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Revised Edition



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with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources

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NEW JERSEY

LORD does not consider this enough, he will also deliver Moab into your power. ¹⁹ You shall destroy every fortified city and every choice city, fell every fruit tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every fertile field with stones.”^c

²⁰ In the morning, at the time of the sacrifice, water came from the direction of Edom and filled the land.

²¹ Meanwhile, all Moab had heard that the kings had come to war against them; troops from the youngest on up were mobilized and stationed at the border. ²² When they rose early that morning, the sun was shining across the water. The Moabites saw the water as red as blood,²³ and said, “This is blood! The kings have fought among themselves and killed one another. Quick! To the spoils, Moab!”²⁴ But when they reached the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites, who fled from them. They ranged through the countryside destroying Moab—²⁵ leveling the cities, each one casting the stones onto every fertile field and filling it, stopping up every spring, felling every fruit tree, until only the stones of Kir-hareseth* remained. Then the slingers surrounded and attacked it. ²⁶ When he saw that the battle was going against him, the king of Moab took seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but he failed. ²⁷ So he took his firstborn, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall. The wrath against Israel* was so great that they gave up the siege and returned to their own land.^d

CHAPTER 4

The Widow's Oil. ^{1a} A certain woman, the widow of one of the guild prophets, cried out to Elisha: “My husband, your servant, is dead. You know that he revered the LORD, yet now his creditor has come to take my two children into servitude.”^{*} ² Elisha answered her, “What am I to do for you? Tell me what you have in the house.” She replied, “This servant of yours has nothing in the house but a jug of oil.”³ He said, “Go out, borrow vessels from all your neighbors—as many empty vessels as you can. ⁴ Then come back and close the door on yourself and your children; pour the oil into all the vessels, and as each is filled, set it aside.”⁵ So she went out. She closed the door on herself and her children and, as they handed her the vessels, she

would pour in oil. ⁶ When all the vessels were filled, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” He answered, “There is none left.” And then the oil stopped. ⁷ She went and told the man of God, who said, “Go sell the oil to pay off your creditor; with what remains, you and your children can live.”

Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son. ⁸ One day Elisha came to Shunem, where there was a woman of influence, who pressed him to dine with her. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he would stop there to dine. ⁹ So she said to her husband, “I know that he is a holy man of God. Since he visits us often, ¹⁰ let us arrange a little room on the roof and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp, so that when he comes to us he can stay there.”^b

¹¹ One day Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight. ¹² Then he said to his servant Gehazi, “Call this Shunammite woman.” He did so, and when she stood before Elisha, ¹³ he told Gehazi, “Say to her, ‘You have troubled yourself greatly for us; what can we do for you? Can we say a good word for you to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She replied, “I am living among my own people.”^{*} ¹⁴ Later Elisha asked, “What can we do for her?” Gehazi answered, “She has no son, and her husband is old.” ¹⁵ Elisha said, “Call her.” He did so, and when she stood at the door, ¹⁶ Elisha promised, “This time next year you will be cradling a baby son.” She said, “My lord, you are a man of God; do not deceive your servant.”^c ¹⁷ Yet the woman conceived, and by the same time the following year she had given birth to a son, as Elisha had promised; ¹⁸ and the child grew up healthy.^d

One day the boy went out to his father among the reapers. ¹⁹ He said to his father, “My head! My head!” And his father said to

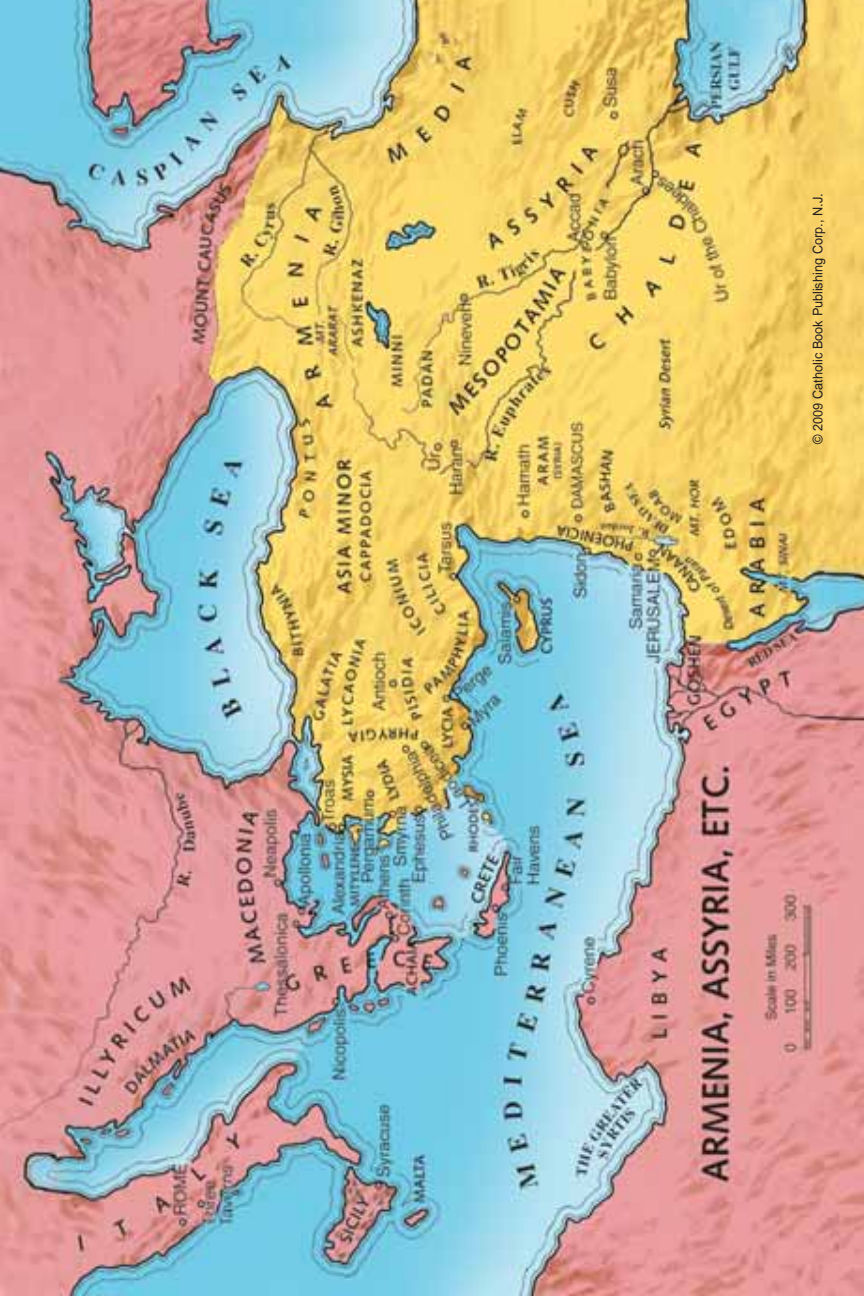
c. [3:19] Dt 20:19.—d. [3:27] Jgs 11:30–31.—a. [4:1–7] 1 Kgs 17:8–16.—b. [4:10] 1 Kgs 17:9.—c. [4:16] Gn 18:9–15.—d. [4:18–37] 1 Kgs 17:17–24; Lk 7:11–16; Acts 20:10–12.

3:25 Kir-hareseth: a major city of Moab, identified with modern Kerak, east of the Dead Sea; cf. Is 16:7, 11; Jer 48:31, 36.

3:27 The wrath against Israel: probably the wrath of Chemosh, the Moabite god to whom the child was offered. The Israelites, intimidated by this wrath, retreat.

4:1 His creditor . . . into servitude: Israelite law permitted the selling of wife and children into slavery for debt; cf. Ex 21:7; Am 2:6; 8:6; Is 50:1.

4:13 I am living among my own people: the Shunammite woman declines Elisha's offer. Surrounded by the support of her family and her clan, she is secure. Ironically, at some point in the future Elisha's advice will send her to live among foreigners (see 8:1–2).



ARMENIA, ASSYRIA, ETC.

Scale in Miles
0 100 200 300

11 Upon you I was thrust from the womb;
since my mother bore me you are my
God.^h

12 Do not stay far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is no one to help.ⁱ

II

13 Many bulls* surround me;
fierce bulls of Bashan* encircle me.

14 They open their mouths against me,
lions that rend and roar.^j

15 Like water my life drains away;
all my bones are disjointed.

My heart has become like wax,
it melts away within me.

16 As dry as a potsherd is my throat;
my tongue cleaves to my palate;
you lay me in the dust of death.*

17 Dogs surround me;
a pack of evildoers closes in on me.
They have pierced my hands and my feet

18 I can count all my bones.^k
They stare at me and gloat;

19 they divide my garments among them;
for my clothing they cast lots.^l

20 But you, LORD, do not stay far off;
my strength, come quickly to help me.

21 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the grip of the dog.

22 Save me from the lion's mouth,
my poor life from the horns of wild
bulls.^m

III

23 Then I will proclaim your name to my
brethren;

in the assembly I will praise you.*ⁿ

24 "You who fear the LORD, give praise!
All descendants of Jacob, give honor;
show reverence, all descendants of
Israel!

h. [22:11] Ps 71:6; Is 44:2; 46:3.—i. [22:12] Ps 35:22; 38:22; 71:12.—j. [22:14] Ps 17:12; Jb 4:10; 1 Pt 5:8.—k. [22:18] Ps 109:24.—l. [22:19] Mt 27:35; Mk 15:24; Lk 23:34; Jn 19:24.—m. [22:22] Ps 7:2-3; 17:12; 35:17; 57:5; 58:7; 2 Tm 4:17.—n. [22:23] Ps 26:12; 35:18; 40:10; 109:30; 149:1; 2 Sm 22:50; Heb 2:12.—o. [22:27] Ps 23:5; 69:33.—p. [22:28] Ps 86:9; Tb 13:11; Is 45:22; 52:10; Zec 14:16.—q. [22:29] Ps 103:19; Ob 21; Zec 14:9.—r. [22:32] Ps 48:14-15; 71:18; 78:6; 102:19; Is 53:10.—s. [23:1] Ps 80:2; 95:7; 100:3; Dt 2:7.—t. [23:3] Prv 4:11.

22:13-14 *Bulls*: the enemies of the psalmist are also portrayed in less-than-human form, as wild animals (cf. Ps 22:17, 21-22). *Bashan*: a grazing land northeast of the Sea of Galilee, famed for its cattle, cf. Dt 32:14; Ez 39:18; Am 4:1.

22:16 *The dust of death*: the netherworld, the domain of the dead.

22:23 *In the assembly I will praise you*: the person who offered a thanksgiving sacrifice in the Temple recounted to the

25 For he has not spurned or disdained
the misery of this poor wretch,
Did not turn away* from me,
but heard me when I cried out.

26 I will offer praise in the great assembly;
my vows I will fulfill before those who
fear him.

27 The poor* will eat their fill;
those who seek the LORD will offer
praise.
May your hearts enjoy life forever!"^o

IV

28 All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD;
All the families of nations
will bow low before him.^p

29 For kingship belongs to the LORD,
the ruler over the nations.^q

30* All who sleep in the earth
will bow low before God;
All who have gone down into the dust
will kneel in homage.

31 And I will live for the LORD;
my descendants will serve you.

32 The generation to come will be told of the
LORD,
that they may proclaim to a people yet
unborn
the deliverance you have brought.^r

PSALM 23*

The Lord, Shepherd and Host

1 A psalm of David.

I

The LORD is my shepherd;*
there is nothing I lack.^a

2 In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;

3^b he restores my soul.

other worshippers the favor received from God and invited them to share in the sacrificial banquet. The final section (Ps 22:24-32) may be a summary or a citation of the psalmist's poem of praise.

22:25 *Turn away*: lit., "hides his face from me," an important metaphor for God withdrawing from someone, e.g., Mt 3:4; Is 8:17; Ps 27:9; 69:18; 88:15.

22:27 *The poor*: originally the poor, who were dependent on God; the term (*'anawim*) came to include the religious sense of "humble, pious, devout."

22:30 Hebrew unclear. The translation assumes that all on earth (Ps 22:27-28) and under the earth (Ps 22:29) will worship God.

Psalm 23 God's loving care for the psalmist is portrayed under the figures of a shepherd for the flock (Ps 23:1-4) and a host's generosity toward a guest (Ps 23:5-6). The imagery of both sections is drawn from traditions of the exodus (Is 40:11; 49:10; Jer 31:10).

23:1 *My shepherd*: God as good shepherd is common in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Ez 34:11-16; Jn 10:11-18).

He guides me along right paths*
for the sake of his name.

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

II

- 5* You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;*
You anoint my head with oil;*^d
my cup overflows.^e
6 Indeed, goodness and mercy* will pursue
me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD^f
for endless days.

PSALM 24*

The Glory of God in Procession to Zion

- 1 A psalm of David.

I

- The earth is the LORD's and all it holds,^a
the world and those who dwell in it.
2 For he founded it on the seas,
established it over the rivers.^b

II

- 3 Who may go up the mountain of the
LORD?^c
Who can stand in his holy place?
4* "The clean of hand and pure of heart,
who has not given his soul to useless
things,
what is vain.
5 He will receive blessings from the LORD,
and justice from his saving God.
6 Such is the generation that seeks him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob."^d

Selah

c. [23:4] Jb 10:21-22; Is 50:10.—d. [23:5] Ps 92:11.—e. [23:5] Ps 16:5.—f. [23:6] Ps 27:4.—a. [24:1] Ps 50:12; 89:12; Dt 10:14; 1 Cor 10:26.—b. [24:2] Ps 136:6; Is 42:5.—c. [24:3] Ps 15:1.—d. [24:7] Ps 118:19-20.—a. [25:2] Ps 86:4; 143:8.—b. [25:2] Ps 71:1.—c. [25:3] Ps 22:6; Is 49:23; Dn 3:40.—d. [25:4] Ps 27:11; 86:11; 119:12, 35; 143:8, 10.—e. [25:6] Sir 51:8.—f. [25:7] Jb 13:26; Is 64:8.

23:3 *Right paths*: connotes "right way" and "way of righteousness."

23:5 *You set a table before me*: this expression occurs in an exodus context in Ps 78:19. *In front of my enemies*: my enemies see that I am God's friend and guest. *Oil*: a perfumed ointment made from olive oil, used especially at banquets (Ps 104:15; Mt 26:7; Lk 7:37, 46; Jn 12:2).

23:6 *Goodness and mercy*: the blessings of God's covenant with Israel.

III

- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates;*
be lifted, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may enter.^d
8 Who is this king of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in war.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates;
rise up, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may enter.
10 Who is this king of glory?
The LORD of hosts, he is the king of
glory. *Selah*

PSALM 25*

Confident Prayer for Forgiveness and Guidance

- 1 Of David.

I

- To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul,
2^a my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be disgraced;^b
do not let my enemies gloat over me.
3 No one is disgraced who waits for you,^c
but only those who are treacherous
without cause.
4 Make known to me your ways, LORD;
teach me your paths.^d
5 Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
for you I wait all the day long.
6 Remember your compassion and your
mercy, O LORD,
for they are ages old.^e
7 Remember no more the sins of my
youth;^f
remember me according to your
mercy,
because of your goodness, LORD.

Psalm 24 The Psalm apparently accompanied a ceremony of the entry of God (invisibly enthroned upon the ark), followed by the people, into the Temple. The Temple commemorated the creation of the world (Ps 24:1-2). The people had to affirm their fidelity before being admitted into the sanctuary (Ps 24:3-6; cf. Ps 15). A choir identifies the approaching God and invites the very Temple gates to bow down in obeisance (Ps 24:7-10).

24:4-5 Lit., "the one whose hands are clean." The singular is used for the entire class of worshippers.

24:7, 9 *Lift up your heads. O gates . . . you ancient portals*: the literal meaning would involve disassembling of the gates, since the portcullis (a gate that moves up and down) was unknown in the ancient world. Extra-biblical parallels might also suggest a full personification of the circle of gate towers: they are like a council of elders, bowed down and anxious, awaiting the return of the army and the great warrior gone to battle.

Psalm 25 A lament. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Such acrostic Psalms are often a series of statements only loosely connected. The psalmist mixes ardent pleas (Ps 25:1-2, 16-22) with expressions of confidence in God who forgives and guides.

servers, "Do whatever he tells you."^{c 6} * Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings,^d each holding twenty to thirty gallons.^e Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim.^f Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter."^g So they took it.^h And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroomⁱ and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."^j Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs* in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.^k

^l * After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.*

Cleansing of the Temple. ^m * Since the Passover* of the Jews was near,ⁿ Jesus went up to Jerusalem.^o He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves,* as well as the money-changers seated there.^p ^q * He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the

money-changers and overturned their tables,^r and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."^s ^t * His disciples recalled the words of scripture,^u "Zeal for your house will consume me."^v ^w * At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"^x ^y * Jesus answered and said to them,* ^z "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."^{aa} ^{ab} * The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years,* and you will raise it up in three days?"^{ac} ^{ad} * But he was speaking about the temple of his body.^{ae} ^{af} * Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.^{ag}

^{ah} * While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing.^{ai} ^{aj} * But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all,^{ak} and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.^{al}

CHAPTER 3

Nicodemus. * ^{am} * Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.* ^{an} * He

2:14–22 The other gospels place the cleansing of the temple in the last days of Jesus' life (Matthew, on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem; Mark, on the next day). The order of events in the gospel narratives is often determined by theological motives rather than by chronological data.

2:14 Oxen, sheep, and doves: intended for sacrifice. The doves were the offerings of the poor (Lv 5:7). *Money-changers:* for a temple tax paid by every male Jew more than nineteen years of age, with a half-shekel coin (Ex 30:11–16), in Syrian currency. See note on Mt 17:24.

2:17 Ps 69:10, changed to future tense to apply to Jesus.

2:19 This saying about the destruction of the temple occurs in various forms (Mt 24:2; 27:40; Mk 13:2; 15:29; Lk 21:6; cf. Acts 6:14). Mt 26:61 has: "I can destroy the temple of God . . ."; see note there. In Mk 14:58, there is a metaphorical contrast with a new temple: "I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands." Here it is symbolic of Jesus' resurrection and the resulting community (see v. 21 and Rev 21:2). In *three days:* an Old Testament expression for a short, indefinite period of time; cf. Hos 6:2.

2:20 Forty-six years: based on references in Josephus (*Jewish Wars* 1, 21, 1 #401; *Antiquities* 15, 11, 1 #380), possibly the spring of A.D. 28. Cf. note on Lk 3:1.

3:1–21 Jesus instructs Nicodemus on the necessity of a new birth from above. This scene in Jerusalem at Passover exemplifies the faith engendered by signs (2:23). It contains the self-manifestation of Jesus in Jerusalem begun in chap. 2. This is the first of the Johannine discourses, shifting from dialogue to monologue (vv. 11–15) to reflection of the evangelist (vv. 16–21). The shift from singular through v. 10 to plural in v. 11 may reflect the early church's controversy with the Jews.

3:1 A ruler of the Jews: most likely a member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin; see note on Mk 8:31.

c. [2:5] Gn 41:55.—d. [2:6] 3:25; Lv 11:33; Am 9:13–14; Mt 15:2; 23:25–26; Mk 7:2–4; Lk 11:38.—e. [2:11] 4:54.—f. [2:13–22] Mt 21:12–13; Mk 11:15–17; Lk 19:45–46.—g. [2:14] Ex 30:11–16; Lv 5:7.—h. [2:16] Zec 14:21.—i. [2:17] Ps 69:9.—j. [2:18] 6:30.—k. [2:19] Mt 24:2; 26:61; 27:40; Mk 13:2; 14:58; 15:29; Lk 21:6; Acts 6:14.—l. [2:22] 5:39; 12:16; 14:26; 20:9; Mt 12:6; Lk 24:6–8; Rev 21:22.—m. [2:23] 4:45.—n. [2:25] 1 Kgs 8:39; Ps 33:15; 94:11; Sir 42:18; Jer 17:10; 20:12.—o. [3:1] 7:50–51; 19:39.

2:6 Twenty to thirty gallons: lit. "two or three measures"; the Attic liquid measure contained 39.39 liters. The vast quantity recalls prophecies of abundance in the last days; cf. Am 9:13–14; Hos 14:7; Jer 31:12.

2:8 Headwaiter: used of the official who managed a banquet, but there is no evidence of such a functionary in Palestine. Perhaps here a friend of the family acted as master of ceremonies; cf. Sir 32:1.

2:11 The beginning of his signs: the first of seven (see Introduction).

2:12–3:21 The next three episodes take place in Jerusalem. Only the first is paralleled in the synoptic gospels.

2:12 This transitional verse may be a harmonization with the synoptic tradition in Lk 4:31 and Mt 4:13. There are many textual variants. John depicts no extended ministry in Capernaum as do the synoptics.

2:13–22 This episode indicates the post-resurrectional replacement of the temple by the person of Jesus.

2:13 Passover: this is the first Passover mentioned in John; a second is mentioned in 6:4, a third in 13:1. Taken literally, they point to a ministry of at least two years.

came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him."^b ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born* from above."⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?"⁵ Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."⁶ What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.⁷ Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.'⁸ The wind* blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can this happen?"¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony."¹¹ If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?¹² ¹³ No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up* the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,¹⁵ * so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

b. [3:2] 9:4, 16, 33; 10:21; 11:10; 13:30; Mt 22:16; Mk 12:14; Lk 20:21.—c. [3:4] 1:13.—d. [3:5] 1:32; 7:39; 19:30, 34–35; Is 32:15; 44:3; Ez 36:25–27; Jl 3:1–2.—e. [3:6] 6:63; 1 Cor 15:44–50.—f. [3:8] Eccl 11:4–5; Acts 2:2–4.—g. [3:11] 3:32, 34; 8:14; Mt 11:27.—h. [3:12] 6:62–65; Wis 9:16–17; 1 Cor 15:40; 2 Cor 5:1; Phil 2:10; 3:19–20.—i. [3:13] 1:18; 6:62; Dn 7:13; Rom 10:6; Eph 4:9.—j. [3:14] 8:28; 12:32, 34; Nm 21:4–9; Wis 16:5–7.—k. [3:16] 1 Jn 4:9.—l. [3:17] 5:22, 30; 8:15–18; 12:47.—m. [3:18] 5:24; Mk 16:16.—n. [3:19] 1:5, 9–11; 8:12; 9:5.—o. [3:20] Jb 24:13–17.—p. [3:21] Gn 47:29 LXX; Jos 2:14 LXX; 2 Sm 2:6 LXX; 15:20 LXX; Tb 4:6 LXX; 13:6; Is 26:10 LXX; Mt 5:14–16.—q. [3:22–23] 4:1–2.—r. [3:24] Mt 4:12; 14:3; Mk 1:14; 6:17; Lk 3:20.—s. [3:26] 1:26, 32–34, 36.—t. [3:27] 19:11; 1 Cor 4:7; 2 Cor 3:5; Heb 5:4.

3:3 Born: see note on 1:13. *From above:* the Greek adverb *anōthen* means both "from above" and "again." Jesus means "from above" (see v. 31) but Nicodemus misunderstands it as "again." This misunderstanding serves as a springboard for further instruction.

3:8 Wind: the Greek word *pneuma* (as well as the Hebrew *ruah*) means both "wind" and "spirit." In the play on the double meaning, "wind" is primary.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave* his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn* the world, but that the world might be saved through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.¹⁹ * And this is the verdict,²⁰ that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.²¹ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed.²² * But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.²³ ²⁴ * After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptizing.²⁵ John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim,²⁶ * because there was an abundance of water there, and people came to be baptized,²⁷ * for John had not yet been imprisoned.²⁸ Now a dispute arose between the disciples of John and a Jew* about ceremonial washings.²⁹ So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him."³⁰ * John answered and said, "No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven.³¹ * You yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am

Final Witness of the Baptist. ²² * After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptizing.²³ John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim,²⁴ * because there was an abundance of water there, and people came to be baptized,²⁵ * for John had not yet been imprisoned.²⁶ Now a dispute arose between the disciples of John and a Jew* about ceremonial washings.²⁷ So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him."²⁸ * John answered and said, "No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven.²⁹ * You yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am

3:14 Lifted up: in Nm 21:9 Moses simply "mounted" a serpent upon a pole. John here substitutes a verb implying glorification. Jesus, exalted to glory at his cross and resurrection, represents healing for all.

3:15 Eternal life: used here for the first time in John, this term stresses quality of life rather than duration.

3:16 Gave: as a gift in the incarnation, and also "over to death" in the crucifixion; cf. Rom 8:32.

3:17–19 Condemn: the Greek root means both judgment and condemnation. Jesus' purpose is to save, but his coming provokes judgment; some condemn themselves by turning from the light.

3:19 Judgment is not only future but is partially realized here and now.

3:22–26 Jesus' ministry in Judea is only loosely connected with 2:13–3:21; cf. 1:19–36. Perhaps John the Baptist's further testimony was transposed here to give meaning to "water" in v. 5. Jesus is depicted as baptizing (v. 22); contrast 4:2.

3:23 Aenon near Salim: site uncertain, either in the upper Jordan valley or in Samaria.

3:24 A remark probably intended to avoid objections based on a chronology like that of the synoptics (Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14).

3:25 A Jew: some think Jesus is meant. Many manuscripts read "Jews."

sion.¹ ²⁶ Again, if an uncircumcised man keeps the precepts of the law, will he not be considered circumcised?^u ²⁷ Indeed, those who are physically uncircumcised but carry out the law will pass judgment on you, with your written law and circumcision, who break the law. ²⁸ One is not a Jew outwardly. True circumcision is not outward, in the flesh. ²⁹ Rather, one is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter; his praise is not from human beings but from God.^w

CHAPTER 3

Answers to Objections. ¹ * What advantage is there then in being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much, in every respect. [For] in the first place, they were entrusted with the utterances of God.^a ³ What if some were unfaithful? Will their infidelity nullify the fidelity of God?^b ⁴ Of course not! God must be true, though every human being is a liar,* as it is written:

“That you may be justified in your words, and conquer when you are judged.”^c

⁵ But if our wickedness provides proof of God’s righteousness, what can we say? Is God unjust, humanly speaking, to inflict his wrath?^d ⁶ Of course not! For how else is God to judge the world? ⁷ But if God’s truth redounds to his glory through my falsehood, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say—as we are accused and as

some claim we say—that we should do evil that good may come of it? Their penalty is what they deserve.^e

Universal Bondage to Sin. ⁹ Well, then, are we better off? Not entirely, for we have already brought the charge against Jews and Greeks alike that they are all under the domination of sin,^f ¹⁰ as it is written:^g

“There is no one just, not one,
there is no one who understands,
there is no one who seeks God.
All have gone astray; all alike are worthless;
there is not one who does good,
[there is not] even one.
Their throats are open graves;
they deceive with their tongues;
the venom of asps is on their lips;^h
their mouths are full of bitter cursing.ⁱ
Their feet are quick to shed blood;^j
ruin and misery are in their ways,
and the way of peace they know not.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.”^k

¹⁹ Now we know that what the law* says is addressed to those under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world stand accountable to God,^l ²⁰ since no human being will be justified in his sight* by observing the law; for through the law comes consciousness of sin.^m

III: JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

Justification apart from the Law.* ²¹ But now* the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, though testi-

t. [2:25] 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:3. — u. [2:26] Gal 5:6. — v. [2:28] Jn 7:24; 8:15, 39. — w. [2:29] Dt 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25; Col 2:11 / 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 10:18. — a. [3:21] 9:4; Dt 4:7-8; Ps 103:7; 147:19-20. — b. [3:31] 9:6; 11:1, 29; Ps 89:30-37; 2 Tm 2:13. — c. [3:41] Ps 116:11 / Ps 51:6. — d. [3:5] 9:14; Jb 34:12-17. — e. [3:8] 6:1. — f. [3:9] 1:18-2:25; 3:23; Sir 8:5. — g. [3:10-11] Ps 14:1-3; 53:2-4; Eccl 7:20. — h. [3:13] Ps 5:10; 140:4. — i. [3:14] Ps 10:7. — j. [3:15-17] Prr 1:16; Is 59:7-8. — k. [3:18] Ps 36:2. — l. [3:19] 7:7. — m. [3:20] Ps 143:2; Gal 2:16 / 7:7.

3:1-4 In keeping with the popular style of diatribe, Paul responds to the objection that his teaching on the sinfulness of all humanity detracts from the religious prerogatives of Israel. He stresses that Jews have remained the vehicle of God’s revelation despite their sins, though this depends on the fidelity of God.

3:4 *Though every human being is a liar:* these words reproduce the Greek text of Ps 116:11. The rest of the verse is from Ps 51:6.

3:9-20 *Well, then, are we better off?:* this phrase can also be translated “Are we at a disadvantage?” but the latter version does not substantially change the overall meaning of the passage. Having explained that Israel’s privileged status is guaranteed by God’s fidelity, Paul now demonstrates the infidelity of the Jews by a catena of citations from scripture, possibly derived from an existing collection of *testimonia*. These texts show that all human beings share the common burden of sin. They are linked together by mention of organs of the body: throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, eyes.

3:19 *The law:* Paul here uses the term in its broadest sense to mean all of the scriptures; none of the preceding texts is from the Torah or Pentateuch.

3:20 *No human being will be justified in his sight:* these words are freely cited from Ps 143:2. In place of the psalmist’s “no living person,” Paul substitutes “no human being” (lit., “no flesh,” a Hebraism), and he adds “by observing the law.”

3:21-31 These verses provide a clear statement of Paul’s “gospel,” i.e., the principle of justification by faith in Christ. God has found a means of rescuing humanity from its desperate plight: Paul’s general term for this divine initiative is the righteousness of God (v. 21). Divine mercy declares the guilty innocent and makes them so. God does this not as a result of the law but apart from it (v. 21), and not because of any merit in human beings but through forgiveness of their sins (v. 24), in virtue of the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus for all who believe (vv. 22, 24-25). God has manifested his righteousness in the coming of Jesus Christ, whose saving activity inaugurates a new era in human history.

3:21 *But now:* Paul adopts a common phrase used by Greek authors to describe movement from disaster to prosperity. The expressions indicate that vv. 21-26 are the consolatory answer to vv. 9-20.

fied to by the law and the prophets,ⁿ 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction;^o 23 all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.^p 24 They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus,^q 25 whom God set forth as an expiation,^{*} through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed,^r 26 through the forbearance of God—to prove his righteousness in the present time, that he might be righteous and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

27^s What occasion is there then for boasting?^{*} It is ruled out. On what principle, that of works? No, rather on the principle of faith.^{*} 28 For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.^t 29 Does God belong to Jews alone? Does he not belong to Gentiles, too? Yes, also to Gentiles,^u 30 for God is one and will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised through faith.^v 31 Are we then annulling the law by this faith? Of course not!^w On the contrary, we are supporting the law.^{*}

CHAPTER 4*

Abraham Justified by Faith. 1 What then can we say that Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh?^a 2^{*} Indeed, if

n. [3:21] Is 51:6-8; Acts 10:43.—o. [3:22] 1:17; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9.—p. [3:23] 3:9; 5:12.—q. [3:24] Eph 2:8; Ti 3:7 / 5:1-2; Eph 1:7.—r. [3:25] Lv 16:12-15; Acts 17:31; 1 Jn 4:10.—s. [3:27] 8:2; 1 Cor 1:29-31.—t. [3:28] 5:1; Gal 2:16.—u. [3:29] 10:12.—v. [3:30] Dt 6:4; Gal 3:20; Jas 2:19 / 4:11-12.—w. [3:31] 8:4; Mt 5:17.—a. [4:1] Gal 3:6-9.—b. [4:3] Gn 15:6; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:14, 20-24.—c. [4:4] 11:6.—d. [4:7-8] Ps 32:1-2.—e. [4:9] 4:3.—f. [4:11] Gn 17:10-11; Gal 3:6-8.

3:25 **Expiation:** this rendering is preferable to "propitiation," which suggests hostility on the part of God toward sinners. As Paul will be at pains to point out (5:8-10), it is humanity that is hostile to God.

3:27-31 **People cannot boast of their own holiness,** since it is God's free gift (v. 27), both to the Jew who practices circumcision out of faith and to the Gentile who accepts faith without the Old Testament religious culture symbolized by circumcision (vv. 29-30).

3:27 **Principle of faith:** lit., "law of faith." Paul is fond of wordplay involving the term "law"; cf. 7:21, 23; 8:2. Since "law" in Greek may also connote "custom" or "principle," his readers and hearers would have sensed no contradiction in the use of the term after the negative statement concerning law in v. 20.

3:31 **We are supporting the law:** giving priority to God's intentions. God is the ultimate source of law, and the essence of law is fairness. On the basis of the Mosaic covenant, God's justice is in question if those who sinned against the law are permitted to go free (see vv. 23-26). In order to rescue all humanity rather than condemn it, God thinks of an alternative:

Abraham was justified on the basis of his works, he has reason to boast; but this was not so in the sight of God.^{3 b} For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."⁴ A worker's wage is credited not as a gift, but as something due.⁵ But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.⁶ So also David declares the blessedness of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven^d and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not record."

9 Does this blessedness^{*} apply only to the circumcised, or to the uncircumcised as well? Now we assert that "faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness."^e

10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was he circumcised or not? He was not circumcised, but uncircumcised.¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal on the righteousness received through faith while he was uncircumcised. Thus he was to be the father of all the uncircumcised who believe, so that to them [also] righteousness might be credited,^f 12 as well as the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised, but also follow the path of faith that our father Abraham walked while still uncircumcised.

the law or "principle" of faith (v. 27). What can be more fair than to admit everyone into the divine presence on the basis of forgiveness grasped by faith? Indeed, this principle of faith antedates the Mosaic law, as Paul will demonstrate in chap. 4, and does not therefore mark a change in divine policy.

4:1-25 This is an expanded treatment of the significance of Abraham's faith, which Paul discusses in Gal 3:6-18; see notes there.

4:2-5 Verse 2 corresponds to v. 4, and v. 3 to v. 5. The Greek term here rendered *credited* means "made an entry." The context determines whether it is credit or debit. Verse 8 speaks of "recording sin" as a debit. Paul's repeated use of accountants' terminology in this and other passages can be traced both to the Old Testament texts he quotes and to his business activity as a tentmaker. The commercial term in Gn 15:6, "credited it to him," reminds Paul in vv. 7-8 of Ps 32:2, in which the same term is used and applied to forgiveness of sins. Thus Paul is able to argue that Abraham's faith involved receipt of forgiveness of sins and that all believers benefit as he did through faith.

4:3 Jas 2:24 appears to conflict with Paul's statement. However, James combats the error of extremists who used the doctrine of justification through faith as a screen for moral self-determination. Paul discusses the subject of holiness in greater detail than does James and beginning with chap. 6 shows how justification through faith introduces one to the gift of a new life in Christ through the power of the holy Spirit.

4:9 **Blessedness:** evidence of divine favor.



Peter: Head of the Church—“ ‘You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, . . . I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven’ ” (Mt 16:18-19).

place by its bearer, Tychicus (6:21–22). Others think that Ephesians is the letter referred to in Col 4:16 as “to the Laodiceans.”

Paul, who is designated as the sole author at 1:1, is described in almost unparalleled terms with regard to the significant role he has in God’s plan for bringing the Gentiles to faith in Christ (3:1–12). Yet at the time of writing he is clearly in prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), suffering afflictions (3:13). Traditionally this “Captivity Epistle” has, along with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon, been dated to an imprisonment in Rome, likely in A.D. 61–63. Others appeal to an earlier imprisonment, perhaps in Caesarea (Acts 23:27–27:2). Since the early nineteenth century, however, much of critical scholarship has considered the letter’s style and use of words (especially when compared with Colossians), its concept of the church, and other points of doctrine put forward by the writer as grounds for serious doubt about authorship by Paul. The letter may then be the work of a secretary writing at the apostle’s direction or of a later disciple who sought to develop Paul’s ideas for a new situation around A.D. 80–100.

The principal divisions of the Letter to the Ephesians are the following:

- I. Address (1:1–14)
- II. Unity of the Church in Christ (1:15–2:22)
- III. World Mission of the Church (3:1–4:24)
- IV. Daily Conduct, an Expression of Unity (4:25–6:20)
- V. Conclusion (6:21–24)

I: ADDRESS

CHAPTER 1

Greeting. ¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the holy ones who are [in Ephesus]* faithful in Christ Jesus: ^a ² grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ^b

The Father’s Plan of Salvation. ³ * Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ^c who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, ^d as he chose us in him, before the foundation of

the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. ^d In love ^e he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, ^e ⁶ for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. ^f

Fulfillment through Christ. ⁷ In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, ^h ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery* of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in

a. [1:1] Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:1–2; Col 1:1.—b. [1:2] Col 1:2.—c. [1:3] 2:6; 2 Cor 1:3.—d. [1:4] 5:27; Jn 15:16; 17:24; Rom 8:29; 2 Thes 2:13.—e. [1:5] Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:1.—f. [1:6] Mt 3:17; Col 1:13.—g. [1:7] 2:7–13; Rom 3:24; Col 1:14, 20.—h. [1:8] Col 1:9.

1:1–2 For the epistolary form used at the beginning of letters, see note on Rom 1:1–7. Twenty-two of the thirty Greek words in vv. 1–2 also occur in Col 1:1–2.

1:1 [In Ephesus]: the phrase is lacking in important early witnesses such as P⁶⁶ (3rd cent.), and Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th cent.), appearing in the latter two as a fifth-century addition. Basil and Origen mention its absence from manuscripts. See Introduction. Without the phrase, the Greek can be rendered, as in Col 1:2, “to the holy ones and faithful brothers in Christ.”

1:3–14 While a Pauline letter usually continues after the greeting with a prayer of thanksgiving, as in vv. 15–23 below, Ephesians first inserts a blessing of God for the blessings Christians have experienced, as in 2 Cor 1:3–4 and 1 Pt 1:3–12. The blessing here, akin to a Jewish *berakah*, is rich in images almost certainly drawn from hymns and liturgy. Many ideas here are also found in Col 1:3–23. Certain phrases are frequently repeated, such as in Christ (vv. 3, 10, 12) or in him (vv. 4, 7, 9, 11, 13) or in the beloved (v. 6) and (for) the praise of (his) glory (vv. 6, 12, 14). Some

terms like *chose* (v. 4) and *destined* (v. 5) reflect Old Testament thought (Dt 7:7; 9:4–6; 23:5) or Pauline themes (*redemption*, vv. 7, 14; *grace*, vv. 6, 7) or specific emphases in Colossians (*forgiveness*, Col 1:14). A triadic structure is discernible in vv. 3–14: *God the Father* (vv. 3–6, 8, 11), *Christ* (vv. 3, 5, 7–10, 12), and the *Spirit* (vv. 13–14). The spiritual blessings Christians have received through Christ (v. 3) are gratefully enumerated: the call to holiness (v. 4; cf. Col 1:22); the gift of divine adoption establishing a unique spiritual relationship with God the Father through Christ (v. 5; cf. Gal 4:5); liberation from sin through Christ’s sacrificial death (v. 7); revelation of God’s plan of salvation in Christ (v. 9; cf. Eph 3:3–4; Rom 16:25); the gift of election and faith in Christ bestowed upon Jewish Christians (see note on v. 12, *we who first hoped in Christ*); and finally, the same gift granted to Gentiles (v. 13, *you also*). In the Christ-centered faith and existence of the Christian communities the apostle sees the predetermined plan of God to bring all creation under the final rule of Christ (vv. 4–5, 9–10) being made known (v. 9) and carried through, to God’s glory (vv. 6, 12, 14).

1:3 In the heavens: lit., “in the heavens” or “in the heavenly places,” a term in Ephesians for the divine realm.

1:9 Mystery: as in Rom 16:25; Col 1:26, 27 and elsewhere, a secret of God now revealed in the plan to save and sum up all things in Christ (v. 10); cf. 3:3–6.