

Word List

— A —

Aaron Moses' brother, who was chosen as the first high priest of Israel.

Abel The son of Adam and Eve who was killed by his brother Cain. Read Gen. 4:1-16.

Abib Or "Nisan," the first month of the ancient Hebrew calendar. The name means "young heads of grain." It was the beginning of spring, about mid-March to mid-April.

Abraham The most respected ancestor of the Jewish people. Through him God promised to make a great nation and bless all the people of the earth. Read Gen. 12:1-3.

Achaia The region in the southern part of Greece where the ancient cities of Athens and Corinth were located.

Adriatic Sea The sea between Greece and Italy, including the central part of the Mediterranean Sea.

adultery Breaking a marriage promise by committing sexual sin.

agreement A contract or agreement from God to his people. The agreement that God gave his people at Mount Sinai, based on the Law of Moses, became the most important for the Israelites or Jews. It replaced or renewed all other agreements, such as that given earlier to Abraham. In the New Testament it is referred to as the "old" or "first" agreement. After Jesus Christ came and offered his life as payment for the sins of all people, God was able to offer a

“new” and “better” agreement based on Christ’s sacrifice.

Agreement Where this is marked, it is literally “Testimony,” a word that usually refers to the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them, which were evidence or “proof” of the agreement between God and Israel.

Agrippa Herod Agrippa II, great-grandson of Herod the Great.

Ahaz A king of Judah who ruled with his father Jotham from 735 to 732 B.C., and then alone from 732 to 715 B.C.

alabaster A beautiful kind of stone that can be carved.

aloes The oil from a sweet-smelling wood that was used to make perfume (Ps. 45:8; Prov. 7:17) or the bitter juice from a cactus-like plant that was used to prepare bodies for burial (Jn. 19:39).

altar A raised area, pile of stones, or table that people used to offer sacrifices on. An important altar was the one in front of the Temple in Jerusalem. See also “golden altar.”

Amen A Hebrew word meaning “That’s right,” “True,” or “Yes.” It is used to express strong agreement with what has been said.

Anakites Descendants of Anak. They were a family famous for tall and powerful fighting men. See Num. 13:33.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the other people that person is descended from. In the New Testament it usually refers to people who lived during Old Testament times.

anoint To pour a special oil on people or things to show that they have been chosen by God and set apart for a special work or purpose.

apostle A follower of Jesus chosen to represent him in a special way. During his earthly ministry, Jesus named twelve men as apostles. They had the specific responsibility and authority to represent him and proclaim his message throughout the world. Later, he appeared to Paul and gave him a similar commission, especially to non-Jewish people. Barnabas, Paul's missionary companion, and James, the brother of Jesus, are also called apostles, as well as several others in the New Testament. Some of these occurrences of the word, however, have the more general sense of "messenger" or "representative."

aqueduct A ditch or pipe that carries water from one place to another.

Aram A country north of Israel that included much of modern-day Syria. See Isa. 7:1; 17:3.

Aramaic The language of the Arameans, which became the main language of trade and diplomacy in the ancient near east during the Assyrian, the Neo-Babylonian, and Persian empires. Similar to Hebrew, it later became the common language of many Jews and is the spoken "Hebrew" referred to in the New Testament.

Ararat The ancient country of Urartu, an area in eastern Turkey.

archangel The leader among God's angels.

archer A person skilled in using a bow to shoot arrows.

Areopagus council A group of important leaders in Athens who served like judges.

armor The special clothes soldiers wore to protect themselves in war.

army officer A centurion, a Roman army officer who had authority over 100 soldiers.

Artaxerxes The king of Persia about 465–424 B.C. He was the son of Xerxes. See Ezra 4:7; 7:1.

Asherah pole A wooden pole (originally, perhaps, a tree trunk) that was set up to honor the goddess Asherah.

Asherah An important Canaanite goddess, the wife of the Canaanite god El and possibly Baal. People thought she could help them have children.

Ashtoreth Or “Astarte,” an important Canaanite goddess, the wife of the Canaanite god Baal and possibly El. Called the “Queen of Heaven,” she was the goddess of love and war.

Asia The geographical area, sometimes called Asia Minor, that is now the western part of modern Turkey.

Assyria A powerful nation northeast of Israel.

— B —

Baal A false god worshiped by the Canaanites. They believed he brought rain and storms and made the land produce good crops.

Babylonia Where this is marked, the Hebrew text has “Shinar,” which may be a form of the name Sumer, a land located in the region later known as Babylonia.

Balaam A non-Israelite prophet in the Old Testament who was hired by Balak, king of

Moab, to curse his enemy Israel. Read Num. 22–24.

baptism A Greek word usually referring to the act of dipping or “burying” a person briefly in water; connected with their decision to change their life and turn to God, trusting him to forgive their sins. For people coming to faith in Jesus Christ it was an expression of their trust in his death as the sacrifice God accepted to pay for their sins. Described as a sharing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, it marked the beginning of their new life in Christ as part of God’s people. See Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26–28; Col. 2:12, 13.

baptize To perform the act of baptism. See “baptism.”

Bashan The northern part of Israel east of the Jordan River.

Bel One of the names of the god Marduk, the most important god of the Babylonians.

believer Where this word is marked, it is literally “brother,” a term used by followers of Jesus Christ to refer to fellow members of God’s family.

Bernice King Agrippa’s sister, the oldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I.

Bethsaida A town by Lake Galilee that Jesus visited during his teaching ministry and where he performed many miracles.

blacksmith A person who makes weapons, tools or other things from iron.

boomerang A curved stick used in hunting birds. When thrown properly, it flies low to

the ground and suddenly curves upward, often returning to the thrower. Literally, "a bow of throwing" or "a bow of deception."

Box of God's Agreement See "Box of the Agreement."

Box of the Agreement Or traditionally, "Ark of the Covenant." The special box kept in the Most Holy Place of the Israelite Holy Tent and, later, the Jerusalem Temple. It contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them, which were evidence or "proof" of the agreement between God and his people. In some passages it is literally, "Box of the Testimony" or simply, "Testimony" (see "Agreement"). See Ex. 25:10-22; 1 Kings 8:1-9.

Box of the LORD'S Agreement See "Box of the Agreement."

bridegroom A man who is getting married.

bronze A type of metal made from copper mixed with tin. The Hebrew word can mean "copper," "brass," or "bronze."

burnt offering This was usually an animal that was killed and completely burned on an altar as a sacrifice.

— C —

Caesar The name or title given to the emperor (ruler) of Rome.

Cain The son of Adam and Eve who killed his brother Abel. Read Gen. 4:1-16.

Canaan The land where the Canaanites lived. In the time of Joshua the Israelites fought for this land and eventually controlled most of it. It was generally the same area that was later called

Palestine and included what are now Israel and Lebanon.

Capernaum A town on the northern shore of Lake Galilee where Jesus often spent time and taught.

capital A decorated cap made of stone or wood and placed on top of each of the columns that support the roof of a building.

captive One of those who have been defeated in battle and are taken away as prisoners.

caravan A group of traders with their animals that carried products from one place to another.

Carmel A famous mountain (or high hill) in northern Israel that had good soil and plenty of rain. The name means “God’s vineyard.” See Isa. 33:9; 35:2.

cassia The fragrant dried flowers of the ancient cinnamon tree that were used in anointing oil and as perfume.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

Chaldeans An important tribe in Babylon. Sometimes this name means simply “people from Babylonia.” King Nebuchadnezzar was from this tribe, as were other kings of Babylon. Well-educated people, they studied science, history, languages, and astronomy, but they also believed they could do magic and look at the stars to learn what would happen in the future.

chariot A small, two-wheeled cart pulled by horses and used in war.

Chemosh The national god of the country of Moab.

Cherub angels Winged beings like angels that serve God, usually as guards around his throne or other holy places. Two statues of these beings were on the cover of the Box of the Agreement that represented God's presence. See Ex. 25:10–22.

Cherub See “Cherub angels.”

Chorazin A town by Lake Galilee that Jesus visited during his teaching ministry and where he performed many miracles.

Christ Literally, “Anointed,” a title that comes from the Old Testament ceremony in which perfumed oil was poured or rubbed on someone being appointed to a high office, especially that of prophet, priest, or king, to show that this person was chosen by God for that role. The Hebrew word is “Messiah,” a title used for Old Testament kings and for the one God would send as prophet, priest, and king to bring people back to a good relationship with him.

church Literally, “assembly” or “community,” the people who have been brought together as God's family through their common faith in Jesus Christ. The word often refers to a group of believers who meet together or who live in the same area, but it is also used to mean the worldwide community of all believers in Christ.

circumcise, circumcision Cutting off the foreskin of the male sex organ. This was done to every Jewish baby boy as a mark of the agreement God made with Abraham. Read Gen.

17:9-14. Sometimes “circumcision” is used with “heart” in the figurative sense of true devotion to God (see Jer. 9:26; Rom. 2:28). In the New Testament “circumcision” is also used in a spiritual sense to refer to the changed life of believers who have come to share in the new agreement God gave his people through Jesus. (See Php. 3:3; Col. 2:11.)

City of David Jerusalem, especially the south-eastern and oldest part of the city.

Claudius The emperor (ruler) of Rome, 41-54 A.D.

clean Pure or acceptable. When it refers to animals, it means fit to be eaten. When it refers to things, it means fit to be used. When it refers to people, it means fit to participate in the worship of God at the Holy Tent (Tabernacle) or Temple. See Lev. 11-15 for the Old Testament rules about clean and unclean things.

coral A hard, stone-like substance, usually pink, red, or black, that is formed from the skeletons of tiny sea animals and covers the ocean floor in certain areas.

cornerstone The first and most important stone of a building.

courtyard The large open area around a king’s palace or outside the Temple.

cross The wooden post that Romans used to execute criminals. It is a symbol of shame, suffering and death. Just as Jesus was willing to suffer death on a cross for all people, so he asks his followers to be willing to give up their lives for him.

crown Literally, “wreath,” a ring of leaves or branches that was placed on the head of the winners of athletic contests to honor them. It was a symbol of victory and reward.

cud The food that is brought up from the stomach of some animals (like cattle) and chewed again. See Lev. 11.

curse To ask for bad things to happen to a person or thing. As a noun it is a request for or warning about bad things to come.

curtain The curtain that separated the inner sanctuary (Most Holy Place) from the front room in the Tabernacle (see “Holy Tent”) and in the Jerusalem Temple. It represented the spiritual barrier that kept people from entering God’s presence. When Jesus died, the curtain was torn open (Mt. 27:51), which was a symbol to show that in the heavenly temple the way into God’s presence had been opened. See Heb. 10:19, 20.

cymbals A pair of circular metal plates that are hit against each other to make a loud sound.

Cyprus Literally, “the land of Kittim.” This could be either Cyprus or Crete.

Cyrus A king of Persia who ruled about 550–530 B.C.

— D —

Dagon A false god worshiped by the Canaanites in the hope that he would give them a good harvest of grain. When the Philistines settled in Canaan, they adopted Dagon as their most important god.

darkness A symbol for the kinds of things that describe Satan’s kingdom, such as sin and evil.

David Israel's greatest king, who ruled about 1000 years before Christ. Besides being a great military and political leader, he was a deeply spiritual man and a gifted musician, who wrote many of the Psalms. He made plans and arrangements for the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem ("the city of David"), which was actually completed by his son Solomon. The Scriptures said that a descendant of David would be God's chosen messiah (king), who would establish an eternal kingdom. For that reason, Jesus is sometimes called "the Son of David."

Day of Atonement Also called "Yom Kippur," a very important holy day for the people of Israel. On this day the high priest went into the Most Holy Place and performed the ceremony that made it pure and atoned for (covered or erased) the sins of the people. See Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32.

day A symbol for the kinds of things that describe God's kingdom, such as goodness and truth.

Day The day Christ will come to judge everyone and take his people to live with him.

dedicate To offer something to God with a promise that it will be used only for him, or to set apart something for a special purpose, which means it can then be used only for that purpose.

dedication The act of dedicating something to God. See "dedicate."

deed A written record that proves who owns a certain piece of property. See Jer. 32.

demon An evil spirit from the devil.

director This title is part of a phrase found at the beginning of many of the Psalms. It could also mean “performer.”

discharge Fluid from a person’s body, including pus from sores, a man’s semen, or a woman’s period flow.

divine greatness Literally, “glory,” a word that refers to the special qualities of God. See “glory.”

dungeon A deep pit in the ground, like a cave, used as a prison.

dysentery A very bad intestinal sickness that causes pain and diarrhea.

— E —

Edom A country southeast of Judah. It is also known as Seir after the mountain range by that name in Edom. The Edomites are descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin brother. At times, they were enemies of the Israelites.

elders (in Revelation) The 24 elders in Revelation could be the great leaders of God’s people under both the Old Testament and New Testament periods, combining the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel and Jesus’ twelve apostles. Or they could be angels as leaders of heavenly worship, corresponding to the 24 groups of priests in charge of worship in the Old Testament.

elders (New Testament) Men chosen to lead a local group of believers (church). Also called “overseers” and “pastors” (shepherds), they have the work of caring for God’s people.

See Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; Php. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

elders (Old Testament) Older men who were city leaders and helped make decisions for the people.

Elijah A very important Israelite leader and prophet who spoke for God during a 25-year period ending about 850 B.C. In the time of Jesus, the Jews were expecting Elijah to come again before the Messiah. See Mal. 4:5-6.

Elisha A prophet who served as an assistant to the prophet Elijah and carried on Elijah's ministry after about 850 B.C.

emperor Caesar, the ruler (leader) of the Roman empire.

ephod A special vest (coat) worn by the Israelite high priest (see Ex. 28:6-14; 39:1-7). Sometimes it is a garment worn by people in other kinds of priestly service, such as the boy Samuel (1 Sam. 2:18), or by others like David (2 Sam. 6:14). It is also something used to get answers from God (1 Sam. 23:6-12; 30:7-8). This is why some people think the high priest's garment had a pocket for carrying lots (see "lots"). In Judges 8:27 Gideon uses gold to make an ephod. In such places, it seems to be an idol, but it may be a garment covering an idol.

Ephraim The second son of Joseph and the name of one of the tribes of Israel. Sometimes it is used as the name for the northern kingdom of Israel, since Ephraim was most often the leading tribe.

Esau Jacob's twin brother. Also, another name for Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau.

Ethiopia Or "Cush," a country in Africa by the Red Sea.

eunuch A man who had been castrated so that he could not have sex or one who was physically unable to have children. Often, such men were chosen to be in charge of the women in a ruler's household or served as public officials.

Euphrates One of the two large rivers flowing through the countries of Babylonia and Assyria.

Evil One The devil or Satan, the ruler of demons and enemy of God.

exile Living away from one's home country, usually by force.

— F —

false prophet A person who claims to speak for God but does not really speak God's truth.

famine A time when there is not enough rain for crops to grow, causing people and animals to die without enough food or water.

fast To live without food for a time of prayer or mourning.

fathers Important ancestors of the Jewish people, especially the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

fawn A baby deer.

fellowship offering An offering to God that was also eaten by the person giving the sacrifice and shared with others, especially during New Moon celebrations.

Festival of Harvest A one-day celebration of the wheat harvest in the spring, fifty days after Passover, during which the first part of the new crop was offered to God. Often called "Festival of Weeks," it was later known as "Pentecost" (from the Greek word meaning "fifty").

Festival of Shelters A special week each year when the Israelites, and later the Jews, lived in tents to remember God's protection during the time their people wandered in the desert for 40 years with Moses. Also called "Festival of Ingathering" (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). Read Lev. 23:33-36, 39-43.

Festival of Unleavened Bread An important and holy week for the people of Israel and their descendants. In the time of the Old Testament it began the day after Passover, but by New Testament times the two festivals had become one. To prepare for it, the people threw out all their yeast and ate only bread without yeast for seven days."

firepan A small shovel used for removing ashes from an altar.

first agreement The contract God gave to the Israelites when he gave them the Law of Moses. See "agreement."

firstborn The first child born into a family. The first son was very important in ancient times and became the head of the family at the father's death. It can also mean a person of special importance. In reference to Christ, it means that he is the first and most important of God's children, the first to share his glory.

fortress A building or city with tall, strong walls for protection.

fortuneteller A person who tries to use magic to learn what will happen in the future.

frankincense Special dried tree sap that was burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke and offered as a gift to God. See “incense.”

Free Men Jews who had been slaves or whose fathers had been slaves, but were now free.

furnace Or “kiln,” an oven for baking bricks to make them hard.

— G —

gazelle A small, fast kind of antelope, an animal like a deer.

Gibeah A place where some men from the tribe of Benjamin committed a terrible sin. See Judges 19 and 20.

Gilead The area east of the Jordan River where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh lived. See Num. 26:29.

Gilgal A city in Israel where people had worshiped God but later became known as a place where people worshiped false gods.

gittith This might be a type of instrument, a tune, a music style, or a performer in the Temple orchestra such as Obed Edom from Gath (the Gittite). See I Chron. 15:21; 16:4-7.

glory A word that refers to the special qualities of God. The expression “Glory of the LORD” refers to one of the forms God used when he appeared to people. It was like a bright, shining light. In the book of Numbers, it might have been a bright light or a tall cloud. Sometimes

glory means majesty or power, referring to a kind of greatness that cannot be compared to anything in human experience. It can also include the ideas of wealth, honor, fame, or respect, especially in expressions of praise.

goad A sharp stick that a person used to make animals go the right way.

God's kingdom The "reign" or "rule" of God over all people who accept Jesus as the Messiah (the chosen king). Jesus' life and teachings show what it means for God to be King on earth. Jesus fulfilled the King's mission of love and justice by setting people free from the control of the devil, the temporary ruler of this world. Through Jesus, God offers his enemies forgiveness for their rebellion against him. And when people are freed from their slavery to sin, they can give control of their lives to Jesus. Then they become part of God's kingdom and gladly accept his mission. Just as Jesus did, they too invite God's enemies to change their hearts and lives, become God's friends, and enjoy the benefits of his just rule, both now and in the future. (Note that in Matthew this term also translates the Greek word "kingdom" by itself or the phrase, "the kingdom of the heavens," which was used by Jews as a way to avoid saying the divine name.)

golden altar The table made from acacia wood and covered with gold that was used in the Holy Tent for burning incense as a gift to God.

goldsmith A person who makes things from gold.

Gomorraah A city that God destroyed, together with the city of Sodom, because the people living there were so evil. See Gen. 19.

Good News In the Gospels this is usually the news about the coming of God's kingdom (see "God's kingdom") or its representative Jesus the Messiah. In other places it is, more specifically, the news or message of God's grace—that he has made a way through Jesus Christ for people to be made right with him and enjoy his blessings now and forever.

grace The love and kindness that God shows in his complete willingness to give people favors he does not owe them and blessings they don't deserve.

grave Or "Sheol," the home of the dead. This word is often used as a metaphor for death.

Greek A non-Jewish person anywhere throughout the first century world who was influenced by Greek language and culture.

— H —

Hades The Greek word for "Sheol," the home of the dead. It is often used as a metaphor for death.

hands on See "lay hands on."

Hermes A Greek god. The Greeks believed he was a messenger for the other gods.

Herod (1) Herod I (the Great), king of Judea and all of Palestine (40–4 B.C.), Mt. 2:1-22; Lk. 1:5; Acts 23:35. (2) Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, tetrarch (ruler) of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.–39 A.D.), Mt. 14:1-6; Mk. 6:14-22; 8:15; Lk. 3:1, 19; 8:3; 9:7, 9; 13:31; 23:7-15; Acts 4:27; 13:1.

(3) Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, king of Palestine (37–44 A.D.), Acts 12:1, 6–21.

Herodians Members of a Jewish political group who were supporters of Herod and cooperated with the Pharisees in finding a way to stop Jesus from teaching.

Hezekiah A king of Judah who ruled about 715–686 B.C.

high place A place of worship usually on top of a hill, a mountain, or a man-made platform. Although high places were sometimes used for the worship of God, they are most often associated with pagan worship of false gods.

high priest The most important priest and leader of the Israelites or the Jews, God's people under the "old agreement." Under the "new agreement" the high priest for God's people is Jesus Christ. Read Heb. 7:11–8:13.

holy When referring to people or things, holy means set apart or chosen for a special use; especially, belonging to God or used only for him. It can also mean pure or perfect, worthy of God and fit for his service. When God is called holy, in addition to the idea of pure and perfect, it often means he is completely separate or different from and above everything else that exists. In the New Testament God's people are holy because they have been made perfect and pure through Christ and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, keep themselves away from sin and live only for God.

Holy Box See "Box of the Agreement."

holy bread This was the special bread that was set out on a table in the Holy Tent as an offering to God. It is also called “showbread” or “bread of the Presence.” Normally, only the priests were allowed to eat this bread. See Lev. 24:5-9.

holy people Literally, “saints” or “holy ones,” a term used in the New Testament to describe followers of Jesus Christ as God’s special people. They are holy because they have been made pure through Christ and belong only to God. See “holy.”

Holy Place The room in the Holy Tent (Tabernacle) and in the Temple that was used by the Israelite priests to do their daily service for God.

Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. In union with God and Christ, he does God’s work among people in the world.

Holy Tent Or “Tabernacle,” the special tent described in the Law of Moses, where God lived among his people and where the Israelite priests performed their worship duties. It was often called the “Meeting Tent” because it was where the Israelites went to meet with God. It was used until Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem.

horns of the altar The horn-shaped corners of the altar (see “altar”) used for burning sacrifices that was in the courtyard of the Holy Tent (see “Holy Tent”) and Temple (see “Temple”). See Ex. 27:2; 38:2. The incense altar inside the Holy Tent also had corners shaped like horns. See Ex. 30:2; 37:25. The law said that a person accused of

killing someone (except willful murder) who ran into the Holy Place (see “Holy Place”) and took hold of these horns should not be punished. See Ex. 21:12-14.

hypocrisy Pretending to be good while hiding wrong motives.

hypocrite A person with wrong motives who pretends to be good.

hyssop A plant with fine branches and leaves used for sprinkling blood or water in cleansing ceremonies.

— I —

idol A statue of a false god that people worship. It can also mean anything that is more important to a person than God.

Illyricum A Roman province north and west of Greece.

incense Special dried tree sap that was burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke and offered as a sacrifice.

Isaac The son of Abraham and one of the most important ancestors of the Israelites or Jews.

Israel Another name for Jacob (see Gen. 32:24-28) and for the nation God chose to accomplish his plan of blessing the world through the Messiah (see “Messiah”). The people of Israel were the descendants of Jacob’s twelve sons. In the New Testament this name is sometimes used in a broader sense to mean all of God’s people.

Israelite Belonging to the nation of Israel (see “Israel”).

— J —

jackal A kind of wild dog that stays where there are no people. Jackals usually hunt together in a pack.

Jacob Or “Israel,” ancestor of the people of Israel (also called Israelites and, later, Jews). See Gen. 32:24-28 for the story of how Jacob was given the name Israel. He was the father of twelve sons from whom the twelve tribes of Israel descended, and the name Jacob continued to be used for the nation or people of Israel.

Jeremiah A man who spoke for God about 600 B.C.

John the Baptizer The man God chose to tell people about Christ’s coming and to prepare them by warning them to change their lives and by baptizing them (see “baptize”) as a sign of their decision to change. Read Mt. 3; Mk. 1:1-11; Lk. 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1-18.

John See “John the Baptizer.”

Joshua The Israelite military captain who, after Moses died, took his place as the leader of the Israelites and led them into the land that God had promised them.

Jotham A king of Judah who ruled with his father Uzziah from 750 to 740 B.C., and then alone from 740 to 732 B.C.

Jubilee A special horn and the festival marked by the blowing of it to announce that the time had come for slaves to be set free and land returned to the original owners. See Lev. 25:9.

Judah One of the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel); also the tribe and, later, the nation named after him. Described as the “southern kingdom,” it was made up of the Israelite tribes that occupied the

southern part of Palestine, while the northern tribes were united into a “northern kingdom” known as Israel.

judge One of the civic leaders who judged, led, and protected the people of Israel before their first king was appointed.

judgment pouch A piece of clothing like a bib or an apron that covered the high priest’s chest. See Ex. 28:15-30.

— K —

Kedar An Arabian tribe that lived in the desert southeast of the land of Judah.

kingdom See “God’s kingdom.”

— L —

Lamb A symbolic name for Jesus Christ. It means that he was an offering for sin like the lambs that were offered as a sacrifice to God in the Old Testament.

law This usually refers to God’s law as it is represented in the Mosaic Law, the rules he gave to the Israelites through Moses (see Ex. 34:29-32). Sometimes it may mean the principle of law rather than a specific law or set of laws.

lay hands on This act was a way of asking God to bless people in a special way—to heal them, to cause the Holy Spirit to come into them, or to give them power for a special work.

leatherworker Or “tanner,” a person who makes leather from animal skins.

Lebanon A country north of Israel, famous for its great cedar and pine trees.

leper A person who has leprosy. See “leprosy.”

leprosy A very bad skin disease. The word in the text has a broad sense, which may include many different types of skin disease.

Levi The tribe of Israel from which the priests (descendants of Aaron) and the priests' helpers were chosen.

Levite An Israelite from the tribe of Levi. The Levites from the family of Aaron served as priests. All the other descendants of Levi served as helpers of the priests in the Holy Tent (Tabernacle) and Temple. In later periods, some Levites worked for the government as civil servants.

light A symbol for the kinds of things that describe God or his kingdom, such as goodness and truth.

lily A kind of flower. In the Song of Solomon, it is probably a red flower.

linen Thread or cloth made from the fibers of the flax plant.

locusts Insects like grasshoppers that could destroy a large crop very quickly. See Ex. 10. The Law of Moses said that locusts could be eaten. See Lev. 11:21-22.

loom A machine used for making cloth.

lots Stones, sticks, or bones used like dice for making decisions. See Prov. 16:33.

lyre A musical instrument with strings, like a harp.

— *M* —

Macedonia The northern part of Greece, where Thessalonica and Philippi were.

make ... pure Or “make atonement for” The Hebrew word means “to cover,” or “to erase” a person’s sins.

man of God Another title for a prophet. See “prophet.”

manna The special food provided by God that the Israelites gathered daily from the ground during the 40 years they wandered through the desert. See Ex. 16:4-36.

Marduk The most important god of the Babylonian people.

maskil The meaning of this word is uncertain. It might mean “a poem of meditation,” “a poem of instruction,” or “a skillfully written poem.”

mast The tall pole to which the sail is tied on a sailboat.

Medes and Persians See “Medes.”

Medes People of the Medo-Persian Empire (also called Media), which defeated the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. See Isa. 13:17.

mediator A person who helps one person talk to or give something to another person.

medium A person who tries to talk with the spirits of people who have died.

Meeting Tent See “Holy Tent.”

Melchizedek A priest and king who lived in the time of Abraham. See Gen. 14:17-24.

memorial stone A stone that was set up to help people remember something special. In ancient Israel, people often set up stones at places where they worshiped false gods.

merchant A person who earns a living by buying and selling things.

mercy-cover The top part of the Box of the Agreement. The Hebrew word can mean “lid,” “cover,” or “the place where sins are atoned (covered, erased, or forgiven).”

message See “Good News.”

Messiah A Hebrew word that has the same meaning as the Greek word Christ (see “Christ”). It was a title for the kings of God’s people in the Old Testament and for the special king God promised to send as a “savior” to defeat evil and establish the reign of God. Many prophets made it clear that this new kingdom would be eternal; that is, not only would the promised Messiah bring about a time of justice and right living among God’s people here on earth, but also his kingdom would extend beyond this world to life forever with God. However, most Jews of the first century expected the Messiah to be a political ruler here on earth who would defeat the other nations and return the nation of Israel to a position of great glory and power. But God intended his Messiah to establish a new “Israel,” an eternal kingdom that would bless all the nations.

miktam The meaning of this word is uncertain. It might mean “a well-arranged song.”

Milcom A god worshiped by the Ammonites, probably the same as the god Molech. See 1 Kings 11:5, 7.

mildew A kind of fungus that often grows on cloth, leather, or wood that is in a warm, damp place. The Hebrew word also means “leprosy” or “skin disease.”

mill Two large, flat rocks used for grinding grain to make flour.

Millo Probably the stone foundation walls that were built on the steep slopes southeast of the Temple area in Jerusalem.

millstone A large, round stone used for grinding grain.

miracle An amazing act done by the power of God.

miraculous sign An amazing act that demonstrates the power of God.

Moab A country east of the Dead Sea, named after one of Lot's sons. See Gen. 19:37.

Molech A false god. This name is like the Hebrew word meaning "king."

Moses One of the most important leaders of the Israelites during the time of the Old Testament. God used him to give the people his law, which is often called "the Law of Moses."

Most Holy Place Literally, "holy of holies," the most important room in the Holy Tent or the Temple, where the Box of the Agreement was kept. It was like a throne room where God sat as king of Israel and where the high priest entered into his presence on the Day of Atonement.

Mount Horeb Another name for Mount Sinai.

Mount of Olives A hill east of the city of Jerusalem from which a person could see the Temple area.

Mount Paran This is probably an important mountain west of the Gulf of Aqaba and north of Mount Sinai.

Mount Sinai The mountain located somewhere on the Sinai Peninsula (the eastern part of modern-day Egypt) where God gave his laws to Moses and the Israelites. Also called Mount Horeb. See Ex. 19 and 20.

Mount Zion See “Zion.”

mourn, mourners To express sorrow for someone who has died or for something lost. In ancient Israel people often put on special clothes, cried very loudly, and put ashes on their head to show their sadness. Professional “mourners” were sometimes paid to do this at a funeral.

mustard A plant that has a very small seed but grows taller than a man.

myrrh Sweet-smelling sap from the bark of trees or other plants that was used for perfume and also to prepare bodies for burial. Mixed with wine, it was probably used to relieve pain (Mk. 15:23).

— N —

nard Very expensive oil from the root of the nard plant. It was used as a perfume.

Nazirite A person who has made a special vow of dedication to God. This name is from the Hebrew word meaning “to separate” or “to consecrate” and refers to the promise Nazirites made to separate themselves from others and dedicate themselves to God by following certain requirements. See Num. 6:1-21.

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Negev The desert area in the southern part of Judah.

Nephilim A kind of superhuman race that appeared before the flood. Sometimes translated "giants," the name might come from a Hebrew word meaning "people who have fallen." Later, the Nephilim were a famous family whose men were tall and powerful fighters. See Gen. 6:2-4; Num. 13:32-33.

new agreement The "better agreement" that God has given to his people through Jesus Christ. See "agreement."

New Moon The first day of the month for Israelites or Jews, which they celebrated as a special day of rest and worship. The people met together and shared in the fellowship offerings like those described in Lev. 7:16-21.

night A symbol for the kinds of things that describe Satan's kingdom, such as sin and evil.

Nisan See "Abib."

— O —

oath A strong declaration that one will tell the truth or keep a promise, often using the name of God or something else known to be real or important. It may include a wish to be punished if the promise is not kept.

official measure Literally, "shekel of the Holy Place," the standard measure of weight used in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

official Where this is marked the word in the text is "eunuch," a man in an important

government position or a servant in charge of a ruler's household. See "eunuch."

onyx A precious stone with layers of blue or gray.

ostrich A fast-running bird with very long legs and neck. The largest and most powerful of all birds, it commonly lives in the desert.

— P —

papyrus A reed-like plant used to make a type of paper used for writing. It was also used to make many other things, such as baskets, rope, sandals, roofing material, and even boats.

paradise A wonderful place of blessing, where God's people go when they die.

parchment Something like paper made from the skins of sheep and used for writing on.

Passover A very important holy day for the people of Israel and their descendants. They ate a special meal on this day every year to remember that God made them free from slavery in Egypt in the time of Moses. The name may come from the word in Ex. 12:13, 23, 27 that means "to pass over" or "to protect."

Pentecost An Israelite or Jewish festival celebrating the wheat harvest fifty days after Passover. See "Festival of Harvest."

persecute To hurt, cause trouble for, or do bad things to someone, especially because of their beliefs.

persecution The act of persecuting or being persecuted. See "persecute."

Persians See "Medes."

Peter Where this is marked, the Greek text has “Cephas,” the Aramaic name for Peter, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles. Both names mean “rock.”

Pharaoh A title for the king of Egypt.

Pharisee A person who belonged to a Jewish religious group that claimed to follow carefully all Jewish laws and customs.

Philistines The people who lived in an area along the coast of Palestine. They occupied the land of Canaan (see “Canaan”) before the Israelites entered it and were their strongest enemy.

philosopher A person who spends much time studying, thinking, talking, or writing about different ideas and trying to gain wisdom.

Pilate, Pontius The Roman governor of Judea, 26–36 A.D. Read Lk. 23:1-3.

pillar One of the tall, carved stones used to hold up the roof of a building.

pomegranate A red fruit filled with tiny seeds, each covered with a sweet, juicy part of the fruit.

potter Someone who makes pottery (pots, jars, bowls) from clay. The Hebrew word also means “creator” or “a person who makes new things.”

prefect An important government official.

Preparation day Friday, the day before the Sabbath day.

prize See “crown.”

prophecy A message or teaching from God. Also, the ability and authority from God to speak for him.

prophecy To speak or teach things from God.

prophet A person who speaks a message from God. Many of the books in the Old Testament are messages spoken or written by “the prophets,” who were some of those God chose to speak for him. God often used dreams or visions to tell or show his prophets what they should say.

prophetess A woman prophet.

proverb A wise saying or short story that teaches a lesson.

pure See “make ... pure.”

— Q —

Queen of Heaven Probably the false goddess Astarte. She was the goddess of sex and war, worshiped by the people of Mesopotamia. They thought she was the planet Venus, which looks like a star in the sky.

quiver A bag or container for carrying arrows.

— R —

Rahab A dragon or sea monster that people thought controlled the sea. Rahab is often a symbol for God’s enemies or for anything evil.

resurrection Being raised from death to live again.

Rezin A king of Aram who ruled about 740–731 B.C.

Rock A name for God that means he is a place where people can find safety, like a high mountain or the strong wall of a fortress.

ruler of the evil powers See “Satan.”

ruler of this world See “Satan.”

— S —

Sabbath Saturday, the seventh day of the week and a special day for Israelites or Jews. By God's command it was set aside as a time for the people to rest and honor God.

sackcloth A rough cloth made from animal hair that people sometimes wore to show sadness.

sacrifice To offer a gift to God (or to any god) as an expression of worship, thanksgiving, or payment for sin. Also, the gift that is offered. In the Old Testament it was usually a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar. The Old Testament sacrifices offered for sins were symbolic of the perfect sacrifice that God himself would provide through Jesus Christ. Jesus gave his own life as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of all people. See Heb. 10:1-14.

Sadducees A leading Jewish religious group. They accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament and believed that people will not live again after death.

Samaria During Old Testament times, the capital city of Israel, the northern Israelite kingdom. In New Testament times, the name refers to the central hill country, the general area that had been occupied by the northern kingdom.

Samaritans During New Testament times, the people who lived in Samaria, the region north of Judea. They were part Jewish and followed the Law of Moses, but the Jews of Judea did not accept them as pure descendants of Israel.

Samuel The last judge (leader) and first prophet of Israel.

sapphire A rare and valuable blue stone.

Satan A name for the devil meaning “the enemy,” or “the accuser.”

satrap An official who ruled over a Persian province.

scepter A special stick carried by kings to show their authority.

scribe Originally, an educated man who was skilled in reading and writing. By New Testament times scribes had become a distinct social and political group. Because of their work in copying the Scriptures and writing down explanations of the Law of Moses, many became experts in the law and were respected as teachers, lawyers, or judges.

Scripture Part of the Scriptures or “Holy Writings”—the Old Testament.

scroll A long roll of paper or leather used for writing on.

seal A small stone or ring with a picture carved in it that was pressed into wet clay or hot wax to hold down the loose end of a scroll. It left a special mark, also called a seal, that was like a signature to keep anyone from opening the scroll except the right person.

seer A kind of prophet (see “prophet”) who received messages from God in visions.

Selah A word appearing in Psalms and Habakkuk that was apparently an instruction for the singers or musicians, perhaps meaning to pause or to get louder.

Sennacherib A king of Assyria who ruled about 706–681 B.C.

Seraph angels Special angels that God used as messengers. The name might mean that they were bright like fire.

Sharon Valley The lowlands along the coast of Palestine.

sheath A leather or metal case for carrying a sword or knife.

sheminith The meaning of this word is uncertain, but it may refer to a type of instrument, a special way of tuning an instrument, or one of the groups that played harps in the Temple orchestra. See 1 Chron. 15:21.

Sheol The place where people go when they die. This usually means the grave, but it can mean the place where spirits go.

Sheshbazzar A governor of Judah mentioned several times in the book of Ezra. He is possibly the same person as the one named Zerubbabel, mentioned in Ezra 2:2 and elsewhere. If they are not the same man, then Sheshbazzar was the first governor of Judah, and Zerubbabel was the second.

sickle A tool with a curved blade for harvesting grain and other crops.

Sidon A non-Jewish city on the coast of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon).

sign See “miraculous sign.”

signet ring A type of seal that was worn on the finger. See “seal.”

silver coin Or “denarius,” a Roman coin that was worth the average pay for one day’s work.

sin offering Or “purification offering,” a sacrifice that was offered to God to remove impurities from sin and make a person fit to worship God.

skin disease Traditionally translated “leprosy,” the Hebrew word means any of several diseases that cause rashes or sores on the skin.

slave woman Or “concubine,” a woman who was owned by a man and treated like a wife.

sling A strip of leather used for throwing rocks.

snuffers Tools used to put out the flame on lamps.

Sodom A city that God destroyed, together with the city of Gomorrah, because the people living there were so evil. See Gen. 19.

Solomon’s Porch An area on the east side of the Temple, covered by a roof.

son of David Any person from the family of David. See “David.”

Son of David A name for the Messiah (Christ) because it was prophesied that he would come from the family of David. See “David.”

Son of Man The name that Jesus most often used for himself. The phrase in Hebrew or Aramaic means “human being” or “mankind,” but in Dan. 7:13-14 it is used of a future savior and king, and this was later understood to be the Messiah, the one God would send to save his people.

song of David This phrase (or a variation of it) is found at the beginning of many of the Psalms. It could also mean “a song dedicated to David.”

sorcery When a person tries to use the power of demons and evil spirits to do magic.

special servant The Greek word is *diakonos*, which is usually translated “servant.” However,

in three places (Rom. 16:1; Php. 1:2; 1 Tim. 3:8-13) the service of those so described is associated with a local church, indicating that they were chosen to serve in some special way. Compare Acts 6:1-6.

spelt A kind of grain like wheat.

Spirit See “Holy Spirit.”

survivors People who have escaped a disaster. Where this is marked, it means the Jewish people who survived the destruction of Judah and Israel by its enemies.

synagogue A place in many cities where Jews gathered for prayer, study of the Scriptures, and other public meetings.

Syrtis A shallow area in the sea near the Libyan coast.

— T —

tar Or “pitch,” a thick oil that becomes liquid when heated and hard again when it cools. It was used to seal the boards on ships. It could also be used in place of mortar in buildings.

Tarshish A city far away from Israel, probably in Spain, famous for its large ships that sailed the Mediterranean Sea.

tax collector A Jew hired by the Romans to collect taxes. Tax collectors often cheated, and the other Jews hated them.

Teman An area in the northern part of Edom, although the name means “South.”

Temple The permanent building in Jerusalem that replaced the portable “Holy Tent” that was used by the Israelites from the time of their wandering in the desert to the reign of King

Solomon, when the first Temple was built. Like the Holy Tent, the Temple was the center of Israelite worship, although provision was made for it to be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7).

Ten Towns Greek, “Decapolis,” an area on the east side of Lake Galilee that once had ten main towns.

Tent of the Agreement Literally, “Tent of the Testimony,” the tent where the Box of the Agreement was kept. See “Holy Tent.”

Tent, Holy See “Holy Tent.”

thank offering A special fellowship offering that people gave to praise God and thank him for doing good things for them. A part of the animal being offered was burned on the altar, but the people ate most of it in a fellowship meal at the Temple. See Lev. 7:11-26.

the Way A symbolic name used by followers of Jesus Christ to describe their faith as “the way” to God through Jesus.

threshing Putting newly harvested wheat or other grain on a hard floor and walking on it or beating it with special tools to separate the hulls (see “chaff”) from the grain.

Thummim See “Urim.”

Tigris One of the two large rivers that flow through the countries of Babylonia and Assyria.

tomb A grave dug in a wall of rock or a building where a dead body is buried. It can also be a small building made to show respect for important people who had died.

torture To hurt or cause someone pain, often to force them to say something against their will.

traitor A person who turns against his or her own country, friends, or family and does anything to help their enemy.

tree of life The tree whose fruit gives people the power to live forever. See Gen. 2:9; 3:22 and Rev. 22:1-2.

tribute Money paid to a foreign king or nation for protection.

tunic A piece of clothing like a long undershirt.

turban A head covering made by wrapping a long piece of cloth around the top part of the head or around a cap worn on the head.

Tyre A non-Jewish city on the coast of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon).

— U —

unclean Impure or unacceptable. When it refers to animals, it means not fit to be eaten. When it refers to things, it means not pure or fit to be used, especially in the worship of God. When it refers to people, it means not fit to be in the area of the Holy Tent (Tabernacle) or Temple or to participate in the worship of God there. See Lev. 11-15 for the Old Testament rules about what was clean and unclean.

unleavened Referring to bread that is made without yeast or anything else to make it rise.

Urim The Urim and Thummim were probably small stone, metal, or wooden pieces that the high priest kept in the judgment pouch he wore. They were used, perhaps like dice, to get answers from God. See Ex. 28:30.

Uzziah A king of Judah who ruled with his father Amaziah from 792 to 767 B.C., and then alone from 767 to 740 B.C.

— V —

vineyard A garden or farm where grapes are grown.

virgin A woman, especially a young woman, who is not married and has never had sexual relations.

vision Something like a dream used by God to speak to people.

vow A very strong promise that a person makes, sometimes to God and often using the name of God or something else known to be real or important. It may include a wish to be punished if the promise is not kept.

vulture Or “eagle,” a bird of prey that eats dead animals.

— W —

wafer A thin bread, like a cracker, made without yeast.

watchman A guard who stood on the city wall, looked for enemy soldiers, and warned the people of the city if he saw trouble coming.

will The legal paper that people sign to give instructions about what should be done with their possessions after they die.

winepress A place dug in rock used to mash grapes and collect the juice for making wine.

wineskin A bag made from the skin of an animal and used for storing wine.

wise men Literally, “magi,” probably meaning pagan religious scholars who studied the stars to predict future events.

witchcraft Using magic or the power of Satan.

witness Anyone who tells what they have seen or heard.

wizard A person who uses the power of Satan or evil spirits to do magic.

wonders Miracles that cause people to react with amazement and fear of God.

— Y —

YAHWEH A Hebrew name for God that is usually translated LORD. It is like the Hebrew word meaning “He is” or “He makes things exist.”

yeast The part of bread dough that makes it rise. Sometimes it is used as a symbol of bad influence.

yoke A pole that was put across the shoulders of men, usually slaves, or animals and used in pulling or carrying heavy loads.

— Z —

Zealot A term used to describe Jews who had an enthusiastic desire or “zeal” to maintain the purity of Judaism—the land, the Temple, observance of the law and the traditions. This desire included a willingness to do whatever necessary to protect this purity against any outside threat, such as Roman control. This kind of spirit eventually brought about the formation of a group of Jewish patriots known as the Zealots. (Note that in Mt. 10:4 and Mk. 3:18 “Zealot” is used to translate the Aramaic term, “Cananaean,” which had the same meaning.)

Zeus The most important of the gods in which the ancient Greeks believed.

Zion The southeastern part of the mountain that Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the city of Jerusalem, the people of God living there, or the Temple.

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