*.) Jesus and the writers of the New Testament stressed this point with believing Gentiles, who eventually became the main body of the Christian church.

**Gerasene** An inhabitant of Gerasa (or Gadara), a city in the *Gentile* region of *Decapolis* east of the *Jordan River*. Jesus ministered to people in this region at least twice.

**God** Like a master potter designing and shaping his pottery, God is the Creator of man and his world. Man was made in God's image with intelligence, emotions, desires and will—but still finite. How can sinful finite man relate to the holy infinite One who created him? By himself he cannot. But God has taken gracious initiative and clearly revealed himself through 1) his world; 2) his personal Spirit, who loves and guides; 3) his written message in the Bible; 4) and above all, through his Son, Jesus Christ.

**heart** Regarded in the Bible as the center of the intellect, will and emotions; the core of people's personhood, what makes them distinctively human.

**Herodians, Herod's party** A political party supporting Herod's dynasty, whose pro-Romanism assured their political power (as puppet kings) and who were therefore hated by the "pure" Jews, especially the anti-Roman *Pharisees*. They also sought to destroy Jesus, because he challenged their morality and threatened their political security. The Herods were descendents of Esau (Edom), twin brother of Jacob, who cheated him of his birthright, but eventually repented and became "Israel".

**Holy Spirit** The third person in the Trinity ("three in one"). God is one in essence, but expresses himself as three distinct Persons. The Holy Spirit is also called Counselor, Spirit of truth and many



other names which describe his personal work in people. His main work is in people's hearts--sensitizing, convincing, convicting them of truth, especially about Jesus. See *heart*.

**Jerusalem** "City of Peace", dating from the 2nd millennium BC; the beloved capital of the Jews in the southern province of Judea; often used as a symbol of the Jewish nation; political/ religious center of opposition to Jesus. Sometimes referred to as "the Holy City", "the city of God", "Mount Zion" (because it sits on a mountain). It remains the focus of conflict between Jews and Muslims.

**Jesus of Nazareth** His earthly identity. Jesus (Joshua = savior) was a common name. See *Nazareth*.

**John (the Baptizer)** Not to be confused with John, an apostle of Jesus and writer of the Fourth Gospel and other New Testament books. With powerful, fearless preaching for genuine repentance, he prepared Israel for the coming of Jesus the Messiah. He was Jesus' cousin, older by six months, but did not know him personally until he baptized him at the Jordan River when they were both 30.

**Jordan, River** The river running from the *Sea of Galilee* in the north to the Dead Sea in the south, where *John the Baptizer* had his charismatic ministry to the nation.

**Judea** The southern province where the capital *Jerusalem* was located. Official opposition came from this region. The word Jew is derived from Judea.

**Kingdom of God** The personal kingship of God over the new community/nation of people who have been redeemed by Christ's salvation of grace. The Old Testament prophets had predicted the coming of this *Messianic* kingdom to be spiritual, world-wide, eternal and eventually visible to all. But in Jesus' day the concept had become largely political, nationalistic and materialistic. (*Matthew* uses the Jewish term "Kingdom of heaven". Mark, Luke and John use "Kingdom of God".)

**the law** Often referred to as "the law of Moses"; the first five books of the Old Testament, containing the early events of human history, the history of the Jews and particularly their rules and regulations God gave Israel through Moses. "The law and the prophets" also means the entire OT.

**the Lord (Yahweh)** Title stressing God's sovereign eternal nature; God's special name given to Israel when they made a covenant to be his people, and he their God. From many compounded names, the meaning becomes clear--*the Sovereign God who actively works on our behalf*. Eg, "the Lord who provides", "the Lord who sees", "the Lord my shepherd", "the Lord our banner".

**messiah** Hebrew for *Christ* (Greek); a title meaning "the anointed one"; the one God had long promised as the deliverer of his people. The OT from *Genesis* to *Malachi* anticipated his coming.

**Moses** (About 1400 BC) One of the greatest OT leaders. 1) *liberator* of his Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery, and 2) *law-giver* when they became a nation at Mount Sinai.

**name** For the Jews a person's name was more than a label or identification number. His name expressed his nature and character. In God's Kingdom his people all receive new names.

**Nazareth** A small market town belonging to the insignificant tribe of Zebulun in northern *Galilee*. It had a bad reputation partly because of its history (*Isaiah 9:1a*) and perhaps because of immoral standards that overnight caravan traders encouraged. But see *Isaiah 9:1b*.



**parable** A concise, vivid picture story of familiar characters, objects and activities created to illustrate a truth about human nature, God's purposes and other eternal values. "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

**Passover feast** A major celebration in early spring (coinciding with Easter week) observing God's miraculous deliverance of the Jews' ancestors from a 435-year slavery in Egypt. The angel of death killed the first-born mainly in Egyptian homes, but *passed over* the Hebrew homes which had lambs' blood smeared over their doors. This foreshadowed the sacrificial death of Jesus to save people from judgment. See *Exodus 12:18-27; Deuteronomy 16:5-8*.

**Pharisees** "The separated ones". A rather exclusive Jewish religious party which prided itself in strict observance of *the law* of Moses and the hundreds of traditional interpretations added to it through the centuries. Middle-class and anti-Roman, they were political and religious opponents of the *Sadducees*, who were less popular.

**priests, high priest, chief priest** 1) Priests performed their duties mainly at the *temple* in Jerusalem as mediators. They represented their people to God, and God to their people. They were proud descendants of Aaron, brother of Moses. (Levites, who assisted the priests, were from the same tribe of Levi.) 2) The high priest was the president of the *Sanhedrin*. In Jesus' day the ruling Romans chose him from among the pro-Roman *Sadducees*. 3) Chief priests included ruling and former high priests as well as male members of their families. They are always mentioned in the Gospels and Acts as among Jesus' fiercest opponents. But many later became believers (*Acts 6:7*).

**rabbi** Also "rabboni", derived from the Hebrew word meaning "great". It came to mean "my teacher" or "my master", a highly respectable title acknowledging a man's ability to teach the Old Testament law. Jesus was addressed as rabbi by friends and sometimes reluctantly by enemies.

**ruler** Usually an elder who arranged the synagogue services, kept its proprieties and looked after other community affairs. Some were members of *Sanhedrin*, the national supreme council.

**Sabbath** The seventh day of the week, on which God commanded his people to rest from ordinary work and celebrate his gifts and himself as their Creator and Lord. Of the Ten Commandments, this fourth one became the most weighted down with numerous interpretations of what work is. These confused and burdened people, and Jesus by his actions often counteracted the *Pharisees'* petty definitions of "work". In turn they charged him with breaking (their interpretations of) the laws of the Sabbath.

**Sadducees** A small but highly influential religious party, composed of aristocratic priests in Jerusalem who controlled the lucrative commercialism in the temple. They accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament as authoritative, whereas the *Pharisees* accepted all 39 books. To them the material world was the only reality. So they rejected anything supernatural like angels, immortality, resurrection. Politically they were liberal, compromising with the Romans with whom they felt their powerful positions secure. They dominated the *Sanhedrin*, which condemned Jesus.

**Sanhedrin** The highest national tribunal, based in Jerusalem, which arrested Jesus and tried him as a "grand jury", committing illegalities. They exercised varying degrees of power under foreign rulers. In Jesus' day the Romans allowed it limited jurisdiction; e.g., capital punishment with their approval.



**Satan** "Adversary" or "accuser". Also called devil (slanderer). Chief of the fallen angels who rebelled against God; the archenemy of God. All of them will ultimately be cast into eternal hell.

**scribes** See *teachers of the law*.

**Simon Peter** The most prominent of Jesus' 12 closest disciples, a fisherman like his brother Andrew, who introduced him to Jesus. He was from Jesus' province of *Galilee*. Though impetuous and overly self-confident at times, he replaced Jesus as team leader of the 12 apostles. After Jesus' resurrection he became an outstanding evangelist and church planter in the Roman world.

**Son of David** A title for the *Messiah*, whom the Jews expected to descend from their glorious King David. Jesus was indeed born in David's tribe of Judah, but he far exceeded the earthly glories of David. Only two people in Jesus' lifetime addressed him as "Son of David", one a foreign woman (*Matthew 15:22*) and the other a blind beggar (*Mark 10:48*).

**Son of Man** No one but Jesus referred to himself by this title derived from *Daniel 7:13-14*, where the Son of Man is the one who appears as a man *and* an eternal king and judge. This figure was always a mysterious personage to the Jewish interpreters of *Daniel*. When Jesus used this title he usually linked it with his suffering, death and resurrection: The Son of God *identified* with humanity, *represented* us to God, *died* to save us and *rose* to be our Servant King.

**synagogue** Local meeting place for Jews to learn/debate the law, worship and carry on other community activities. Ten men were required to organize a synagogue. It is estimated that in Jesus' time there were 365 synagogues throughout the country. Jesus and later his apostles always began their ministry in a new town by teaching in the local synagogue if there was one.

**tax collectors** Hated by their fellow Jews because they worked for the colonial Romans, who did not care how much they collected as long as they paid the stipulated annual sum to Caesar; known for extorting exorbitant sums from people. Rich by such practices, they were social outcasts and not allowed to participate in worship at the *temple* or in the local *synagogues*.

**teachers of the law** Also called scribes because they preserved the sacred Scriptures in writing. They were highly respected teachers or lawyers who studied and taught the Jewish law (Old Testament), whose word was authoritative and final. However, there were different schools of interpretation among them. They were the ones who most vigorously challenged Jesus' interpretation and application of the Scriptures. But some responded to him favorably (*Luke 20:39*).

**temple** The national center in *Jerusalem* for worship of God, especially for the feast days when the priests made animal sacrifices for the atonement of the people. The drama of these religious rituals and the magnificence of the temple complex never failed to awe the pilgrims. Jesus also loved the temple and its rituals for their divine meaning, but he hated the hypocrisy of the priests conducting them. In AD 70 the Romans destroyed both the temple and Jerusalem, climaxing Jewish rebellion.

**woman** The Aramaic word is a more respectful, affectionate term than the English and some other languages suggest. Jesus used this address in several strategic places – to his mother Mary (*John 2:4, 19:26*), to foreign women (*John 4: 21, Matthew 15:28*), to an "unclean" woman (*Luke 13:12*).