

Moses: Journeys

THE BEGINNINGS OF A NATION

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Israel's escape from Egypt was a massive affair: an exodus of 600,000 men, plus women and children (Exodus 12:37) – probably 2–3 million people in all. But such huge social migrations were not unusual in the Late Bronze Age. Miraculously guided by God (Exodus 13:21), they began their journey through the desert, arriving three months later at Mount Sinai where Moses had first encountered God. Here they stayed for almost a year and here they realized that God's plan had been not just to free them from slavery but to establish them as a nation.



An Orthodox Jew wearing 'phylacteries' – tiny boxes containing portions of Scripture – in remembrance of God's command to 'Tie these commandments as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads' (Deuteronomy 6:8).



JOURNEY TOWARDS THE PROMISED LAND

1. WILDERNESS OF SIN

The initial euphoria of freedom quickly turned to grumbling about the hardships of desert life but God miraculously provided 'manna' and quail for them (Exodus 16:1–36).

2. REPHIDIM

When water supplies ran out, God told Moses to strike a rock from which water miraculously erupted (Exodus 17:1–7).

3. MOUNT SINAI

God established Israel as 'a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6) and made a covenant with them (Exodus 24:1–8). Like any nation, they now needed laws to live by (Exodus 20–24) and ways to maintain their relationship with him (Exodus 25–40).

4. KADESH BARNEA

Spies sent into Canaan returned with mixed reports (Numbers 13:26–33), leading to unbelief and a refusal to proceed (Numbers 14:1–10). God's judgment was that everyone over twenty would die in the wilderness, except faithful Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:11–45). The Israelites stayed there for most of the next forty years.

5. EZION GEBER

The Israelites wandered south, then turned north. Resisted by Edom, they by-passed it to the east (Numbers 20:14–21).

6. PLAINS OF MOAB

Moab's opposition to Israel was thwarted as the false prophet Balaam, hired to curse them, could only bless them instead (Numbers 22–24). Moses commissioned Joshua as Israel's future leader (Numbers 27:12–23) and reminded God's people of the covenant that God had made with them (Deuteronomy 1–33).

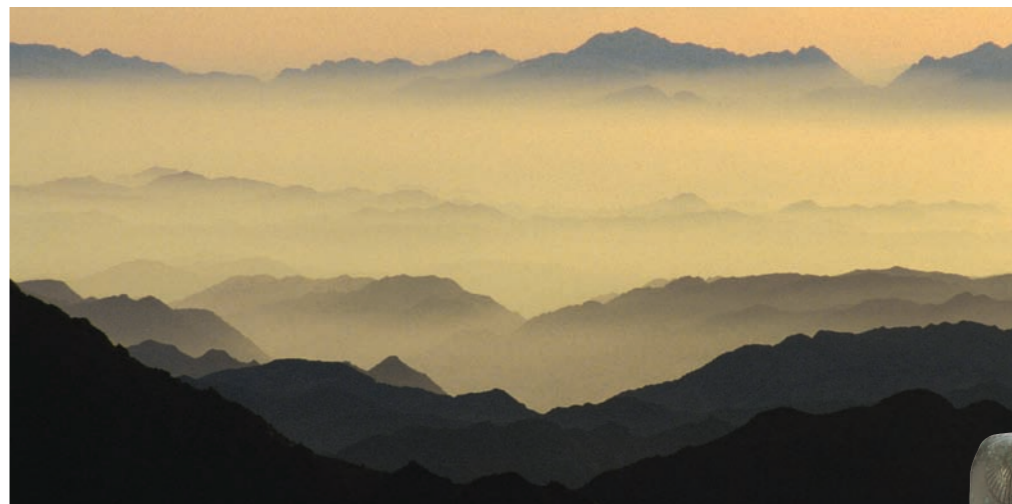
7. MOUNT NEBO

Moses died, aged 120, and was buried within sight of the Promised Land, unable to enter it because his anger with God's people had caused him to sin (Deuteronomy 34:1–8).

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.'

EXODUS 19:4–5

SEE ALSO
COVENANT P21
REVELATION P120–121
SACRIFICE P31
TABERNACLE P30



Covenant and Commandments

At Mount Sinai God made a covenant not with an individual this time (as with Abraham) but instead with a nation, establishing it as 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6). He promised to bless and protect them, and they in turn agreed to serve and obey him. God then gave Moses his laws for them to live by, the heart of which was 'The Ten Commandments' (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21). These were unpacked and supplemented by other laws covering every aspect of life – religious, social, dietary, economic and moral – found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

While we might see these laws as a long list of 'do's and don'ts', the Old Testament doesn't see it like that. In fact, the Hebrew word for 'Law' – *Torah* – means instruction, guidance or direction. In other words, God's 'Law' was not seen as a big stick hanging over people, but rather as his practical guidance on how to get the best out of life.

This eighteenth-century BC sculpture depicts the Babylonian King Hammurapi on top of a seven-foot stela containing his law code. While it has some similarities with Moses' law, it was largely the king's personal judgments and had no religious dimension.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17) are one of the most familiar parts of the Bible. Given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:12), the two stone tablets would have been two copies of the same ten laws, rather than two tablets with five on each, as people often think. Normally each party to a covenant kept a copy but since this covenant was entirely God's doing, both copies were kept in 'the ark of the covenant' in the tabernacle.

Calling them 'The Ten Commandments' is not quite accurate, however, for the Bible describes them as 'the Ten Words' (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13), which is why they are sometimes called 'The Decalogue' (from the Greek for 'ten words'). What people have often seen as 'heavy' commandments are, Christians believe, simply wise words for life.

Because these 'words' are not numbered, you will find three different ways of listing them: Jewish, Catholic/Lutheran and Protestant/Eastern Orthodox – though of course, the content is always the same.



Modern day Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mount Sinai.

This Egyptian statuette of an Apis bull, with a sun disk between its horns, is probably similar to the golden calf made by the Israelites as their god when Moses didn't return from Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:1–35).



Key Idea: Grace

While these books often concern 'law', they are also full of 'grace' – God's undeserved kindness which cannot be earned, only accepted. Despite the unfaithfulness of Israel, the Bible shows God still revealing himself to Moses as 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin' (Exodus 34:6–7). This is what God is like, the Bible tells us.

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Prophets in the North

A CALL TO CHANGE

'Prepare to meet your God, O Israel'

Amos 4:12

SEE ALSO
ASSYRIA P59
ELIJAH AND ELISHA P54–55
PROPHECY P39

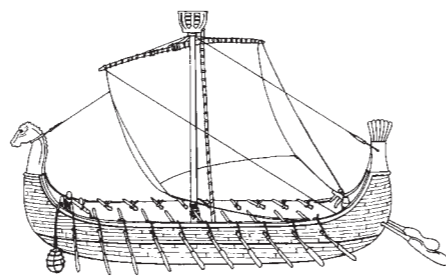
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‘Don’t mix politics and religion,’ is a phrase we often hear today; but such an appeal would have been ignored by the prophets of the eighth century. Their interest wasn’t just in religion, but in every aspect of life. They challenged people by reminding them of God’s character, covenant and call on their lives, by denouncing sin of whatever sort (religious, political or moral) and by calling people back to a real relationship with God. If they didn’t repent, the prophets declared, they would soon discover what judgment really meant.

Jonah

After Assyria’s defeat of Aram (Syria) – allowing Jeroboam II to restore Israel’s boundaries, just as Jonah had prophesied (2 Kings 14:25) – Assyria became proud. Therefore God sent Jonah to Nineveh, its capital, to give them an opportunity to repent (Jonah 1:1–2). Jonah, however, believed that forgiveness was for nice people like him and not for enemies like Assyria and so he set off in the opposite direction. But as God had done with other characters in the Bible long before Jonah, he caught up with him and taught him a lesson. After being swallowed by a great fish (Jonah 1:4–17), Jonah quickly got the message and was then promptly released and sent on his way again. This time he obeyed God, but what angered him now was that Nineveh actually repented (Jonah 3:4–10), something that he hadn’t counted on. The story ends with God showing Jonah the smallness of his heart and the bigness of God’s love.

Jesus refers to this miraculous story of Jonah’s three days in the belly of the fish as a parallel to his own three days in the tomb (Matthew 12:40–41; Luke 11:30–32).



Jonah took a trading ship, similar to this one, which was leaving Joppa for Tarshish (probably in Spain) in his attempt to avoid facing up to God’s call on his life.

SEAL OF AUTHORITY

This seal, found at Megiddo, dates from the time

of Jeroboam II (793–753 BC)



who brought the northern nation of Israel to the height of its power (2 Kings 14:23–29). With



Aram (Syria) at last subdued, it was a time of peace and prosperity. The religious centres were crowded with pilgrims, although the prophets saw this as a superficial gesture, hiding an underlying level of corruption, injustice and immorality.

Hosea

Hosea didn’t just speak his message, he lived it. He was caused great pain when he married a woman who was unfaithful and who became no better than a prostitute. She ended up as a slave on sale in the marketplace but Hosea bought her and took her home again after being challenged by God to keep loving her (Hosea 3:1–3).

Hosea’s story was symbolic of the relationship that God had with Israel. God ‘married’ them but ‘a spirit of prostitution was in their hearts’ (Hosea 5:4) and they abandoned him for others (the Canaanite nature gods and their temple prostitutes). However God never gave up on them and he remained faithful and loving and wanted the relationship restored. But time was short, Hosea said. Assyria was on the doorstep and judgment was close, so they needed to repent quickly.



Drawing on a scene from everyday life, Hosea challenged Israel to ‘sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you’ (Hosea 10:12).



‘The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim’ (Hosea 9:8). Just as watchmen kept a lookout from their watchtowers, guarding olive groves and vineyards, so the prophets were spiritual lookouts, keeping watch over the nation’s life and bringing God’s word into it.



A scene from the Black Obelisk of King Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) showing King Jehu of Israel on his knees before the Assyrian king.

Keys to Reading the Prophets

When reading the prophets, it helps to remember that their sayings were:

■ **Contemporary**, relating to things happening at that time. References to the future are generally *their* (the prophets’) future rather than *ours*. Of course, some prophecy points to Jesus and his future kingdom, although probably only about five per cent, and readers need to be careful of looking for future

interpretations in everything they read.

■ **Poetic**, since poetry was a useful device to help people remember what was said. The poems employed a lot of imagery that should not be interpreted literally.

■ **Compilations**, not all delivered on the same occasion. A chronological order isn’t always followed, so readers should avoid trying to make everything ‘fit’.

Amos

Amos, a shepherd and fig-grower from Judah in the south, was sent north as a prophet to Israel (Amos 7:14–15). Based at Bethel, he prophesied during Jeroboam II’s reign, a time of peace and prosperity – at least, for some. The rich lived in extravagant luxury, but at the expense of the poor and by perverting justice, which Amos boldly exposed. But his message didn’t go

down too well and he was thrown out of Bethel’s sanctuary and told to go home. Amos warned that ‘the day of the LORD’ was coming and, with it, judgment for Israel.

They would be taken into exile (Amos 6:7), something that happened in 721 BC when Assyria invaded. Amos highlights that social justice and concern for the poor

are very important to God, and that any faith that doesn’t make room for them is not a true faith.



Like the Jordan when it is flowing strongly, Amos challenged Israel to ‘let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!’ (Amos 5:24)

Key Idea: Repentance

At the heart of the prophets’ message is a call to repent; in other words, to acknowledge that the way the human race has been living is wrong, express sorrow for it, make a complete change of direction and begin living God’s way. It is only through repentance, Christians believe, that forgiveness can come.

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The Fall of Jerusalem

GOD'S DISCIPLINE

It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.
 2 KINGS 24:20

SEE ALSO
 ARK OF THE COVENANT P30
 BABYLON P64-65
 DAVIDIC COVENANT P43
 JEREMIAH P64-65

For 350 years, the prophets had been calling upon God's people to turn back to him. When they didn't, judgment was inevitable. After Israel in 722 BC, it was now Judah's turn. Babylon besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and took its people into exile. Judah had just discovered what God meant by his discipline.

The Beginning of the End

After Egypt's defeat at Carchemish, Jehoiakim was sucked into the growing Babylonian empire. For three years he submitted, but then rebelled. Babylon's might came down hard on Judah in 598 BC, the year that he died. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him but couldn't resist Babylon, lasting just three months. Jerusalem was taken in 597 BC, and Jehoiachin and many leading citizens (including Ezekiel) were taken to Babylon to join those already there from an earlier deportation in 605 BC (which had included Daniel). Treasure from the palace and Temple was also taken.

Nebuchadnezzar, who had come to power in Babylon in 605 BC, appointed Zedekiah as king, but he too eventually rebelled.



This clay tablet is part of the *Babylonian Chronicle*, recording events from 605–594 BC. It notes the accession of Nebuchadnezzar II, his battle against Egypt at Carchemish, and the capture of Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar had had enough. In 588 BC, Babylon marched against Jerusalem and besieged it for two years until it fell in 586 BC. The walls were broken down, every important building including the Temple was destroyed and the population was exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1–21; 2 Chronicles 36:15–21; Jeremiah 52:1–30). Zedekiah, who had tried to escape, was captured. His sons were killed before him, then his eyes were gouged out and he was taken to Babylon. Judah's history seemed to be over.



Jeremiah's Work Continues

Despite many obstacles, Jeremiah brought God's word to people until the end of his life:

■ Dictated prophecies to Baruch when forbidden to enter the Temple and had them read to people. Jehoiakim cut up his scroll and burnt it, showing his contempt for God's word (Jeremiah 36:1–32).

■ Wrote to the exiles, encouraging them to settle into their new life in Babylon because it would be seventy years before God brought them home (Jeremiah 29:1–23).

■ Also prophesied that God would not only restore his people, but would one day make a new covenant with them, based not on externals but written on minds and hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–34).

■ Bought a field while the King of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem (Jeremiah 32:1–44) – humanly speaking, not the best time to buy property! But it was a prophetic act of faith in the future, declaring that God's people would indeed return.

■ Urged submission to Babylon (Jeremiah 21:1–7), advice which was rejected by Zedekiah who instead rebelled, prompting Nebuchadnezzar's siege. Jeremiah was imprisoned (Jeremiah 37:1–21).

■ Found favour with Babylonian officials and was sent back to serve Gedaliah, Judah's new governor (Jeremiah 40:1–6). Gedaliah was assassinated by rebels (41:1–5) who fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (Jeremiah 41:16–43:7). This is probably where he died, never to see his homeland again.

Jeremiah's opponents put him in a cistern like this one, hoping that he would die there (Jeremiah 38:1–13). Cisterns were used for storing water in readiness for the dry season. Fortunately, Jeremiah's well had only mud in it.



The Lost Ark

After the Temple's destruction, the ark of the covenant disappeared from history. Since it didn't reappear in later temples in Jerusalem (even though the returning exiles brought back many Temple artefacts), the most likely explanation is that it was broken up when the Babylonians looted the Temple. However, many legends developed around its disappearance. One Jewish tradition says that Jeremiah hid it in a cave, while an Ethiopian tradition says that the queen of Sheba took it to Ethiopia where it remains hidden in a church in Aksum. Novels and films, meanwhile, provide plenty of other suggestions!

Since Jeremiah prophesied that in the coming messianic age the ark would be of no interest to anyone (Jeremiah 3:16) as God himself would be present, attempts to trace it are probably of little significance.

Other Prophets

Obadiah was probably written during this period, when Edom was gloating over Babylon's invasion of Judah. His message was that those who enjoy the misfortunes of others would one day be judged themselves.

Habakkuk, probably prophesying during Jehoiakim's reign, tackled the perennial question of how God could allow wicked



'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11). This sums up Jeremiah's profound faith in God, despite how some of his prophecies might have sounded at the time.

'Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.' (Habakkuk 3:17–18)

Key Idea: Discipline

The Bible paints a picture of God being like any good father, disciplining his children when they do wrong – not because he doesn't love them, but because he does. The exile was his loving discipline on Judah, giving them time to reflect on how they had hardened their hearts and how far they had drifted from him. 'The Lord disciplines those he loves' (Hebrews 12:6).

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Jesus: His Nation

REAL MAN, REAL WORLD

So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us.

JOHN 1:14

SEE ALSO
BETWEEN THE TWO TESTAMENTS P76-77
JESUS: HIS MINISTRY P88-89
JESUS: HIS OPPONENTS P94-95
THE PROMISED LAND P34-35

Through the miracle of the virgin birth, not only did Jesus become a real human being but he came and lived in the real world. That meant experiencing both the joys and pains of life, just like everyone else, and there were plenty of both in first-century Palestine.

Money

Pilgrims needed to change their money into local currency, especially to pay the Temple tax and buy animals for sacrifices. Money changers were therefore needed but they were often corrupt and over-charged people, and Jesus twice cleared them out of the Temple out of anger for what they had turned it into.

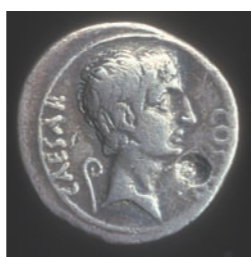
Even more corrupt were the tax collectors. Through payment to Rome in advance, they bought the right to collect taxes for a district, but then made huge profits by making inflated assessments of taxable goods, with Roman soldiers backing them up. Jesus reached out to this hated social group, even becoming known as 'a friend of tax collectors and sinners'. Both Matthew and Zacchaeus were tax collectors.

The Pax Romana

The Roman empire was vast, covering Europe, Greece, Asia Minor and North Africa. Its iron hand had brought peace and stability; just laws and effective administration prevailed; roads linked every city; trade flourished; Latin and Greek were international languages and the Roman denarius was the universal currency. This was known as the 'Pax Romana' ('Roman Peace').

But peace had its price. Palestine had been under Roman rule since

63 BC, and while some appreciated the advantages that this brought, the majority resented the presence of godless Gentiles. In the seventy years following Herod the Great's death in 4 BC, there were numerous uprisings as would-be rescuers of Israel from foreign rule ('messiahs') tried in vain to establish a Jewish kingdom. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pilate, the Roman Governor, was so nervous when told that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews.



A silver denarius from the reign of Emperor Augustus, who died in AD 14. The denarius was the most common coin and was a day's wage for a labourer. Jesus referred to common coins in his teaching, and half of

his parables refer to money in some way or other, perhaps showing that money was as big an issue then as now.

ROMAN ROADS

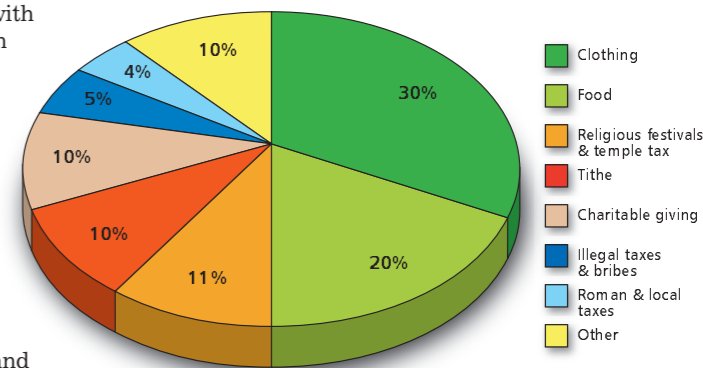
Over 50,000 miles of roads spread out across the Roman empire. Paved and crowned (to enable water to flow away), they made travel possible in all kinds of weather. While primarily built to facilitate rapid movement of the army, they also opened up vast trade possibilities, especially when linked to the Roman development of shipping.



Palestine's Economy

The economy was still largely land-based at this time, with most families working their own land. Wheat was grown in the valleys of the north and along the coastal plain, and barley in the south; sheep, goats and cattle were kept in the hill country and figs, dates and vines were grown on hillsides. Fishing was an important industry around the Sea of Galilee and many of Jesus' parables were based around farming and fishing.

Roman roads and shipping brought international trade. Imports included spices from Greece and Persia, myrrh from Arabia, apples from Crete, cheese from Bithynia and parchment from Egypt. Exports included vegetables, grain, olive oil, honey, salted fish and bitumen and Jerusalem became a major commercial centre, with seven different markets in New Testament times and 118 recorded foreign luxury goods such as jewellery, silk and glass bowls.



Eating

Bread, made from raw ingredients and baked each day, was basic to every Jewish meal. In fact, the Hebrew expression 'to eat bread' means 'to have a meal'. Their diet was largely vegetarian, as meat (generally lamb, but sometimes beef) was expensive and was reserved for special occasions. Water, milk and wine (often diluted with water) were all common drinks.

Eating together was an expression of friendship, and hospitality was very important. However, Jewish food laws meant that Jews could not eat with Gentiles (non-Jews), and many devout Jews would not eat with other Jews who hadn't fulfilled their hand-washing rituals or washed their utensils properly. But Jesus delighted to eat with anyone, much to the annoyance of the Pharisees.



Jewish Faith

Every Jew was expected to pray the 'Eighteen benedictions' every morning, afternoon and evening. Each began with, 'Blessed are you, O Lord, king of the universe...' A prayer of blessing was also said before each meal. Most Jews went to the synagogue every sabbath to hear the Scriptures being read and to pray, and three times a year, they went to the Jerusalem Temple for the great annual festivals.

Jesus' conflicts came, not with the Jewish faith, which he said he had come to fulfil not abolish, but with the interpretations of it by religious leaders that he argued kept so many ordinary people from God.

Jesus spent many hours working in his family's carpentry workshop.

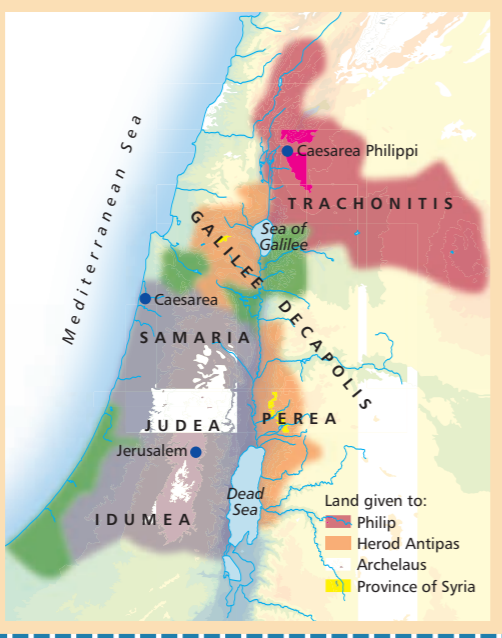


Key Idea: Work

By committing himself to daily work till he began his public ministry at the age of thirty, Jesus highlighted that work was not an inconvenient hindrance to spiritual life, but was instead part of life. Work is not a curse but a blessing, and Christians believe that God can be both found in it and served in it as much as in anything else.

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

After the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, his kingdom was divided into three, ruled by his sons; but the ineffective Herod Archelaus was replaced by a Roman governor called Pilate, ruling from AD 26-36, the man who had Jesus crucified (Matthew 27:11-26).



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Paul: His Letters

KEEPING IN TOUCH

When Paul wrote his letters, he had no idea that he was writing much of what would become known as 'the New Testament' (thirteen of its twenty-seven books were written by him). He thought that he was simply keeping in touch with churches and their leaders, teaching, encouraging and challenging them. But unknown to him, something deeper was happening: Scripture was being written again, as even Peter recognized (2 Peter 3:15-16).

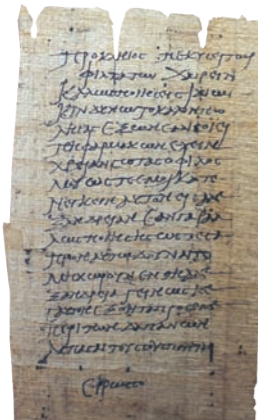
'Take a letter Tertius...'

It was common in New Testament times to use an amanuensis (professional writer) when writing documents or letters. He not only wrote what you dictated but often helped phrase what you wanted to say. Tertius, the writer of Romans, adds his own sentence and signature at the end (Romans 16:22). But Paul often added something in his own hand at the end of letters to mark them as authentic (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 1:9).



LETTERS IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

A papyrus letter from the first century AD. Letters always began with the writer's name, the recipient's name, a greeting and thanksgiving for the recipient's life. Most New Testament letters follow this format.



Romans

Written in Corinth in AD 57 on his third journey, the book of Romans contains the fullest (though not complete) outline of Paul's understanding of the Christian message, preparing the way for his visit there. Through consistent argument, he shows how God's promises to Abraham were being fulfilled and how Gentiles were part of these promises – not through keeping the Jewish Law, but simply through faith which was, Paul says, how God had always dealt with people.

The forum in Rome, a square surrounded by public buildings and colonnades, which was the hub of business and social life and the setting for many public meetings.

1 Corinthians

Written from Ephesus in AD 55 during his third journey, Paul replied to troubling news: the church was in chaos. Factions abounded; members were taking one another to court; immorality was rampant; the Lord's Supper was marked by drunkenness and greed and the special gifts of the Holy Spirit for building up the church were being abused. Paul must have despaired, but the key to everything was love for other people (chapter 13).



The Temple of Apollo at Corinth, with the acrocorinth in the background that was dominated by the Temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Corinth was well-known for commercialized sex and a 'Corinthian girl' meant a prostitute. The church, generally, struggled with the city's worldliness and sexual sin.

2 Corinthians

Paul's first letter hadn't solved the problems, and his visit had made things worse. Another letter, unfortunately now lost, had helped considerably though as Titus now reported, and this third letter, written later in AD 55, was Paul's joyful response – the letter of a very relieved spiritual father!

I have written to you quite boldly on some points... because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.
ROMANS 15:15-16

SEE ALSO
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES P102-103
PAUL: HIS TRAVELS P110-111
PAUL: HIS TEACHING 114-115

RECIPIENTS OF PAUL'S LETTERS



Galatians

In this hard-hitting letter, Paul wrote that the church had swallowed the lie that people must become Jews before they can become Christians and must keep the Jewish Law. Paul robustly rebuked this error, pointing them to Jesus whom, he said, saves us through faith alone.

This letter was probably written before the Council of Jerusalem in AD 50, making it one of the earliest New Testament letters.

Ephesians

Written around AD 60 from Rome, this was probably a circular letter, since the most reliable ancient manuscripts omit the words 'at Ephesus' (Ephesians 1:1) and the letter contains no personal references, even though Paul knew the church well. He wrote, firstly, that Jesus' death was part of God's plan from the beginning, and that it is only through Jesus that everything makes sense and secondly, showed how this can be worked out in practical, everyday Christian living.

Philippians

Written from Rome around AD 61/62, this joyful letter thanks the church for their gift sent during his house arrest. Paul had planted this, his first church in Europe, over ten years earlier, so their friendship was longstanding. The letter is completely Jesus-centred and contains a beautiful description of how God's Son became human (Philippians 2:5-11).

Colossians

Written alongside Ephesians (with which it has many similarities), this letter addressed heresies that had crept into the church, especially beliefs concerning Jesus. People who felt they had special secret insights and who said certain religious rules would help others grow spiritually were drawing believers away from trusting in Jesus alone. But Paul wrote that, if Christ was fully God, people did not need anything or anyone else.



1 and 2 Thessalonians

Paul had been driven out of Thessalonica during his second journey, so didn't have time to establish the church. Encouraged by good reports from Timothy, he wrote these two letters (c. AD 50/51) to encourage them to keep going. Both letters focused strongly on the return of Jesus since the Thessalonians were worried about those who had died before Jesus returned.

1 and 2 Timothy

These personal letters were written to the pastor whom Paul had drawn alongside him when a newly converted teenager and they are full of practical advice on leading a church and the importance of an individual's own life and character. The first letter was written after release from house arrest in Rome around AD 62 and the second during his final imprisonment when he knew the end was near.

Timothy led the church in Ephesus for many years.

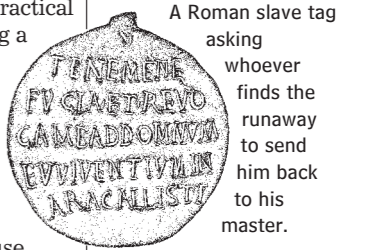
The Via Egnatia, Rome's primary artery to the east, passed through Philippi and was the road that Paul would have taken on his second and third journeys.

Titus

Titus had been left by Paul to lead the church in Crete during a visit after Paul's release from house arrest. The letter contains practical instructions for wise church leadership.

Philemon

This short letter urged Philemon to take back his runaway slave Onesimus who had met Paul and become a Christian. Paul asked him to give Onesimus a new start, just as Jesus had given Philemon himself a new start. Paul couldn't change the social structure of slavery but he could begin to undermine its foundations.



Key Idea: Encouragement

Encouragement is a major theme in Paul's letters as he wrote of what Jesus did for people, assuring them of God's love, and urging them to press on. Everyone needs encouragement, and Paul showed that it should be a major feature of church life.

GEN
EXODUS
LEV
NUM
DEUT
JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 SAM
2 SAM
1 KINGS
2 KINGS
1 CHRO
2 CHRO
EZRA
NEH
ESTHER
JOB
PSALMS
PROV
ECCLES
SONG
ISAIAH
JER
LAM
EZEKIEL
DAN
HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBAD
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HAB
ZEPH
HAGGAI
ZECH
MAL
MATT
MARK
LUKE
JOHN
ACTS
ROM
1 COR
2 COR
GAL
EPH
PHIL
COL
1 THESS
2 THESS
1 TIM
2 TIM
TITUS
PHILEM
HEB
JAMES
1 PETER
2 PETER
1 JOHN
2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE
REV