

# BRIEF LEXICON

## PLACES, PEOPLE AND SOCIAL GROUPS BIBLICAL PERSONAGES BIBLICAL TERMS

- Aaron** This personage, leader of a religious group in the desert, is called the *brother* of Moses Ex 4:14. He was considered as the ancestor and model of priests and especially of the High Priest of Jerusalem. Traditions regarding Aaron: Ex 4:14; 6:20; 7:12; 15:20; 24; 32; Num 12:1; 20:24. The *sons of Aaron* are the priests: Ex 28-31; Lev; Num; Chr; Lk 1:5. Also the *house of Aaron*: Ps 115;135. In the N.T., Aaron is only mentioned in Heb 5:4; 7:11 and 9:4.
- Abba** Word of Aramaic origin meaning Father or Daddy: Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.
- Abel** The first victim of violence: Gen 4:2; Wis 10:3; Mt 23:35; 1 Jn 3:12. The N.T. sees him as the model of the just person: Heb 11:4; 12:24.
- Abiathar (or Ebyathar)** 1 S 22:20; 23; 30; 2 S 15:27; 1 K 2:7; 2:26; Mk 2:26.
- Abigail** Wife of Nabal of Carmel, then David's wife: 1 S 25; 2 S 2:2; 3:3.
- Abijah** Son of Rehoboam, Mt 1:7. See Abijah and the list of Kings.
- Abimelech** King of Guerar: Gen 20; 26:1 or of the Philistines: Gen 26; Ps 34:1. Another man with the same name was the son of Gideon Jdg 9:1.
- Abishag** the Shunamite: 1 K 1:3; 2:17 and 21.
- Abner** Saul's cousin and chief of his army: 1 S 14:51; 17:55; 2 S 2:8.
- Abomination** Usually refers to an idol: 1 K 11:5; 2 K 23:13; Jer 4:1. The *abominable idol of the invaders* refers to the idol that Syrians placed in the Temple: 1 Mac 1:54; Dn 8:12; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. See Mt 24:15.
- Abraham** Tradition regarding Abraham: Gen 12-15. Even though he was a historical figure, we know very little about him: note Gen 11:26. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: Gen 50:20; Ex 2:24; 3:6; 3:15; 6:3; 32:13; Num 32:11; Dt 1:8; Mt 22:32. Our father Abraham: Is 51:2; 63:16; Mt 3:9; Lk 1:55; 13:16; 16:25; Jn 8:39. Abraham's faith: Rom 4; Gal 3; Heb 11:8; James 2:21. Biblical Teaching **20-28**.
- Absalom** Son of David: 2 S 3:3; 14-18.
- Abyss** It is the lower world, the part of the world over which God the Creator rules: Gen 1:2; Hg 3:10; Ps 36:7. The world of the dead: Ps 73:18; Sir 21:10. It also refers to the depths of the ocean and to the ocean itself: Ps 107:24; 2 Cor 11:25. Hell: Rev 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; in this case it translates **Sheol**.
- Acaron** See **Ekron**.
- Acculturation** It is the incarnation of the Christian faith and liturgy in a new culture. Faith and the Gospel leave aside what characterized the culture in which they were previously expressed in order to express themselves in a new culture, at the same time as the latter, that is baptized, becomes renewed through faith: Mk 16:15.
- Adam** A collective noun in ancient Hebrew: *people*. Ben-Adam, son of Adam, means someone. Adam is the name given to the first man in the account of the garden of Eden: Gen 2 and 3. Ezekiel is called son of man by God in Ezk 2:1. See Son of man. In tradition, Adam would be the ancestor: Wis 10:1; Sir 33:10; 49:16; Lk 3:38; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22.
- Adonijah** Son of David: 2 S 3:4; 1 K 1-2.
- Adonis** Comes from Adon or Hadon meaning Lord. Syrian god of vegetation: see note in Is 17:2.

**Adoption** It was commonly practiced and gave all the rights of children. See notes in Ruth 3:1; Mt 1:18. *God's adopted children*: see note in Rom 8:15.

**Adultery** In a literal sense, see Ex 20:14 and Lev 20:10. In the sense of idolatry, see notes in Is 1:21 and Hos 1:2. In the N.T., see Mt 5:27; 19:9; Jn 4:18; 8:4; James 4:4 and Rev 2:22.

**Aeneas** A man healed by Peter: Acts 9:33.

**Agabus** Acts 11:28; 21:10.

**Agape** A Greek term meaning true and unselfish love. In the early Church, this term was used to refer to meals with the celebration of the Eucharist: 1 Col 11:11.

**Ahab** 1 K 16-22.

**Ahaz** King of Judah 2 K 16:1; Is 7:1.

**Ai** It means *ruin*. An ancient city destroyed by the Hyksos, long before the arrival of Joshua. The story of Jos 6-8 attributes the conquest and destruction of the city to Joshua.

**Alexandria** In the Nile delta. Main city of Egypt and of the Greek world at the time of the apostles. See introductions to Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and the note in Heb 1:1.

**Alleluia!** *Praise God!* This acclamation is found in the last psalms and in Revelation.

**Alpha** The letter A of the Greek alphabet and **Omega** is the last letter: see Rev 1:8.

**Alphaeus** One of the apostles is James, son of Alphaeus: Mt 10:3; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13. Levi is called the son of Alphaeus in Mk 2:14.

**Amalek** Nomads of southern Palestine and hereditary enemies of Israel: Ex 17:15.

**Amen** *I believe, I accept.* See 2 Cor 1:20 and Rev 3:14.

**Ammonites** People of nomadic origin who settled down east of the river Jordan, taking advantage of the collapse of the kingdoms of Egypt and Mesopotamia around the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. They founded a kingdom whose capital was Rabbath-Ammon, today Amman in Jordan.

**Amorites** Nomadic population that prevailed at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium in the kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Syria. The famous Hammurabi who

will establish an empire in Babylon around 1800 B.C. was an Amorite, like Abraham and the Patriarchs.

**Analogy** It is a kind of comparison except, instead of comparing two things, it is the way things occur in very different fields. The grain of wheat that falls to the earth and apparently dies before producing a new plant is an analogy of what happens to us: Jn 12:24; 1 Cor 15:37. However, we do not look like a grain of wheat and we will never have leaves.

**Ananias** There are two of them: Acts 5:1 and 9:10, not to mention the others: Acts 24:1. Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5:1.

**Anakim** Ancient inhabitants of Palestine considered to be giants by legend: Dt 2:21. See note in Num 13:22.

**Anathema** At the beginning, the word meant: separated, cut-off, and it was applied to all that belonged to God and could not fall into profane hands; it could be a person, a land, or something donated to God (Lev 27:21; Num 18:14). It could be a conquered city which would be burned down and its whole population massacred (Jos 7). Later on anathema would be the condemnation that excluded individuals from the people of God, designating them to be cursed (Rom 9:3; Gal 1:9).

**Anathoth** Village of priests and Jeremiah's homeland: Jer 1:1.

**Andrew** An apostle: Mk 1:16; 3:18; 13:3; Jn 1:35; 12:22.

**Angels** The word means *messengers*; in the Bible, it is found with different meanings. An angel is, at times, a way of speaking about some intervention of God (see commentary on Gen 16:1; Jdg 6:11; 2 K 19:35). But more often, it expresses the belief in superior beings who are surrounding God and are at His service; they are often called *sons of God*—the true translation in English would be: *divine beings*. (See Ps 29:1; 89:7). It is true that, at first, these *divine beings* were gods, but in Israel they were made the servants of the One God and never was there a question of doing without them. They were, then, superior beings connected with our

universe but belonging to an invisible world. The Old Testament speaks of *Seraphim* (Is 6) and *Cherubim* (Ezk 1; 9:3)—“sacred monsters” in the religions of the Middle East—as the guards of God. Later on, angels would be seen as the messengers of God, in charge of guiding the nations and directing events: Dt 32:8; Dn 4:10 and 14. This was their major role in the New Testament: Eph 1:21. Likewise, angels are taking care of people who follow the will of God, as it was the case in Dn 2 and Tb 5:4. See Mt 18:10. In Revelation, they represent the faithful before God: Rev 8:3.

**Antichrist** A way of referring to a certain figure who, according to different traditions, would be the instrument of the devil before the coming of Christ: 2 Thes 2:6; 1 Jn 2:18. See also Rev. 13:11.

**Antioch** The name of several cities in the Near East. Antioch of Syria (today Antakya in Turkey). In 37, a Christian community was founded in this capital of the Roman province of Syria (Acts 11:19-30). Antioch of Pisidia, today a place in ruins, about 250 km southwest of Ankara. Paul and Barnabas evangelized this city around 46 (Acts 13:14-52).

**Aphék** At the intersection of two important roads: the Road of the Sea, starting in Egypt going north and of the road up to Jerusalem. It was there that Israel was defeated and the Ark was captured: 1 S 4. Rebuilt by Herod during the Hellenistic era, it became **Antipatris**, between Jerusalem and Caesarea. Paul was brought there when he was a prisoner: Acts 23:12-32.

**Apocalypse** This term means *revelation*. It refers not only to the Book of Revelation of the N.T. but it also applies to an entire category of books that claimed to reveal the meaning of the present time and to open a perspective on the future. See the Introductions to Revelation, Daniel and the commentary on Ezekiel 38.

**Apocryphal** Books that comment the biblical events but are not recognized by the Church as inspired books.

**Apollo** Acts 18:24; 1 Cor 1:12; Tit 3:13.

**Apologetics** This term refers to written works intended to defend the faith.

**Apostasy** It consists in renouncing one's identity as a believer or as a member of the people of God: 1 Mac 2:15; 2 Thes 2:3. See Heb 3:12 and 12:15.

**Apostles** This Greek word means *Sent*. At the time of Jesus, the one sent was in reality the representative of his master. Jesus probably gave this title to the first missionaries he sent throughout Galilee: Mk 3:13 and Lk 3:14. Later on, the apostles seem to be identified with the group of the Twelve. That is the reason why Jesus gave such importance to the formation of the **Twelve**. List of the Twelve: Mt 10:2; Acts 1:13. Their call: Jn 1:35-51; Lk 5:1-11. See also Biblical teaching **121, 122, 158, 163, 175, 180, 240**.

**Aquila and Priscilla** Acts 18:2 and 26; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3.

**Arabah** It is the large north south depression that crosses the whole of Palestine and through which the Jordan River flows. The word refers especially to the southern part that extends to the gulf of Aqabah: Dt 1:1; 4:49; Jos 11:16; Jer 39:4.

**Arad** Important city of the Negeb. Its king is mentioned in the list of the kings conquered by Joshua: Jos 12:14. The Israelites had a provincial temple there. It was later destroyed during the reform of Hezekiah.

**Aramaic** From the same family as Hebrew, Aramaic became the common language of Israel after the return from the Exile, but Hebrew remained the sacred language. Jesus spoke Aramaic although he understood Hebrew and the first documents at the origin of our Gospels were written in Aramaic and in Hebrew.

**Arameans** People of nomadic origin who settled down north of the Lake of Tiberias around the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. They occupied approximately what is now the territory of Syria. At times, the Bible translates Arameans as Syrians. They formed several small independent kingdoms (1 K 20:24), the most important one being Damascus. They were neighbors of the kingdom of Israel with whom they were

often at war: 1 K 20-22. Like Israel, they were finally defeated by the Kings of Assyria.

**Ararat** The country of Arartu refers to the region of the Caucasus; these mountains of the far north were the residence of gods, and this is the reason why the pre-biblical Noah had to land there: Gen 8:4; Is 14:13; Jer 51:27.

**Areopagus** Council of wise men of the city of Athens, in charge, among other things, of religious affairs. See note in Acts 17:22.

**Ark** This English word is the translation of two very different Hebrew term. One is the Ark of Noah (Gen 6-9) similar to the basket in which Moses was saved (Ex 2:3). The other one is the Ark of the Covenant: note in Ex 25:2.

**Ark of the Covenant** Acacia wooden case carried on a man's shoulders. Exodus 25:10-22 describes it at length. It was considered as a sign of the presence of God and thus, it was called the footstool of Yahweh (1 S 4-6; Ezk 43:7). It also contained the tablets of the Law received on Mt. Sinai and, according to a later tradition, a golden urn with a handful of manna deposited there and the staff of Aaron that blossomed in the desert. The Ark disappeared with the Temple in the year 587 B.C. and it was never rebuilt. Nevertheless, they reconstructed the *propitiatory*, or *place of mercy*, a golden carved slab that used to cover the ark and on which the blood for the expiation of sins was offered.

**Asherah** It was a sacred pole, symbol of the power of a god. It was placed in front of the god's statue in sanctuaries on the hills. The same word also refers to the effigy of Astarte (2 K 21:7).

**Asia** In the ancient texts and thus also in the N.T., Asia refers to the Roman province that covered the farthest western region of today's Turkey.

**Ashkelon** (or **Ascalon**) One of the five Philistine cities: 1 S 5:1; Zep 2:4; 1 Mac 10:86.

**Assyria** It covered both shores of the river Tigris along its middle course and it be-

came a great empire between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 853, Shalmaneser was victorious over a coalition of the kings of Syria and Palestine, including the king of Samaria, Ahab, who proceeded to conquer Egypt. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Assyria destroyed the kingdom of Israel with its capital Samaria (Is 7). At the end of the following century, Assyria was completely destroyed by the Babylonians.

**Astarte** Main feminine goddess of the Canaanites. She presided over fertility and sensual love.

**Athaliah** Queen of Judah: 2 K 11.

**Athens** This city extended its intellectual radiance over the whole Mediterranean area. It was evangelized by Paul around 50 (Acts 17:16-34).

**Azymes** See **Unleavened Bread**.

**Azazel** The demon toward which a scapegoat was sent: Lev 16:10.

**Baal** or *Lord*. It was the name given to male divinities among the Canaanites. Their cult spread over Israel and was vigorously fought by the Prophets (1 K 18:20-40). Yahweh also received the title of Baal in ancient times (Hos 2:18).

**Babylon** City and countryside located in the region of Baghdad in Iraq. On several occasions, it was the capital of Mesopotamia. It is especially known as the empire of Nebuchadnezzar (605-562) that succeeded the one of Assyria. This king led two punitive military expeditions against the kingdom of Judah and, on the second one (in 587), he burned down the city and the temple of Jerusalem. He deported the elite of the country to Babylon: it was the **Exile**, or the Babylonian captivity, an event of primary importance in biblical history. When Babylon was taken by Cyrus and the Persians in 537, the Jews were able to return to their country.

**Balaam** He was the national prophet of the Ammonites. The book of Numbers combines two traditions about him. According to the first one, he proclaimed Israel's future (Num 31:16). According to the second one, he sought to place a curse on the Israelites and tempted them with prostitutes of the god of Peor (Num 31:16).

Posterity would only remember the second version: 2 P 2:15; Rev 2:14.

**Baptism** It is a rite used in many religions with a meaning of purification. To baptize is a Greek word meaning *to wash* or *to immerse*. Baptism appeared in the Bible with John the Baptizer. It would become the rite of entrance into the Church. Baptism of John and Baptism of Jesus: see commentary on Lk 3:15. Baptism of the Spirit: note in Acts 8:14. Baptism in the name of Jesus: Acts 19:1. Paul provides the meaning of Christian baptism in Rom 6:3 and Col 2:11. See 1 P 1.

**Barabbas** Mt 27:16; Jn 18:40.

**Barnabas** One of the first apostles aside from the Twelve; missionary with Paul: Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22; 13:1; 15:36.

**Bartholomew** An apostle: Mt 10:3.

**Baruch** The king's secretary at the time of Jeremiah (Jer 36:26). Also Jeremiah's secretary for the writing of his book: Jer 32; 36; 45. A book of the Bible, written 50 years before Jesus, is listed under the name of **Baruch**.

**Bathsheba** Uriah's wife. King David had her abducted and she became Solomon's mother 2 S 11:3; 1 K 1:11; Mt 1:6.

**Beatitudes** See Mt 5:1 and note; Lk 6:1. There are many formulas of beatitudes in Luke (11:28; 12:37...) and in Revelation: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6...

**Beelzebul** Canaanite divinity whose name means: *Baal, the Prince*. Formerly venerated in the Philistine city of Ekron, due to his name, in the gospels, this divinity symbolizes the prince of demons (Mt 12:24).

**Beersheba** Main center of the Negeb, visited by the patriarchs: Gen 21:31; 22:19; 26:33; 46:5. Southernmost part of the territory of Israel; hence the expression: all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba. Place of pilgrimage of the Israelites of the north after the schism. Elijah took refuge there: 1 K 19:3.

**Benedictus** The Latin name of the canticle of Zechariah in Lk 1:68.

**Benjamin** Traditions regarding this last son of Jacob: Gen 35:18; 43:14; 49:27.

**Bethany** A village just outside of Jerusalem

(Jn 11:18) on the other side of the Mount of Olives. The raising of Lazarus (Jn 11) and the anointing by Mary (12:1) occurred there.

**Bethel** It may mean House of God (Gen 28:20). See Jdg 1:23 and Gen 35:6. A very ancient city with a sanctuary of the Canaanite god, Bethel. After the schism, king Jeroboam established a sanctuary there to rival the Jerusalem sanctuary (1 K 12:26).

**Bethlehem** It means *house of the god Lamamu* or *house of bread*. One of the centers of the tribe of Judah, 7 km south of Jerusalem. Place of origin of Ruth the Moabite (Ru 1:19), ancestor of David who was from Bethlehem (1 S 16). The prophet Micah said that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem: Mic 5:4. Jesus was born there in a place already identified at the end of the first century.

**Bethsaida** Village of fishermen on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias. Herod's son, Philip, transformed it into a city. The apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip were from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44). See also Mt 11:21.

**Beth-shan (Beisan)** An ancient Canaanite city to the far east of the Plain of Jezreel, near the Jordan. It became an industrial center opposed to the Israelites (1 S 31:10) with the settling of the Philistines. David conquered the city. Centuries later, it took the name of Scytopolis and became a center of Hellenism. The Romans made it the capital of the Decapolis (Mk 5:20; 7:31), a Greek province apart from the Jewish world.

The **Bible** All understand that it is the sacred book whose largest part is shared by Jews and Christians. The word means: *The Books*. This was the name given to the Scriptures of Israel when they were translated into Greek. Since the Church of the Apostles used the Greek version and presentation of these Scriptures, the word Bible took roots among Christians when, to the ancient collection, they added the books of the apostolic period that made up the New Testament. Catholic Bible and Protestant Bible: see **Deuterocanonical**.

**Blasphemy** The word *blaspheme* means: “to defame” or “to slander” (Jas 2:7). Most of the time, in the Bible, the word refers to a blasphemy that offends God or those consecrated to God (1 Mac 7:34; Tb 1:18; Rev 13:1. It was punishable by death: Lev 24:11 and it was the cause of Jesus’ condemnation (Mk 15:26; Jn 10:33; Mt 26:63). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: Mk 3:20.

**Boaz** The spouse of Ruth: Ruth.

**Breaking of Bread** At the institution of the Eucharist, Jesus took this rite that marked the start of the meal among the Jews (Mk 6:41; Acts 27:35); very soon this expression was commonly used to refer to the Eucharistic celebration (1 Cor 10:16).

**Brothers of Jesus** This is an expression used by the primitive Church to designate an influential and quite conservative group made up of the relatives and acquaintances of Jesus at Nazareth. In the Gospel, they are called “brothers” of Jesus according to the biblical use in the Hebrew as well as in the Greek texts. However, the Hebrew expressions referring to “blood brothers” was never applied to them. See commentary on Mk 3:31.

**Caesar** Nickname of Claudius Julius, conqueror of Gaul. His nephew Octavius wanted to be called Caesar Augustus (*divine Caesar*). After his death, *Caesar* was the way to refer to the emperor (Acts 25:12). After Augustus (Lk 2:1) and Tiberius (Lk 3:1), the N. T. knew Claudius and Nero without naming them.

**Caesarea** Mediterranean port built mostly by Herod. A new and magnificent city, at the head of the connections with Rome and the Mediterranean world. The Romans made it the capital of Palestine. Philip went there (Acts 8:40). Peter baptized Cornelius there (Acts 10) and he returned after his miraculous liberation (Acts 12:19). Paul often went there where he spent over two years in custody while waiting to appear before the emperor’s tribunal (Acts 23-26).

**Caesarea Philippi** Philip, the son of Herod the Great, gave this name to the city of

Paneas (*city of the god Pan*) situated in the far north of Palestine and Philip made it his capital. Jesus took refuge in that province when he was no longer safe in Galilee that was under Herod Antipas: Mt 16:13.

**Cain and Abel** See Gen 4 and notes.

**Caiaphas** Lk 3:2; Mt 26:3; Jn 11:49.

**Caleb** Num 13:6; Jos 14:6.

**Calendar** Ancient Israel had a cycle of 12 lunar months of 29 or 30 days to which, from time to time, they added another month to make up for the delay vis-à-vis the solar year of 365 days 1/4. The year, then, started in autumn, at the end of the harvest, and the months had names of agricultural origin. From the Babylonian Exile, the Babylonian calendar, that begun in spring, was adopted; the months changed names and were known as first, second, third month, etc. Later on, the names of the Babylonian calendar were introduced: thus, the month of *abib* (ear of wheat: Ex 13:4) became *Nisan*. The civil year went back to the old system and Rosh Hashanah, the new year, was celebrated in September. However, the start of the religious year remained in the spring.

**Cana** A village of Galilee, 14 km north of Nazareth, on the ancient road from Nazareth to Capernaum. Two of Jesus’ miracles took place in Cana (Jn 2:1 and 4:46).

**Canaan, Canaanites** They were the early inhabitants of Palestine at the time when the Israelites entered the land. They were quite divided among themselves, a fact that facilitated the conquest. They already had more than a millennium of urban culture and the Israelites simply destroyed or copied many elements of their prosperity. The language of Canaan became Hebrew. Many religious customs were adopted from the Canaanites: feasts, sacred places but there was fierce opposition concerning faith in the one God, rejection of images and human sacrifices. The civilization of Canaan remained in Phoenicia, in the merchant cities of Tyre and Sidon. The word Canaanite refers sometimes to a Phoenician or a merchant (Mt 15:22;

Zep 1:11). Later on, Simon the Canaanite (Mk 3:19) is the equivalent of Simon the zealot.

**Canon** It is a rule or a straight tube. The Canon of the Scriptures is the rule of the official list of the books constituting the Bible.

**Capernaum** It may mean *beautiful village* or *village of rest*. Small town a few kilometers west of the Jordan, on the shore of Lake of Tiberias. A border town between the territories of Herod Antipas and those of his brother Philip, it had a custom-house: Mt 9:9. Part of its resources came from fishing. Archeologists uncovered the remnants of the town of Jesus' time. The first church was built on the foundations of a private home that must have been Peter's house where Jesus stayed for a while: Mk 1:21, 29, 33; 2-1.

**Carmel** Mount Carmel, celebrated in Song 7:6 and Is 35:2, is easy to find on a map. Its summits are crowned with pines, vineyards and olive trees grow on its slopes. It was one of the early habitat of homo sapiens around 10,000 years ago. Already a sacred mountain in ancient times with Canaanite altars. The Bible primarily recalls that the prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and the fire falling from the sky: 1 K 18.

**Catechesis** It refers both to a course of Christian formation and to the contents of this teaching. Catechesis had a very important place in the early Church along with liturgy and preaching. If, as it seems probable, the main source of our gospels was written before the year 36, this document was conceived as a rule of catechesis for which the apostles were directly responsible. The Gospel is not a later echo of oral catecheses that are necessarily distorted: it is an official testimony giving to catechesis a solid basis from the start.

**Catholic** A Greek adjective meaning universal. By asserting its universality, the Latin church quickly distinguished itself from churches that became separated and subdivided. It was not only one, but it was able to embrace all people and every human reality. This Catholicity is opposed

to the dream of a pyramidal church in which everything comes from above and such diverse personalities have to fit within frameworks foreseen for them. This Catholicity presupposes, at the same time, an understanding of the unifying role of Christ and of the diversity and tensions that are constantly renewed by the Spirit.

**Cephas** or **Kephas** This nickname means rock in Aramaic: Jn 1,42. The name is mentioned in 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9-14. **Peter** is at the center of the first part of Acts 1-15.

Simon, named Cephas, will become Simon Peter in the Greek and Latin churches: Mt 16:16.

**Chaldea** This was the name given to lower Mesopotamia. Several cities, like Ur, had flourished there. At the time of Kings, Babylon had become the center of the area. Chaldeans, see **Babylon**.

**Charisms** Spiritual gifts given by God to each person for the good of the whole Church. Acts and Paul's letters relate manifestations of the Spirit accompanying baptism (Acts 8:13), the laying of hands (Acts 19:6) and giving life to the Christian assemblies (1 Cor 14:26). The action, always unforeseeable, of those inspired could disturb the assemblies and Paul intervened to establish harmony. He always prioritized the apostolic ministries and love. See 1 Cor 12 and 14, and their respective notes.

**Cherubim** In the Middle East, sacred monsters guarding the areas of the gods. They appear in Ezekiel's vision (Ezk 10; 28:16). There were also cherubim covering the ark of covenant with their wings (Ex 25:18-22).

**Christ** See: **Messiah**.

**Christians** The name appears in Acts 11:26 and again in Acts 26:28 and 1 P 4:16.

**Church** see **Biblical Teaching 120-124**.

**Circumcision** It must have come to the Orient with the migration of Egyptian populations toward the valley of the Nile. Practiced in Egypt in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia, Israel considered circumcision as the sign of belonging to God. See Gen

17:9. When the Church began to admit non-Jewish people, the problem arose on whether or not to impose circumcision on them. Paul was especially opposed to it and the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) freed Christians coming from the Greek world from this imposition. The refusal to impose circumcision was very strongly motivated in Paul: it was the way of showing, even at the risk of scandal, what constituted the newness of the Christian faith (Gal 5:11).

**Cisjordan** Jordan, this side of the Jordan river. Seen from Jerusalem, it was the western part of the valley and, in a wider sense, Palestine. Seen from Persia or Mesopotamia, it was the land beyond the Jordan: Num 35:14; Ezra 7:25.

**Cleophas (or Clopas)** Lk 24:18; Jn 19:25.

**Commandments** See **Law** and **Decalogue**.

**Communion** It is the fraternal union among Christians and in Christ. It is communion with his sufferings (Phil 3:10), communion in the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13) and communion in the Eucharist: 1 Cor 10:16.

**Consecration** It is the rite by which a person or thing is, henceforth, made to belong to God. The Temple is consecrated: 1 K 8; priests and kings: Lev 8:1; Num 35:22; 2 K 9. The Messiah is the one who has been consecrated: Is 11:1. Christians consecrated to God: see **saints**.

**Conversion** In Hebrew, the verb *to come back, to turn around* became: to be converted. In Greek, it is the expression *to change one's way of thinking*. In the O.T., the prophets were asking for a return to the covenant at the heart of Deuteronomy: Dt 32 and 1 K 8:47. See Is 6 where *conversion* is related to the *remnant*. The return of the exiles to their land would go hand in hand with the return of the spirit to God: see Biblical Teaching 43. *Conversion of the heart*: Ezk 36: 22 and gift of the Spirit: 37:34. God converted his people: 1 K 18:37. In the New Testament, John the Baptist preached baptism and a change of ways: Mt 3:1. Jesus started the same way: see note in Mk 1:14. However, he would soon insist on hearts open to mercy: Mt. 9:13. *Conversion and bap-*

*tism*: Acts 2:38; 26:20. Conversion always rejected: Is 6:10; Jn 12:40; Acts 28:26. *Change your ways or you will perish*: Lk 13:5.

**Cornelius** The Roman officer baptized by Peter: Acts 10.

**Covenant** This very word summarizes the whole faith of Israel as well as the Christian faith. A first covenant was given to humankind through Noah: Gen 9. The covenant was later given to Abraham (see commentary on Gn 15:1), then to Israel through the mediation of Moses (see commentary on Ex 19 and 24). Deuteronomy refers to a confirmation of this covenant in the land of Moab: Dt 28-60. The covenant was renewed by Joshua: Jos 8 and 24 and Josiah: 2 K 23. An eternal covenant was promised by Isaiah and Jeremiah: Is 55:3; Jer 32:40. Jeremiah showed that it would be a totally new covenant: Jer 31:31).

The **New Covenant** that God promised was celebrated by Jesus on the eve of his death (see commentary on Mk 14:12). The Letter to the Hebrews compares it to the first covenant with Israel (called old in 2 Cor 3:14): see Heb 7-10. Only part of Israel entered into this covenant that the Messiah was to bring to them but, in their place, converts from other nations had entered into it: Acts 15:16, Rom 11. In Greek, the same word meant covenant and testament: see Gal 3:15 and Heb 9:16. The New Testament is the book of the new covenant.

**Cross** A terrible torture that probably came from Persians. Romans used it only for slaves and foreign rebels. The fact that, in a thousand ways, the cross is connected with Christian faith in every country, manifests what pertains to biblical revelation. The people of God proclaimed in the world something that religions could not attain, namely, a knowledge that is the paradoxical wisdom of God-Love, the passing from the Infinite to zero. Without this step, there would be no real salvation for human beings. See 1 Cor 1:25.

**Cyrus** King of Persia. In 539, he defeated the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus. The



following year, he authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem. His role as liberator of Israel merited him to be presented as a Messiah in the text of Isaiah: Is 45:1.

**Dan** Situated to the far north of Palestine (see **Beersheba**). Jdg 17 and 18 present an account of its origin. After the schism, king Jeroboam established one of the sanctuaries of the kingdom in this sacred place of the Canaanites: 1 K 12:26.

**Daniel** Legendary sage (Ezk 14:14) to whom the book of Daniel is attributed.

**David** The true founder of the kingdom of Israel and of the dynasty that reigned in Jerusalem for four centuries: 1 S 16-30, 2 S (whole book), 1 K 1 and 2. Later, he was considered as the organizer of the cult and the author of the Psalms: 1 Chr 16-29. For the N.T., David, the founder of the Messianic dynasty, was one of the pre-figures of the Messiah: Mt 12:23; 22:43; Acts 2:25; 13:36; Rev 22:16.

**Deaconesses** The term is only found in Rom 16:1. See also Phil 4:2.

**Deacons** See Acts 6 and note. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul presents deacons as the assistants of the "episkopos" (or elders, responsible for the local church). The letter to Timothy indicates the prerequisites for this ministry (1 Tim 3:8-12).  
The Abode of the **Dead**: see **Sheol**.

The **Dead Sea** A natural curiosity, this salt lake of 75 km long by 15 km wide is 400 meters below sea level. In the O.T., sometimes it is called the Salt Sea (Gen 14:3), the Sea of the Arabah (Dt 3:17), the Eastern Sea (Jl 2:20) or later, Lake Asphaltibis, due to the large amount of asphalt in its waters.

**Death** See Biblical Teachings **88, 90-94** and also **Resurrection 140-142**.

**Deborah** Rebekah's nurse: Gen 35:8. The prophetess who prepared Barak's victory was another Deborah: Jdg 4:5.

**Decalogue** See Ex 20:22 and note, and Dt 5. Also see Ex 34:1.

**Demons** See **Devil**.

**Desert** In the Bible, it refers either to the desert where nothing grows or to shepherds' arid lands that are only green in the spring.

**Deuterocanonical books** See the page following the book of Esther.

**Deuteronomic** This term refers to the literature and history written according to the spirit of the prophets. Deuteronomy may have been its introduction. Written in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, this history includes Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. In other words, it goes from the conquest of the Promised Land to the loss of that land.

**Devil** Some Old Testament passages mention an adversary of God and of Israel, *Satan* in Hebrew, *Diabolos* in Greek, that is to say, the one who throws a monkey wrench in the works, or the accuser: 1 S 29:4; Job 1. In the last centuries before Christ, popular belief centered on *demons*, strange and bad spirits. The Greek word "*daimon*" can refer to a genial spirit, a deranged spirit (Jn 10:20), an evil spirit. Jesus drove out demons as Jewish exorcists were already doing (Lk 11:10, Acts 19:13) and he invited his disciples to share in his victory over impure spirits (Lk 9:1; 10:17). Jesus insinuated that the term demons referred to very different things (Mk 9:29) but he gave much more importance to the Devil, the adversary of God and of salvation (Mk 3:27; Lk 10:18). The Gospel of John, in particular, shows the spiritual and cosmic dimension of redemption: taking away the control of an alienated world from the devil (Jn 12:31; 14:30).

**Diaspora** or **Dispersion** This word indicated the collectivity of the Jewish people scattered throughout neighboring countries and especially in the Roman empire at the time of the beginning of the Christian era. They were more numerous than the Jews of Palestine. They were all convinced that, at the end of time, the whole of Israel would come together (Jn 7:35). Fruitless in Palestine after a few years, the Christian apostolate addressed the communities of the Diaspora: most of Paul's work took place among them. It was through the Jews of the Diaspora that he reached non-Jews. The word appeared in 1 P 1:1.

**Disciple** A term rarely used in the O.T. (Is 8:16; 50:4). A disciple is ordinarily someone who clings to a master and allows this master to form him (Pro 2:1; 8:32). Disciples appeared at the time of rabbis. But it was Jesus who gave the strongest meaning to this term because he taught with the authority of God: Mt 10:37; Mk 10:21. In the Gospel, there is frequent confusion between the words disciple and apostle (Mt 10:1), but not in Luke. The apostles (the Twelve of Jesus) were elected by him and remained with him: the disciples formed a fluctuating group of persons attached to him but not living in community with him. Among them, there were quite a few women (Lk 8:2). In Acts, the disciples are the Christians (Acts 21:16).

**Divorce** Concessions of the Law: Dt 24:1. The words of Jesus: Mt 5:31; 19:4. Paul's instructions: 1 Cor 7.

**Doctrine** Wherever there is a master, there is a doctrine. In the Old Testament, the term referred especially to the education of children and youth, presupposing the use of punishment. This is why doctrine should often be translated as discipline, reprimand (Pro 3:1; 4:13; 5:12).

**Earthly Paradise** See Gen 2 and 3 and the notes.

**Ecumenism** It comes from the Greek *oikoumenè*, inhabited (land). The meaning of the term was more geographical than human since the word humanity did not exist yet.

**Edomites** These nomads established south east of the Dead Sea settled down at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and they founded a kingdom that was often in conflict with Israel. The conflicts and massacres related in the Bible did not prevent the Israelites from acknowledging that they shared the same origin: they expressed it by pointing to Esau, a brother of Jacob, as their father: Gen 26:21.

**Egypt** The country developed around the Nile valley. Agriculture and culture followed the rhythm of the Nile's yearly floods watering the surrounding desert. The ancient empire began over 35 centuries before Christ. The pyramids and

writing go back to that time. Absolute authority of the Pharaoh over the land except for what belonged to the priests. All the Old Testament was lived on a land that was coveted both by Egypt and the leaders of Mesopotamia. Both cultures confronted or completed each other in Israel.

**Ekron** Formed part of the Philistine federation dominating the fertile coastlands and in constant conflict with the Israelites of the mountainous region: Jos 13:3. It was the center for making olive oil. It was destroyed in 701 B.C. by the Assyrians of Sennacherib: Is 36.

**El** It means God in Hebrew (Gen 33:20). El was the first god, the god of heaven. The Bible uses the plural *elohim*, a more solemn form, to designate God.

**Elamites** People west of Lower Mesopotamia. In part, the Samaritans were formed of Elamites deported by the Assyrians: Ezra 4:9.

**Elders** They were the chiefs of nomadic clans at the beginning of the biblical history: later on, after the Israelites settled down, this term referred to the important landowners who became part of the Sanhedrin after returning from the Exile. When the synagogues started to be organized shortly before the time of Jesus, they were directed by a council of elders, and this was the way of government adopted by the first churches (Acts 11:30). The elders were men chosen for their maturity and their sense of responsibility (Acts 14:23); elected by the community and accepted by the hierarchy, they received the imposition of hands from the apostles in a direct or indirect way (1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5). They were entrusted with the task of guiding the community, giving them the word and presiding the Eucharist (Acts 20:17). In Greek, the word elder is *presbyteros*, from which the term "priest" comes, but it is clear that in our Church, the word no longer has the same meaning.

**Eleazar** Son and successor of Aaron: Num 3:4; Jos 14:1.

**Elijah** The great prophet of Israel: 1 K 17; 19:21; 21:17; 2 K 1:3. Elijah was taken

- up to heaven: 2 K 2:1; Sir 48:9; Mal 3:23. In the whole biblical tradition, Elijah represented the very essence of a prophet: Mt 11:14; 17:1-13.
- Elisha** The prophet, successor of Elijah, man of miracles: 1 K 19:16; 2 K 2:5; 9:1; Lk 4:27.
- Elizabeth** Mary's cousin and the mother of John the Baptist: Lk 1:5; 1:40-45.
- Elohim** See **El**. This Hebrew term is almost always used to refer to God. Rarely used to refer to foreign gods, sometimes it designates eminent people: Jn 10:34.
- El Shaddai** It seems that, at first, this Assyrian term referred to the *god of the steppe* (Gen 17:1; Ruth 1:20; Is 13:6). The use of this title had an ancient ring to it. Later on, it was used mostly in Job with the meaning Almighty.
- Emmanuel (Immanuel)** *God-with-us* is the name given to the infant announced as a sign of God by the prophet Isaiah (Is 7:14); Matthew applied this text to Jesus and from then on, in Christian tradition, Emmanuel was the name of the Savior.
- Emmaus** In a village called Amaus, 60 km northwest of Jerusalem, Judas Maccabeus won one of his victories (1 Mac 4). Later, enemies built a fortress there (1 Mac 9:50). We do not know if it was the same as the Emmaus of Lk 24. According to most manuscripts, Emmaus is 20 km from Jerusalem although a few texts indicate the same distance of 60 km.
- En-gedi** *Source of the kid*. It is about 200 meters above the Dead Sea. Water gushes forth and cascades down through vegetation and rocky land, making this place into a paradise: Song 1:14; Ezk 47:10; Sir 24:14. See 2 S 24:1.
- Enoch** A great ancestor linked to different traditions: Gen 4:17 and 5:18. He became famous in the days of apocalyptic literature Jdt 14.
- Ephesus** Capital of the Roman province of Asia, this city was located on the west coast of today's Turkey. There, Paul founded a Christian community around 55.
- Ephod** It is hard to know whether it was an article of clothing or a piece of furniture containing the sacred sticks called *Urim and Thummim* (Ezra 2:63) that were used to determine the will of God: Ex 28:6; 1 S 2:18; 14:18.
- Epicureans** Philosophers and disciples of Epicurus (Acts 17:18). This Greek philosopher sought to attain lasting pleasures rather passing ones and to control the impressions and desires of daily life.
- Episkopos** A Greek term meaning overseer. At the time of the apostles, it meant the person responsible for one or several communities of a city (hence the term bishop). See note in Acts 20:18 and Phil 1:1.
- Eschatology** A Greek term meaning last. It can refer to a person's destiny after this life, to a new world at the end of time or, more often, to the way we experience divine life here and now. See notes in Mk 13:1 and the discourses in the Gospel of John.
- Essenes** Like the Pharisees, they came from the movement of the Hasideans or Hasidim who renovated the spirit of faith a century and a half before. Like the Pharisees, they were committed to the Law and more than the Pharisees, they were enemies of the Sadducees. They were fatalists and did not believe in political action. They thought that God would intervene in order to eliminate all the "sons of darkness". They gathered in communities among which one, at least, called *Qumran*, lived in a monastic way in the desert on the shores of the Dead Sea.
- Esther** Heroine of the book of Esther that is related to the Jewish feast of Purim.
- Eternity** It is God the Father who has no beginning or end. Everything comes from God and returns to God (Rom 11:36). One of the aspects of a person develops in time, the other is in God and in eternity. God, love and eternity, endures: *He Is*. Eternity does not come after time. It is not permanence but instead, it is pure creativity. All the expressions we read in Ps 102:24-27 and in 2 P 3:8 should be seen as mere human stuttering.
- Eucharist** See Biblical teaching **188**. See Lk 22:19; Jn 6:48; 1 Cor 11:17; Heb 8:1.

**Evangelist** It was one of the ministries of the early Church: see Acts 21:8; 2 Cor 8:18; 2 Tim 4:5. It is the title traditionally reserved for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the authors of the four gospels.

**Excommunication** It refers to exclusion from the community, the Church. See Rom 9:3; 1 Cor 5:3; 16:22; Gal 1:8; 1 Tim 1:20. See **anathema**.

**Exegesis** This word first meant *to tell*, then *to explain*. Exegesis is the art of shedding light on a text by way of literary, historical techniques and comparison with texts from another source. The techniques are numerous and they have clarified many aspects of biblical history. However, since these texts come from the faith and experience of a people different from others, exegesis never reveals the meaning of the texts to those who do not share the faith and experience of the people of God. Jesus is God's exegete: Jn 1:8.

**Exile** Period of the history of Israel that went from the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 to the time when the Israelites first returned in 538. For Israel, this trial meant a time of maturation, deepening and purification of their faith. See *Bibl. Teach.* **64** and **65**.

**Exorcism** The action of driving out demons from the possessed. See **devil**.

**Expiation** It usually means appeasing God by sacrificing a victim: Lev 1:4; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5; 1 Jn 2:2; Mt 20:28; Rom 5:20; 1 Tim 2:3 and 1 Jn 2:12. Jesus atoned for our sins.

**Faith** In Hebrew, this word has the same root as the verb *to lean on* and *firm*. In Greek, the word that served to express faith meant both the trust one could have in a debtor and the pledge engaged. Heb 11:1 gives us a dynamic definition of faith as holding on to what we hope for.

**Fast** It was part of the ritual of penance of certain Jewish feasts (Lev 16:29-31). It was practiced privately on certain occasions (Ps 35:13). Jesus fasted before the beginning of his mission (Mt 4:2). The disciples of John the Baptist fasted, as well as the Pharisees (Mt 9:14; Lk 18:12). In the primitive Church, fasting accom-

panied prayers at the time of important decisions (Acts 13:3; 14:23).

**Feast of Tents (Booths or Tabernacles)** See **Jewish Feasts**. For a week, people were living in tents made of branches in courtyards or on balconies in remembrance of their stay in the desert.

**Firstborn** As every first fruit, the firstborn son belongs to God (Num 8:17). On the 40<sup>th</sup> day, he was to be presented to God (Lk 2:22). But the Levites were considered to replace firstborn in the service of God. Nevertheless, this sacrifice of the firstborn was a common practice among the Canaanites, neighbors of Israel and for centuries, the prophets had fought against such a practice (Ex 13:13; Jer 19:1-9). One of the purposes of the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac was to introduce the prohibition of the Bible in this matter (Gen 22). In the N.T., the word only appears to refer to Jesus as the firstborn of God and the firstborn for every creature: see note in Col 1:15.

**Flavius Josephus** He was born around 37 A.D. He participated in the war against the Romans but then, he turned back and worked with them. Welcomed in Rome after the fall of Jerusalem, he wrote the history of the Jews from the four centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.

**Fraternal Correction** See Mt 18:15, James 5:19.

**Freedom** A person's fundamental dimension. See notes on Gen 1:1; 2:7; 3:1; Sir 17. Freedom to choose life or death: Dt 30:15. Freedom to surrender to God: Is 50:4; Jer 1:4; 15:10; 20:7; Ps 40; Mk 14:36; Jn 4:32; 1 Cor 9:16; Phil 2:6.

**Fundamentalism** A trend that appeared in the United States around 1910. It presented the virginal birth of Jesus, his physical and bodily resurrection and his second coming as a judge, understood in a literal sense, as the foundations of the Christian faith. Fundamentalists read the text passively as they understand it in their own culture without wondering what the sacred author understood by it or what was meant.

**Galilee** The northern part of Palestine. Up-

per Galilee (Mount Merom, 1,208 meters) is a rugged and closed area. On the other hand, the open valleys of Lower Galilee welcomed diverse people. Galilee means *the district* (of non-Jews): Is 8:23; Mt 2:22 and 4:4. We find this name after the Exile, especially in 1 Mac. Jews lived there along with other people. Jesus is *the Galilean*: Lk 22:59. When the kingdom of Israel disappeared, Galilee became first an Assyrian, then a Persian province. A century before Christ, Hasmoneans from Jerusalem took it back. At the time of Jesus, Herod Antipas ruled over it (Lk 3:1).

**Gamaliel** A famous master at the time of Jesus. Paul owed him a great deal: Acts 5:34; 22:3.

**Gehenna** A valley surrounding Jerusalem to the southwest. It was called the Hinnom Valley (*Ben-Hinnom* in Hebrew). In this place with many tombs, many Israelites immolated their sons in fire at the time of Jeremiah (Jer 7:31). Many pages from Jeremiah and other prophets condemned these practices (Jer 19:1-9). In the gospels, Gehenna is the image of hell (Mk 9:43).

**Genealogy** A list of ancestors, or better still, the origins of people and institutions. See Gen 5:1; Mt 1:1.

**Gerasa** The possessed man mentioned in Mk 5:1 (Lk 8:26) was from the Decapolis (Mk 5:20). Some manuscripts speak of the country of the Gerasenes, others of the Gadarenes. Gadara and Gerasa were in this region but they were not near the lake.

**Gerizim** This mount (880 meters) and its twin Mt. Ebal (940 meters) form both sides of the mountain pass where the city of Shechem was situated. It was a sacred mountain for thousands of years. There, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, the Samaritans built a temple to compete with the Jerusalem temple. John Hyrcanus had razed everything during the wars to reconquer and expand before the arrival of the Romans.

**Gethsemane** The olive press. It is the name of a garden that Jesus knew on the Mount

of Olives, east of Jerusalem. It is the place where Jesus taught the Our Father and where his agony occurred (Mt 26:26).

**Gezer** An ancient Canaanite fortress overlooking the coastal plain 30 km west of Jerusalem and restored by Solomon (1 K 9:16). It is mentioned again at the time of the Maccabees, under the name of Gazara (1 Mac 13:53).

**Gibeon** A very old Canaanite city whose sacred place was perhaps mentioned in 1 S 14:35 and 2 S 20:8. The miracle of Joshua stopping the sun took place in that city (Jos 10:13). It became one of the sanctuaries of Israel: 1 K 3:4.

**Gideon** One of the most famous Judges: Jdg 6-8.

**Gnosis** It means knowledge. Gnosis or Gnosticism refers to a religious current that came from the Greek world of the east at the end of the first century A.D. John's first letter had it in mind without naming it. Gnosticism spoke of a good and a bad God and it opposed light and darkness. The spirit is good and matter is bad. Souls had to get rid of matter to return to light. This Gnosticism came from ancient religious traditions that would reappear in the Manicheans and the Catharists of the Middle ages—and even in today's New Age. A Gnostic library of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries has been found in Nag'-Hammadi.

**Goliath** The Philistine giant (2 S 21:19) whom the legend of David later made its own: 1 S 17:4 and 23.

**Gospel** It is the Good News. See Rom 1:1 and 1:17. It is not primarily a doctrine but rather the proclamation of a new time and of the manifestation of God in the person of his Son. The resurrection of Jesus is at the center of the message: 1 Cor 15:1. The four Gospels: see the Introduction to the N.T. Infancy gospels: two accounts of the infancy of Jesus in Mt 1-2 and Lk 1-2. Apocryphal gospels: later gospels that are not recognized by the Church as the authentic tradition of the apostles.

**Grace** This word, originally meaning beauty (Ps 45:3) or goodness (Ex 12:36), quickly changed to signify favor. In the N.T., the

word became pregnant with religious meaning. Thus, grace became the plan of salvation born of God's goodness (Lk 4:22; Acts 14:3; Rom 5:21). Grace can refer to the state of the creature reconciled with God (Rom 5:2). It also means the spiritual gifts of God (2 Cor 12:9; Gal 2:9) as well as the works blessed by God (2 Cor 8:19).

**Hades** In the Greek Bible, it is the equivalent of **Sheol** in Hebrew. It is the underground abode of the dead: Lk 10:5; 16:23. In the Bible, it is also the place of evil powers at the origin of attacks against God's work: Mt 16:18; Rev 6:8.

**Hagar** An Egyptian, Abraham's wife: Gen 16:1; 21:9; Gal 4:22-23.

**Haman** (part of the Amaleks). He was the "enemy" in the book of Esther.

**Hannah** Mother of Samuel: 1 S 1:2. However, men also have a similar name (Annas): Lk 3:2; Acts 4:6.

**Hasideans or Hasidim** The *pious ones* (1 Mac 2:42; 7:13; 2 Mac 14:6). Promoters of the renewal of faith in the second century B.C. before the Syrian persecutions. They fought against the effects of pagan Hellenism, rediscovered the prophets and the hope of the promise. They initiated the apocalyptic current and affirmed individual resurrection. The Pharisees and the Essenes came from this movement. Among other things, we owe the book of Daniel to them.

**Hasmoneans** It was the name given to the sovereigns, descendants from the family of the Maccabees, who reigned in Palestine during the 150 years before Christ.

**Hazor** About 15 km north of the Lake of Tiberias, it was at the intersection of the road of tin (brought from the Caucasus and from today's Afghanistan) and the road of copper that came from Cyprus and the islands of the Aegean Sea. Both metals were needed to produce bronze and they made Hazor prosperous. As archeology proved, Joshua took the city and burned it (Jos 11:13). Solomon made Hazor into one of the three major fortresses protecting his kingdom (1 R 9:15).

**Healings** See notes in Mt 9:35; Mk 5:33;

16:17; Lk 10:8. Healings are not always presented as miracles: see the distinction in 1 Cor 12:9. Gifts of healing, healing worked through the sacrament of the anointing of the sick (James 5:14) and miraculous healings, signs of the power of God acting through faith, have always abounded in the Church.

**Heart** See Biblical Teaching **83**. One should never forget that, for the Hebrews, the heart did not mean affectivity (it is *the soul* attached to people and things) but rather, interiority. The promise of a new heart (Ezk 36) and the texts regarding the Spirit in our hearts (Rom 8:27) do not refer to generosity but instead, to interiority.

**Heaven** Hebraic culture opposed heaven and earth. *The heavens*, a vault extended over the earth (Gen 1:1; Is 51:16; Jer 10:12; Zec 12:1; Ps 136:6), represented the dwelling place of God, the *highest heavens* (Dt 10:14; 1 K 8:27). Yahweh became *the God of Heaven* at the time of the Persians (Ezra 5:11; Ne 1:4). Later on, the name of God was replaced by *the Heaven*: see notes on Mt 5:1 and 6:9. In the N.T., *in heaven* meant near God or in eternity: Lk 12:33; Eph 1:1.

**Hebrew** Until the founding of the monarchy, in the eyes of people with more culture, this word meant foreign nomads whose social status was considered as inferior (Ex 1:19; 1 S 4:9). Much later, at the time of the Greeks, this word applied to all that dealt with the Jewish language and culture as opposed to the Greek language and culture. The Jews from Palestinian origin were called Hebrews (Acts 6:1; 2 Cor 11:22).

**Hebron** A very ancient city (Num 13:22), about 20 km south of Jerusalem, a capital of Judah called then Kiriath-arba (*city of the four clans*): Gen 35:27. The sacred place of Mamre that Abraham and Jacob visited was there (Gen 13:18; 23:2; 37:14). It was there that God visited Abraham who bought the cave where Sarah and, later on, the patriarchs would be buried. Joshua conquered Hebron and gave it to Caleb (Jos 10:36 and 14:13).

David was made king of the tribe of Judah in Hebron (2 S 2:1).

**Heliopolis** See Is 19:6.

**Hell** See Biblical Teaching 258 and commentary on Mt 13:47 and 25:31.

**Hellenism** It is the Greek culture transplanted to the Middle East after Alexander's conquests: see Introductions to Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and Sirach. The Hellenism imposed by Syrian kings became persecuting: see 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mac. It remained present in Palestine along with Hebraic culture. The *Hellenists* of the N.T. were Jewish or Christian believers of Greek culture and language, present in Palestine (Acts 6:1; 9:29).

**Heresy** In Greek, it is the same word as **sect**. For Christians, heretics are those who choose what they accept to believe from the traditional faith of the Church (Tit 3:10). They destroy faith (2 P 2:1) and they divide the Church.

**Hermeneutics** Theories and methodology regarding the interpretation of juridical, philosophical or religious texts. It guides the use of methods to help with the exegesis (explanation) of a text.

**Herod** Several kings reigned under this name. Herod the Great ruled Palestine from 37 to 4 B.C. The massacre of the Holy Innocents was attributed to him (Mt 2:7). Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, inherited part of his kingdom: Galilee and Perea. He ruled from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. Jesus was brought before him (Lk 23:8-12). Herod Philip II, another son of Herod the Great is called Philip in Lk 3:1. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great ruled from 39 to 44 A.D.: see Acts 12:1-19. Herod Agrippa II ruled outside Palestine from 48 to 70 and he was the one Paul met at Caesarea (Acts 25 and 26). There is also Herod Philip I, son of Herod the Great. His wife Herodias left him for his half-brother Herod Antipas; she asked the latter for the head of John the Baptist (Mk 6:17-28).

**Hezekiah** A reformer king whose memory is linked to Isaiah: 2 K 18-20.

**Hierarchy** *Sacred principle*. In Greek, it is the order of sacred power. At first, it des-

igned a classification of angels according to the various names that the Bible gave to celestial powers. Later, a similar order was sought on earth and comparable classifications of the different orders and ministries in the Church were established.

**High Place** As in many other religions, the Canaanites often built their places of worship on hilltops: 1 K 3:2; 12:31. With the Israelite domination, those sanctuaries became dedicated to the worship of Yahweh. However, old idolatrous practices remained and brought on them the condemnation of the prophets (2 K 12:4; Jer 19:5; Hos 11:18).

**High Priest** From the time of Solomon's kingdom, this term designated the chief of the priests and the one responsible for the service of the temple. He was considered as Aaron's successor (Lev 8-10). After returning from the Exile, the High Priest became the leader of the Jewish community: 1 Mac 10:15. At the time of Jesus, he presided over the Sanhedrin or Great Council. The Gospels speak also of the "High Priests," the main leaders of the service of the temple.

**Hittites** People of Anatolia (in today's Turkey) who were powerful in several periods of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, they took control of Syria and Palestine from Egypt but they soon fell before the invasion of the "People of the Sea" who included the Philistines of Palestine. They formed the aristocracy of the people of Canaan (Ezk 16:3).

**Holocaust** See Lev 1 and note.

**Holy Place** and **Holy of Holies** The Holy Place was the first hall of the temple of Jerusalem; inside were the altar of incense, the table of the bread of presence and the chandelier of 7 branches (Heb 9). A veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the most sacred hall of the temple, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. After being taken by the Babylonians, the Holy of Holies remained empty.

**Hyksos** Asian nomads who dominated Egypt from 1850 to 1500 B.C. See Introduction to Exodus.

**Hymn** A religious poem meant to be sung with accompaniment.

**Hypocrisy** See commentary on Mt 6:1.

**Icon** The Greek term *eikon* (image) has the same meaning as *eidolon* (idol). However, these two terms went in different directions. An idol is a false deity whereas an Oriental icon is an image that is more theological than realistic. Oriental icons are images without depth and with an inverted perspective. They are like an open window on eternity. They show realities of which earthly events are only an image. Their colors and shapes have symbolic meanings.

**Idol, Idolatry** See commentaries on Ex 20:4.

**Incarnation** This word means to be made flesh and it reminds us of Jn 1:14. This mystery characterizes Christian faith and it continues to frighten many Christians because it teaches that the Son, God from God, one of the eternal faces of God-Love, was made flesh. See notes in Jn 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:6. Jesus is this Son or Word of God.

**Inspiration** This word means that the biblical texts are both the work of a human author and of the Spirit of God. See 1 P 3:16.

**Isaac** The traditions regarding this ancestor are found in Gen 17-27. In tradition, he remained the son of the promise: Gen 17:19; Rom 9:7; Heb 11:18.

**The Islands** This term is used in the O.T. to refer to the islands and peninsulas (Greece, Italy, Spain) in the Mediterranean Sea. It refers to the countries that would be called the Greek world (Is 11:11; 40:15; 51:5).

**Israel** It was the name of the ancestor to whom several tribes, who formed the people of Israel, were linked. He was later identified with **Jacob**, another ancestor (Gen 32:29). At the time of division of the kingdom of David and Solomon, the northern tribes kept the name of Israel while the southern kingdom became the kingdom of Judah. After the destruction of the northern kingdom, the southern people, the Judeans, became the only

remnant of ancient Israel and they took back the name.

**Jacob** He was one of the great ancestors of the tribes. He was presented as a son of Isaac (Gen 25:21) and the story of his life is related in Gen 25:35.

**Jairus** Jesus raised his daughter from the dead: Mk 5:22.

**James** The N.T. refers to James as the son of Zebedee and brother of John, commonly called James the Elder (Mt 4:21). See Acts 1:13; 12:2.

There is also **James**, son of Cleophas and Mary, a relative of Mary (Mk 6:3 and John 19:25). This James, **brother of the Lord**, became the leader of the Palestine church: Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9-12; James 1:1; Jd 1:1. He is undoubtedly different from James, son of Alpheus (Mt 10:3; Acts 1:13).

**Jehu** King of Israel who reestablished Yahwism: 2 K 9 and 10.

**Jericho** *City of the moon*, it was also called the city of palm trees, a paradise in the Jordan Valley. The discovered sanctuary tower was one of the most ancient monuments in the world: 80 centuries B.C.! When Joshua arrived, all that was left of its walls was in ruins. The account of the procession that made the walls of the city fall down probably came from a yearly liturgy celebrating the miraculous crossing of the Jordan (Jos 3). See Joshua's curse in 6:26 and the way it was fulfilled in 1 K 16:34. At the time of Jesus, Jericho was Herod's winter residence. The two episodes of Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus occurred in Jericho (Lk 19:1 and 18:35).

**Jeroboam** The first king of the northern tribes at the time of the great separation or Schism: 1 K 11-14. Jeroboam II would be the last great king of Israel: 2 K 14:23.

**Jerusalem** According to Jdg 19:10, this city was called *Jebus* before the Israelite conquest. In fact, the name is very old. It may mean: *the city or foundation of peace* or more likely *foundation of Salem* (a divinity). Its conquest by David marked a decisive step in the history of Israel and of biblical revelation: see commentary on 2 S 5:1. Its miraculous liberation at the time



- of Hezekiah and Isaiah was equally important: Is 37:21; Ps 46 and 48. The image of Jerusalem, a city of peace, at times enslaved and at times free but just as disappointing, maintains alive the dream of the heavenly city promised by God (Is chapters 60-62). Its most beautiful description is found at the end of Revelation (chapter 21).
- Jesse** David's father: 1 S 17:12; Is 11:1; Rom 15:12.
- Jethro** Priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law: Ex 3:1; 4:18. He was also called Reuel: Ex 2:18.
- Jew** It is the English translation of the word Judean. See **Judah**.
- Jewish Feasts** See Dt 16:1-15. **Passover**, linked to the feast of unleavened bread (commentary on Ex 12:15), was at the beginning of the harvest. The **Feast of Weeks**—Pentecost—referred to the thanksgiving at the end of the barley harvest. The **Feast of the New Year** took place in the fall (Lev 23:24), according to the old calendar. The **Feast of Tents** and the great day of **Atonement** (Lev 16) took place at the same time. Later on, the feast of the **Dedication** of the Temple was added (1 Mac 4:36-59), as well as the feast of **Purim** (Es 9:17). Almost all these feasts had an agricultural origin but they were given a religious meaning. Passover: departure from Egypt; Pentecost: gift of the Law; Feast of Tents: stay in Egypt: These feasts became a living catechism.
- Jezebel** King Akab's wife: 1 K 16-21; 2 K 9. Image of corrupting and persecuting power: Rev 2:20.
- Joanna** One of the women who followed Jesus: Lk 8:3; 24:10.
- John** The brother of James and the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles: Mk 1:16; Lk 8:51; 9:28; 22:8; Jn 13:23; 18:15; 19:26; 20:2; 21. According to a commonly shared opinion, he is the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel, the book of Revelation and the 3 letters bearing his name. However, see the Introduction to John's Gospel.
- John** (the evangelist?) Acts 1:13; 3:1-4; 3:11; 4:13-19; 8:14; Gal 2:9; Rev 1:1; 22:8.
- John Mark** See **Mark**.
- John the Baptist** He was the last and the greatest of all the prophets: Lk 1. He preached and baptized in the desert: 3:1-18; Jn 1:19-28; Lk 7:18-35; Jn 3:22-36; 10:41; Mt 17:21. With him, the O.T. came to an end. Like Moses, he led the people of God to the edge of the Promised Land, but he did not enter it because his mission stopped there (Jn 3:30). Jesus underlined John's greatness (Mt 11:11-14).
- Jonathan** Son of Saul and friend of David whom he accompanied in his trials: 1 S 14-20. See 2 S 1.
- Jordan** Its source is found at the foot of Mount Hermon in the north of Palestine and it runs southward disappearing in the waters of the Dead Sea. In the O.T., it represented the spiritual frontier of the promised land. The miraculous crossing of the Jordan, following the holy Ark, would remind Israel that the land was not conquered but given by God (Jos 3 to 5). In the N.T., the baptism of Jesus in the waters of the Jordan marked the beginning of his evangelical preaching (Acts 1:21-22).
- Joseph** The story of **Joseph, Jacob's son**, sold by his brothers takes up the last third of Genesis: 37-50. Joseph is a prototype of the future Savior.
- Joseph** The adoptive father of Jesus: Mt 1-2; Lk 1-2; 3:23; 4:22; Jn 6:42.
- Joseph** of Arimathea: Mt 27:57; Jn 19:38.
- Joshua** Aside from the book of Joshua, see Ex 17:9; Num 11:28; Dt 31:3; 34:9.
- Joshua** Jozadak's son. A priest who played an important role in the rebuilding of the temple: Ezra 5; Hg 1:1; Zec 3.
- Josiah** The holy and reformer king: 2 K 21:24; and chapters 22-23.
- Jubilee** See Lev 25 and note.
- Judah** It is the name of one of the twelve sons of Jacob, the one who was considered as the father of the tribe of Judah: Gen 29:35; 35:23; 49:8.
- Judah-Judea** This term refers to one of the tribes of Israel (Num 10:14) and to the kingdom that remained with David's dynasty after the Schism of 931 B.C. It is the southern part of a mountainous range

whose northern part is Samaria. It includes three very different regions:

1. The Plain of Shephelah to the west.

2. In the center, the Judean Mountains (over 1,000 meters) extend (40 km) from Bethlehem to Beersheba. Jerusalem is north, close to the border that separated the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

3. The eastern part was called the wilderness of Judah. It slopes from Jerusalem to the Jordan and the Dead Sea with a 1,400 meter incline. It was the domain of shepherds.

The clans that were to form the tribe of Judah united under David's authority. It was then that a son of Jacob was attributed to them as their ancestor (Gen 29:35). Due to God's choice of David and Jerusalem (1 K 11:13), this southern area of Palestine became the heart of Israel. Its privileged vocation was inscribed in Jacob's blessings: Gen 49:8.

After the Romans occupied Palestine, the southern part, that corresponded more or less to the old tribe of Judah, received the name of **Judea**.

**Judaizing, Judaizers** The term appears in Gal 2:14. It refers to Christians who, in the early days of Christianity, did all they could in order not to be rejected by the Jewish community that did not accept Christ. They wanted the Church to recommend the observance of the O.T. laws. They were opposed to the proclamation of the utter newness of faith in Christ, namely, the belief in his divine person. They never stopped persecuting Paul. A Judaizing tendency still exists in the Church today. It often paralyzes efforts to evangelize. It is less concerned about revealing the Savior to all, and to Jews in the first place, than it is to silence anything that "could grieve the Jews."

**Judas Iscariot** One of the Twelve who betrayed Jesus: Mt 10:4; Lk 6:16; Jn 6:71; 12:4; 18:2; Mt 27:3.

**Judas Maccabeus** A hero of the national and religious resistance against the Syrian empire: 1 Mac 3:1 to 9:22; 2 Mac 8-15.

**Judeo-Christians** See **Judaizers**.

**Judges** In the Bible, the power to judge is not clearly distinguished from the power to govern: the same word means both things. Tribe leaders, city elders and kings were judges. Nevertheless, the Bible speaks of Judges appointed by the authorities, starting with Moses (Ex 18:13). In most cases, Levite priests were judges (Dt 21:5). In the Bible, there is a **period of Judges** (2 S 7:7) during the first century when the tribes settled in Palestine. These Judges were leaders: see Introduction to Judges.

**Justice (Justification)** It is one of the words most frequently used in the Bible. Biblical history knows God as the one who renders justice. The God of Israel wants above all a just law and the observance of a just law. The meaning of the word justice expanded as people became more aware of the many exigencies of God's law. The term ended up by expressing the perfection of those who are just in God's eyes, those who please God because they do what is pleasing to God. The just are righteous persons.

In the N.T., the Greek word more commonly used means both justice and **justification**. A key word used by Paul to express both the renewal of people and their reconciliation with God through faith in Christ, the Savior. See commentaries on Rom 1:16.

**Kadesh-barnea** An oasis on the northern border of Israel where nomads used to stop. It had been a sacred place since ancient times. This was the place where Moses' companions shared their faith with other desert groups. In Num 13 and 14, the long stay in Kadesh-barnea (Dt 1:43) was seen as God's punishment. This will be recalled in Josh 10:41 and 14:6.

**Kedar** See note on Is 21:16.

**Kerygma** A Greek word meaning proclamation or preaching of a message. The message is at the heart of the Gospel. It is a call to believe in the gesture of the Father who sent his Son to reconcile the world.

**Kingdom** See Biblical Teaching 62-63 and 110-113.

- Knowledge** When Paul used this term, he was often referring to the *knowledge of mysteries* that was expected of new religions coming from the east. To that, Paul would oppose mystical knowledge, the *gift of the Spirit*: 2 Cor 8:2. See also: **Wisdom**.
- Land** This word can refer to the whole earth. *The Land* may also refer to Palestine, the land promised by God.
- Gift of Languages** To praise God in languages we do not know is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: see Acts 2:11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor 2:10; 12:30; 13:1; 14... See note in Acts 8:4.
- Law** In the sense of all the rules and commandments: see Biblical Teaching **70-78**. The word is also used to designate the first 5 books of the O.T., the *Torah* in Hebrew. The Gospel and the Law: see Mt 5:17; 5:20; 7:12; 22:40; Lk 16:16; 24:44; Jn 1:17; Rom 10:4. Faith and the Law: Rom 2-7; Gal 2:3. The Law and works: Rom 13:10; Gal 2:16; Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 1:8; James 1:25; 2:8.
- Lazarus** The man raised by Jesus: Jn 11:1-14; 12:1. The same name would be given to the poor man of the parable narrated in Lk 16:20.
- Leah** Jacob's wife: Gen 29:16; 30:9.
- Legion** It refers to the largest unit of the Roman army, from 3,000 to 6,000 infantrymen, plus cavalrymen. A legion was divided into cohorts under the command of tribunes or commanders (Acts 21-24). Cohorts were subdivided into centuries (companies) under the command of centurions (Acts 10:1).
- Levi** Name of one of the twelve sons of Jacob. He was presumed to be the father of the **Levites**: Gn 29:34; 49:4; Ex 6:16; Mal 2:5.
- Levi** Name of one of the Twelve of Jesus: Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27.
- Levites** Among the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi was chosen to assure the service of worship (Ex 32:22; Num 3:12). The Jerusalem sanctuary was not the oldest one. There were sanctuaries of Yahweh all over the country (Bethel, Beer-sheba, Shechem, Mamre, Shiloh and many others). The priests of the tribe of Levi officiated in those temples and after the closing of the sanctuaries of the provinces under kings Hezekiah and Josiah, they came back to Jerusalem. However, the priests of the Holy City left them only secondary tasks (2 K 23:9). Those priests coming from the provinces were called Levites to differentiate them from the Jerusalem priests. All that refers to the Levites in the texts of the Pentateuch, Ezra and Chronicles was written after their return from the Exile.
- Levirate** See Dt 25:5-10. See also the two examples of Tamar (Gen 38:6-9) and Ruth (Ru 2 and 3) as well as Mt 22:23-27.
- Libation** A religious rite in which wine or oil is poured, usually on the altar, as an offering to God (Ex 29:40; Lev 2:1).
- Liberation** See Introduction to Exodus; Ex 1-4; 15:22; Lev 25; Is 3:9; 58:1; Jer 34.
- Liberty** See **Freedom**.
- Liturgy** This term designates a celebration or a public act. The first Christian liturgies adopted many elements from the Sabbath liturgy of the synagogues: Scripture readings, interventions and commentaries, singing of Psalms. In addition to these, the Passover of the Lord and the manifestations of the Spirit were recalled (1 Cor 12 and 14), especially for baptism and for the Eucharist.
- Logos** A Greek term too easily translated by *word*: see notes in Jn 1:1. In Greek philosophy, the logos was a reasonable principle that governed the world order and curbed individualities. In John, the Word did not come to repress. On the contrary, the Word was rejected. During the century before Jesus, Jews from Greek culture tended to approximate Wisdom and the Word of God: see Col 1:15. John alone identified the Son of God with God's Wisdom and Word by calling him the Logos in Jn 1:1; 1:14; Rev. 19:13.
- The **Lord** It translates as Yahweh in the Greek Bible. The title Lord was soon given to Jesus and all the biblical texts mentioning the Lord were applied to him. See Jn 1:1; 4:11; 13:2; 20:1; 20:8; 20:11.

- Lot** Abraham's nephew: Gen 12:4; 13; 1; 19; 2 P 2:7.
- Love** See Biblical teaching **50-53** and **220-228**.
- Lydia** A disciple of Paul: Acts 16:14; 16:40.
- Magdala** Small port on the shores of Lake Tiberias. Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala) was from that city.
- Magdalene** See **Mary**.
- Magic** Always present as a persistent temptation, it was constantly and violently fought by the prophets in the O.T. (Dt 18:10; Is 2:6). Paul's preaching in Ephesus will help Christians to become aware of the futility of those practices (Acts 19:19).
- Magnificat** In Latin it is the first word of the canticle of Mary (Lk 1:46-55). In the West, it designates this canticle.
- Mammon** The Syrian god of business. We translate as *money*, or the god of money in Mt 6:24; Lk 16:9; 16:11; 16:13.
- Manasseh** The ancestor, son of Joseph. A tribe with the same name was attributed to him: Gen 41:50-51; 48:1-20.  
The persecutor king, son of Hezekiah: 2 K 21:1; his conversion: 2 Chr 33:1-20.
- Manna** Food that was found in the desert. Tradition saw it as bread from heaven: Ex 16 and Num 11.
- Marana tha!** An Aramaic expression: *Come, Lord!* 1 Cor 16:23; Rev 22:20.
- Mark** One of the first disciples, mission companion of Paul and Barnabas and an evangelist: Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5-25; 15:37; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24.
- Marriage** This term summarizes the goal of human history: Rev 21:9; see Is 49:1; 54:1 and notes; the Song of Songs (Introduction and 3:6); Jn 2:1; Eph 5:32. Marriage, the law of the beginning: Gen 1:24; Mt 5:38; 19:1; note in 10:1. Moses and divorce: Dt 24:1. Considered normal by the patriarchs and kings, polygamy would gradually disappear: Mal 2:13. Ezra and mixed marriages: Ezra 10:1; Ne 13:23; Tb 4:12. Marriage, divorce and virginity: 1 Cor 7:1; 7:8; 7:12; 7:25-38. Marriage, sacrament: Eph 5:22; 1 Thes 4:4.
- Martha** Sister of Lazarus: Lk 10:38; Jn 11.
- Martha and Mary:** Lk 10:38; Jn 11.
- Martyrs** A Greek word meaning *witnesses*. For Christians, martyrs are those who were witnesses at the cost of their lives but without entering into the spirit of violence: Acts 7:57.
- Mary** Transcription of the Hebrew *Miryam*. The mother of Jesus. See Biblical Teaching **106** to **108**. Acts 1:14.
- Mary** Mother of John Mark: Acts 12:12.
- Mary of Cleophas** Mt 27:56; 28:1; Jn 19:25.
- Mary Magdalene** Mt 27:56-61; 28:1; Lk 8:2; 24:10; Jn 12:3; 19:25; 20:1, 11.
- Masoretes** From the Hebrew term *massoret* meaning tradition. They were Jewish experts who, for centuries (already over a century before Jesus), had been verifying the accuracy of the copies of biblical texts.
- Mattathias** A hero of the faith at the time of the Syrian empire: 1 Mac 2.
- Matthew** One of the **Twelve**: Mt 9:9; 10:3.
- Matthias** He was elected by the apostles to take the place of Judas Iscariot: Acts 1:15-26.
- Megiddo** A very ancient city. It was the necessary passage for any connection between Egypt, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. One of the fortresses that Solomon restored thanks to forced labor (1 K 9:15). Josiah, the just king, died there before completing his work of reform: 2 K 23:29 and 2 Chr 35:21. Megiddo, a symbol of the confrontation of good and evil, is the meaning that John gives it in Rev 16:16.
- Melchizedek** A legendary figure of the traditions regarding Abraham: Gen 14; Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6; 7:1-17.
- Mesopotamia** It was the *country between the two rivers*, the Tigris and the Euphrates. The world oldest civilization, that of the Sumerians, developed there long before the year 3,000 B.C. Chaldea and Babylon were located in this plain, near the delta with Assyria, more north of the mountains. Ur in Chaldea is thought to be the departure point of Abraham, at a time when the Amorite tribes moved freely from the south (Ur) to the far north (Haran) of Mesopotamia.

**Messiah** Transcription of the Hebrew *masiah*, one who has been anointed. Kings were the first to be anointed (1 S 16:10; 13), then priests were anointed. See Lev 8:1; Num 35:22; Is 11:1 and Biblical Teaching 62-66. Jesus was recognized as the Messiah in his resurrection. Peter had already acknowledged him as the Messiah: Mt 16:16; Jn 6:68. In Greek, Messiah is translated by **Christos**, a title that would be linked to the name of Jesus.

**Methuselah** Gen 5:21.

**Micah** or **Michea** The name of two prophets from different times: Micah, the son of Imlah (1 K 22) and Micah of Moresheth, the author of the book of the same name: Mic 1:1.

**Midianites** Nomadic tribes established in the northwest of the Arabic peninsula. At the time of the Judges, they went as far as the Plain of Jezreel where Gideon defeated them (Jdg 6-8).

**Midrash** A Hebrew term meaning *search*, study. It deals with a commentary on Scripture on the basis of the reality of the time, as in Mt 2.

**Millenarianism** It refers to the expectation of an intermediary time between present history and eternal life. It would be somewhat like an earthly paradise under the authority of the Messiah: see text and note in Rev 20:1.

**Ministers** It is the translation of *diakonos* from which we get our term deacon. Both terms complement each other since the Greek indicates both service and responsibility. The apostles established ministers for the ordinary service of the Church. Other ministers shared their own duties and responsibilities. See Acts 14:1; 20:28 and Introduction to the pastoral letters. Qualities required of elders and deacons: 1 Tim 3:1; 5:3; Tit 1:5. See **Priests**.

**Miracles** An event that does not follow the norms of nature or that defies the laws of probability and leaves a message to believers. Miracles help with salvation and they also reveal something about God. In Hebrew and in Greek, a miracle may have different names. It is a *sign*, a *wonder*, a *work of power*, or all at the same time.

*Faith, miracle and health*: see notes in Mk 5:33; Lk 8:43; 17:11. *Works of power*: see the note in Mt 15:29. John will insist on the aspect of sign: Jn 2:11; 2:18; 4:54; 6:14; 12:18. Miracles are always present among the people of God: Acts 3:11; 9:34; 9:40; 19:10; 20:10; Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:12.

**Miriam** A prophetess whom the Bible remembered as Moses' sister: Ex 15:20; Num 12.

**Mission** A term that means sending forth. Being sent is the same word as apostle. Jesus was sent by the Father: Mt 10:40; 15:24; Lk 4:18; Jn 3:17; 6:44; 8:42; 17:3. The apostles were sent by Jesus: Jn 17:18; 20:21. The mission in Galilee: Mt 10:16; Lk 9:1; 10:1. Paul was sent: Acts 22:21; 13:2; Rom 10:15; 1 Cor 1:17; Gal 1:1. Paul's missions: see **Paul**. The universal mission: Mt 28:18; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8.

**Moabites** Nomadic people who settled east of the Dead Sea in the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Around 900 B.C., they gave themselves a king. The kingdom of Moab formed part of those neighbors with whom Israel was often in conflict.

**Monotheism** It is the belief in the One God. In fact, most religions believe in one Divinity over many gods. Strictly speaking, faith in the One God is more characteristic of Jews, Christians and Muslims who rely on a revelation from God. Belief in the One God is expressed in Dt 6:4, the creed of Jews. For Jews and Muslims, Christian belief in the Triune God weakens monotheism. For Christians, it makes us enter into God's mystery. This belief brought to the world a sense of person, the priority of love, the meaning of forgiveness and the discovery of a universal neighbor. It put an end to the fanaticism linked to revealed monotheism and it gave us access to a world that is beyond religion. See the notes in Gen 1:1; Ex 3:1; 20:1; Dt 4:1; Jn 1:1 and Eph 3:1.

**Mordecai** Esther's uncle in the book of the same name. He is also connected with the feast of Purim: Es 9:30.

**Moses** Chosen by God, he took the sons of Israel out of Egypt and led them to the

edge of the Promised Land. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy relate the deeds of Moses as they were perceived by Israel. See Biblical Teaching **30** to **39**.

**Mystery** In ordinary language, a mystery is something that is beyond our understanding. God and his work are beyond us: Job 42:1; Pro 30:2. The Son reveals God to us (Jn 1:18), earthly things and heavenly things (Jn 3:12). This being the case, the Greek word *mysterion* usually means a secret that is finally revealed: Mt 13:11; 1 Cor 4:1. This secret is primarily the entire plan of God for universal salvation: Eph 1:9; 3:3; Col 1:26.

**Myth** The Greek term refers to a fable. Myths are stories made up by popular tradition to convey, and at the same time, to conceal ancient facts in order to give us a reassuring vision of the present human situation and of society. The Middle East myths on the origins of the world are between the lines in the accounts of Gen 1-3; Ezk 28:11; Ps 74:13.

**Naim** A village on the north side of a hill in the Plain of Jezreel, not far from Nazareth. **Shunem** is on the other side. Elisha raised up a child in Shunem: 2 K 4:8. In Naim, Jesus restored a widow's son to life: Lk 7:11.

**Name** Regarding the use of this word to express the power of a superior being, God or a supernatural being, see the commentary on Mk 16:15. The Name of Yahweh is the irradiation of his power: Ex 23:21; Num 6:27; Ps 89:25.

**Naomi** Ruth's mother-in-law.

**Nathan** David's prophet. See 2 S 7:3-17; 12:1; 1 K 1:11.

**Nathanael** One of the first disciples of Jesus: Jn 1:45.

**Nazareth** A small village. Even though it is very old, it is not mentioned in the O.T. It is in a small hollow on a hill in Galilee, on the edge of the Plain of Jezreel. As we saw regarding Peter's house in Capernaum, it is quite possible that the Nazareth community gathered in "Mary's house." It is probably the place where Mary received the annunciation (Lk

1:26). A century later, a 'synagogal church' was built over that house. From then on, many buildings have replaced one another thereby confirming the authenticity of the place. Jesus grew up in Nazareth where he spent over thirty years. The Son of God, having come to full manhood, experienced the world in this corner of Galilee. Jesus is *the Nazorean* (Mt 2:23; 26:71; Lk 4:34; Jn 1:45) just as he is *the Galilean* (Mt 26:69; Lk 22:59).

**Nazirite** A man who was temporarily or permanently consecrated to God, abstained from alcoholic beverages and who did not cut his hair (Jdg 13:5; Lk 1:15).

**Nebuchadnezzar** From 605 to 562, he ruled over a vast empire with Babylon as the capital. He took over Jerusalem in 597 and returned for the second time in 587-586 when he completely destroyed the city and deported the rest of the inhabitants (2 K 24 and 25).

**New Year's Day** Strictly speaking, there was no New Year's Day feast in the O.T. However, in the fall or the beginning of the year for the Israelites, they used to celebrate the feast of the Harvest (Ex 23:16). Later on, they celebrated Rosh Hashana or the New Year.

**Nicodemus** A leader of the Jews and a disciple of Jesus: Jn 13:1; 7:50; 19:39.

**Nineveh** This Assyrian capital was the center of an insatiable empire from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. It extended its domination as far as Egypt and, in 721, it definitively ruined the kingdom of Israel with the capture of Samaria and the subsequent deportation. The biblical authors were not impressed by the artists, temples and the library of the city. Nineveh was the sinful city where Jonah was sent (Jon 3:2; 4:11) and the city of the oppressor where Tobit lived. The prophets were waiting for its fall (Nh 1:1; 3:7). In fact, its fall was quick and complete. Jesus said that it is possible to be worse than the Ninivites: Mt 12:41; Lk 11:30.

**Noah** The builder of the Ark and father of viniculture: Gen 5:29; 6-8. Noah is mentioned in Lk 17:26; 1 P 3:20; 2 P 2:5.

**Nunc Dimitis** In Latin, the first words of Simeon's canticle in Lk 2:29.

**Oblation** A religious offering. Part of it was offered in sacrifice and the other part was given to the priests as food (Lev 7:12-14).

**Omri** A great king of Israel whom the prophets did not appreciate: 1 K 16:16.

**Onan** Son of Judah: Gen 38:1-11. The protagonists of this story personify different clans who were at the origin of the tribe of Judah.

**Ophir** An area famous for its gold (1 K 9:28; Job 22:24). Some have looked for it on the coasts of Arabia. It might have been in the Mediterranean area, most probably in Spain.

**Oracle** It is the right word to designate God's response to a prophet's consultation. In the prophetic books, the expression "Oracle of Yahweh" became a refrain underlining their poems like the other refrain "the Word of Yahweh."

**Original Sin** See Gen 3:14 and note.

**Orthodox** or *true faith*. The Eastern churches have chosen this term to underscore their will to keep the authentic faith conveyed by the liturgy and tradition. Catholic and Orthodox Churches share the same faith. In spite of that, cultural differences and historical wounds have maintained tenacious conflicts.

**Pagan** This word comes from the Latin *paganus*: peasant, countryman. The present meaning is due to the fact that, for centuries, only cities were evangelized in Europe while the countryside kept its traditions and gods.

**Palestine** The name is derived from the Philistines who occupied the coast during the entire period of the kings. Its borders changed through the centuries depending on the hazards of history. The limits indicated in the Pentateuch were established after the return from the Exile and they were only reached during Solomon's rule.

**Pantocrator** This Greek term is a translation of the Hebrew *Sebaoth*, the God of Hosts or the God of the universe: Rev 1:8.

**Papyrus** A reed whose bark was made into paper on which one could write in ink.

**Parable** See Mt 13:1; 13:34; Mk 4:10 and their respective notes.

**Paraclete** In Greek, it means *intercessor* or *defender*. It is the title given to the Holy Spirit in Jn 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7 and to Jesus in 1 Jn 2:1.

**Parousia** This Greek term is a translation of the Hebrew word *visitation* (to ask for explanations). The whole O.T. announces such visitations by God, namely, God's judgments on the world. With the N.T., the expected visitation is that of Jesus both as Judge and Savior (1 Thes 2:19).

**Passover** It was originally a feast of nomadic people (Ex 5:1-4). Since the departure from Egypt coincided with this feast, it took on a new dimension for the following generations (Ex 13:8). When they came to the Promised Land, these people of shepherds became agricultural and the celebration of the first harvest would blend with the old feast of the sacrificed lamb. By passing from this world to his Father (Passover means *passage*) at Passover time, Jesus gave to this feast its definitive and total dimension (1 Cor 5:7). See also Mk 14:1 and note.

**Passover Lamb** Each year, the immolation of the Passover Lamb and the ritual meal during which it was eaten reminded Israel of how God had liberated them from slavery to the Egyptians in order to lead them to the Promised Land: Ex 12:21-28. By his death on the cross, at the very hour in which Passover lambs were sacrificed in the temple, Jesus accomplished and transfigured all the Passover celebrations of the old covenant: Jn 19:35-36. Jesus is the Lamb of God: Jn 1:29 and note in Jn 19:31. See Rev 1:4 and the Introduction to Revelation.

**Pastors** See **Shepherds**.

**Patriarchs** This term refers to the great ancestors of the people of Israel who were clan leaders at the time of nomadic life, Abraham, Jacob and his sons (Acts 7:8) and also David, the ancestor of the kings (Acts 2:29). Some legendary heroes, like Enoch, were also included in this category.

**Paul** His life: Acts 22:1; Phil 3:4-11; Acts

7:58; 8:3; 26:9; His conversion: Acts 9:1; Gal 1:15; 1 Tim 1:12; His missions: Acts 9:23; 11:25; 13-21; 2 Cor 11. Journey to Rome: Acts 21.

**Peace** The entire O.T. was yearning for peace because war and oppression had been its experience. It knew that peace came from God (Is 9:5; Mic 5:4; Is 53:5; 57:19) but it did not know that peace was for all. Peace usually meant that opponents were reduced to silence: Is 61:2; 63:1; 25:11. The Gospel builds peace on reconciliation in the conviction that God has already given salvation (Lk 2:14; 10:5; Acts 10:36). Jesus gave peace (Jn 14:27) but he also brought war (Lk 12:51) because God's call divides: Mt 5:11; 10:16. Christians wrestle with the power of darkness and, for them, peace is only temporary: Eph 6:1; 1 P 5:8.

**Pentateuch** A technical term that is often used to designate the first 5 books of the O.T.: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books were attributed to Moses. Although they often contain ancient traditions, as we know them, the texts were written after the return from the Exile. The laws found in these books were laws that governed the Jewish community after Ezra's reforms (Ne 8). These books are also called **The Law**.

**Pentecost** Originally this feast, called feast of Weeks, had a purely agricultural nature: 7 weeks after reaping the first ears of barley, the wheat harvest was celebrated. Toward the end of the O.T., however, this feast became linked to the remembrance of the Law given on Mt. Sinai. For the Church today, Pentecost does not recall the gift of the Law but instead the effusion of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:1.

**Penuel** The Jabbok river crossed this city near the Jordan. It is mentioned in Gen 32:32. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Penuel had a sanctuary to preserve the memory and the prophecies of Balaam, an Ammonite prophet.

**People** In Hebrew, *the peoples* (or *the nations*) refers to all non-Israelites, while *the*

*people* or *the nation* means only Israel. Therefore, depending on the cases, we can translate by foreigners or pagans. In the Greek world where Paul lived, the Jews used other terms: *the circumcision* referred to the Jewish collectivity and *the foreskin*, to the collectivity of non-Jewish people.

**Persecutions** In the O.T., 1 Mac 1; 2 Mac 4-7; Dn 3. In the N.T., Mt 5:11; 10:16-39; 24:9; Jn 15:18; 17:14; Acts 7:57; 9:1; 12:1. Paul under persecution: Gal 5:11 and the note; Phil 1:28; 1 Thes 2:14; 1 Tim 1:13; The Church and the Beast: Rev 13:16; 14:9. See **Martyrs**.

**Peter** His call: Jn 1:42; Mt 4:18; Lk 5:1. **Peter, James and John:** Mk 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33. Promises to Peter: Mt 16:13; Jn 21:15; Peter's faith: Jn 6:68; Lk 9:18; 22:31. Peter's denial: Mk 14:53. His apostolate: Acts 1:13-15; 2:14-40; chapters 3-12; 15:7; 1 P 1:1; 2 P 1:1. See also **Cephas**.

**Pharisees** The Pharisees (or separated) were one of the branches coming from the Hasideans or Hasidim who had renewed the spirit of faith a century and a half before (1 Mac 2:42). These lay people gave little importance to Temple worship and much more to the practice of the Law. They strongly insisted on the responsibility of individuals who are saved by their own merits, in the eyes of a just God who rewards. They were the party (and the sect) of the *pure* (Mt 16:6; 23:1; Mk 8:1 and notes). Many of the teachers of the Law belonged to this party (Mk 2:16). For over a century, they had been part of the Sanhedrin along with the Sadducees (Acts 23:7). After the national tragedy of 70, they became the undisputed guides of the nation and it was then that they excluded those who had been baptized from the Jewish community.

**Phoenicia** It was the northern part of the coastal plain of Palestine with the port cities of Tyre, Sidon and Byblos. Its inhabitants were Canaanites who lived from their trade. They traveled all over the Mediterranean. They invented the alphabet in the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It was among



them that Solomon looked for the wood and metal experts he needed to build the Temple and the palace. Thanks to their seamen, Solomon was able to send expeditions to Africa. The Phoenicians' prosperity aroused the envy of their neighbors. The prophets saw their pride and self-sufficiency and they threatened them with a judgment of God (Is 23; Ezk 27:32).

**Philip** One of the **Seven**: Acts 6:5; 8; 21:8.

**Philip** One of the **Twelve**: Mt 10:3; Jn 1:43; 12:21.

**Philistines** They formed part of the *Sea Peoples* who had come from Greece and the neighboring islands around the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Driven back by the Egyptians of Ramses III, they settled down in the coastal plain of southern Palestine in the five districts of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Accaron or Ekron and Gath (Jos 13:3; 1 S 6:4). They settled in the coastal plain at the same time as the Israelite nomads arrived from the interior and they were enemies of Israel for centuries. At that time, Palestine was in the iron age and, due to their monopoly on this metal, the Philistines were formidable enemies. We find references to them especially in the book of Judges and the two books of Samuel.

**Pilate** Pontius Pilate (Lk 3:1) was the Roman governor of Judea from 26 to 36 A.D. He was ruling at the time of the passion of Jesus (Lk 23:1; Jn 18:28). He was under the Roman legate who administered the present territories of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, occupied Palestine and Jordan.

**Polygamy** A common practice among the people of the ancient Eastern world, but in the course of the centuries, monogamy prevailed in Israel, first as an obligation for the High Priest and later, for everyone as it is attested in the last books of the O.T.

**Polytheism** It means acknowledging several gods. For a long time, the Israelites did not answer the question concerning the existence of other gods. What mattered to them was to serve Yahweh (Ex

20:3) and to have others as his subjects. The One God: Is 43:10; 45:21.

**Possessed by the devil** See Mk 1:23 and note.

**Predestination** See Rom 9:14 and note; Eph 1:1 and note.

**Priests** Priests of the Old Testament: see commentaries on Num 3:1 and 4:1. Leviticus and Numbers contain laws regarding priests and worship at the end of the monarchy and at the time of the Exile. The priestly families of the tribe of Levi had the monopoly on serving in the Jerusalem Temple. This service consisted of animal sacrifices, incense offering and blessings. The priests would take turns serving and after that, they would return to their villages (1 Chr) 24; Lk 1:8). Priests also served as judges. See **Levites**. For the New Testament, see commentaries on Acts 14:21 and Heb 9:1.

**Priscilla** See **Aquila**.

**Prophets** See the special Introduction just before Isaiah.

**Proselytes** This was the name given to pagans who converted to Judaism and who accepted the whole Law, starting with circumcision. By the second or third generation, they were considered completely Jewish.

**Prostitution** It existed in Israel as it did among other people but, in the biblical texts, it often became an image to express the people's infidelity to God: Is 1:21.

**Ptolemais** A Phoenician port north of Israel. It was also called Acco and Saint Jean d'Acre.

**Pul** In 2 K 15:19, it is the name given to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria.

**Pure and Impure** It was a fundamental classification in the world of Jesus and the apostles. See commentaries on Mk 7:14 and Acts 10.

**Qumran** See **Essenes**. The library of this Essene community was rediscovered in the last century. It provided countless documents from the first century B.C., including fragments or complete copies of all the books of the Bible.

**Rabbi** It comes from the Hebrew *rab* to designate a leader or a chief. At the time

of the Gospel, this title was already applied to teachers of the Law who had disciples as in the case of John the Baptist (Jn 3:26) and Jesus (Mk 9:5). At a later time, rabbis would be ordained and officially recognized.

**Rachel** Jacob's favorite wife: Gen 29:15; 29 and 30; 35:16; Jer 31:15; Mt 2:18.

**Rebekah** Isaac's wife: Gen 29; 25:21; 27:5.

**Redemption** or **ransom** Israel is the people God acquired or purchased for himself by taking them out of Egypt (Dt 9:26). Later on, the Israelites betrayed God and sold themselves to do evil (Is 50:1) or God sold them to foreign people to punish them (Dt 32:30; Is 42:24). Then God decided to buy them back and to bring them again to the Promised Land. **Jesus the Redeemer**: see Biblical Teaching **130-137**.

**Rephaim** It is the name traditionally given to the early inhabitants of Palestine long before the Israelites' arrival. They were considered as a race of giants (Dt 2:11).

**Repudiation** According to the Law (Dt 24:1), a husband could repudiate his wife but the reverse was not allowed. The husband had to give his wife a certificate of divorce to allow her to remarry. Jesus condemned that practice and insisted on the sanctity of marriage. See Mt 19:1-9.

**Resurrection** See Biblical Teaching **140-142**.

**Revelation** It means to remove the veil. The whole Bible is revelation since it conveys the truth, the meaning, the way and the form of salvation that God had entrusted to his people and these were fully manifested in the person of Jesus. The people of God experienced and proclaimed this truth, way and salvation that cultures and religions could not attain. This revelation deals with God's mystery and his mysterious plan and, at the same time, it reveals our true nature to us: Jn 3:12.

**Rock** God is the rock: Dt 32-4; 32:31; Is 44:8; Ps 18:3; 28:1; 42:10; 89:27... Christ was the rock: 1 Cor 10:4. See **Cephas**.

**Rome** It was the capital of a vast empire comprising all the territories around the Mediterranean conquered little by little

during the last three centuries B.C. Palestine had become part of this empire about 50 years before the birth of Christ. Therefore, for the Jewish people, Rome was the symbol of the occupying power and of all its evil consequences (Rev 17 and 18). Yet, people could not help admiring the success of this huge empire that was able to keep order and whose riches and law made Rome a unique city. By seeing Rome as the incarnation of the power of Satan, the book of Revelation revealed the other side of the world. See commentary on Rev 19:1.

**Sabbath** See Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8; Lev 25; Ne 10:32; 1 Mac 2:32; Is 56:2; 58:13; Jer 17:21.

**Sabbatical Year** As they passed from nomadic to agricultural life, the Israelites adopted the custom, probably existing before them, to allow the land to rest every 7 years, as the Sabbath ended the 7 days of the week. The priests and the prophets, then, insisted for each Sabbatical Year to be the occasion of remitting debts and of returning the lands to their former owners: Dt 15:1. In fact, this was like asking for the impossible and the law was never applied. To make the law more acceptable, they instituted the Jubilee Year every 50 years: see Lev 25 and its commentary.

**Sacred Prostitution** In pagan sanctuaries, priests and priestesses were available to the faithful: by uniting with them, the faithful thought that they were entering into communion with the divinity. The prophets condemned these practices: 2 K 23:7; Is 57:7.

**Sacraments** See Bibl. Teach. **180-189**.

**Sacrifice** In Latin, the term means *to make sacred*. There were countless forms of sacrifice(s) through the years and there were also countless theories regarding them. Nomadic Hebrews sacrificed a lamb: see note on Ex 12:1. Later, in Canaan, they adopted many local religious customs: 1 S 1:4; 4:12. The laws about sacrifices contained in the Pentateuch were not from Moses. It was the ritual of the Jerusalem Temple after the Exile. The Letter to the Hebrews shows

how this liturgy announced the sacrifice of Christ who gave his life to reconcile the world: see the notes in Heb 3:1 and 9:1.

The **Sadducees** They were one of the **four sects** or groups within Judaism at the time of Jesus. They came from influential priestly families, Zadok's descendants, who had taken over the office of the high priest at the time of the Exile (Ezk 44:15). Having religious authority and controlling most of the seats of the Sanhedrin, or great council, they dominated the political landscape. They tried to make the best use of the Roman occupation. The only salvation they acknowledged was that of the national community. They mistrusted the Prophets whose message risked breaking up their nationalistic spirit (Acts 23:8). They held on to the Pentateuch because it had the advantage of heavily stressing their privileges as priests (Mk 12:18 and note).

The **Saints** In Hebrew, the word *kadosh* (holy) applied to God and to divine beings. The saints were God's angels in Dn 4:10. When it is applied to people and things, the word means consecrated: Ex 39:30; Num 6:8. In the N.T., the Greek term *agios* (holy), also applies to a pure and noble life (1 Cor 7:34). Therefore, this word has two meanings: 1) It applies to the Church, the people God consecrated to himself and the saints are the people God has chosen and called: see the note in 1 Cor 1:1. 2) The baptized are told that their lives have to be holy, that is to say, perfect before God.

**Salome** Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40; Mt 20:20.

**Salvation** See **Bibl. Teach.** **160-166**. The whole Bible deals with salvation. See Gen 3:15; Ex 15 (the God who saves); Is 45:8 (God's salvation blossoms from the earth); Mk 11 (the unexpected Savior); Lk 2:22 (paradoxical salvation) Lk 8:48 (your faith has saved you); Acts 4:12 (Christian salvation); Rom 14:9; 15:7; 1 Tim 2:4 (God wants all to be saved); 1 P 1:3 (the salvation of souls).

**Samaria** A city and province of central Palestine. Born of the 931 schism that

separated it from Judah and from David's descendants, it was the seat of the kingdom of Israel: see **Chronology, Kings**. See 1 K 12 and 13. Samaria was captured by the Assyrians in 721 and the kingdom disappeared.

The **Samaritan woman** Jn 4:7.

**Samaritans** A mixed population made up of Israelites and people from different regions of the Near East. They had been brought in by the Assyrians after their victory over the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. Even though they lived in Palestine, the Samaritans were always suspicious to the Jews who profoundly despised them (Jn 4:9; Lk 17:16).

**Samson** A hero with legendary strength: Jdg 13-16.

**Sanctuary** When the Israelites arrived in Palestine, they found sanctuaries that were often outdoor sacred places on hills. When the Jerusalem Temple was built, those sanctuaries became less important and they were finally eliminated by Hezekiah and Josiah (2 K 23) in compliance with Dt 12. From then on, while the temple (or house) referred to all the buildings and courts, the sanctuary was only the building with the vestibule and the Holy of Holies: 1 K 6:5.

**Sanhedrin** It was the great council of the Jews at the time of Jesus. It was made up of 71 members representing the priestly families (the high priests), large landowners (the elders) and after Queen Alexandra (76-67 A.D.), the scribes who represented the Pharisees.

**Sarah** Abraham's wife (Gen 12:5) and mother of the son of the promise (Gen 17:15; 21:1). The N.T. associated her to the faith of Abraham: Heb 11:11; 1 P 3:6.

**Satan** See **Devil**.

**Saul** The first king of Israel: 1 S 9-31.

**Scandal** In Greek, it was a stumbling stone. The term is found in Is 8:14. In ordinary language, a scandal became what shocks the conscience and makes one doubt divine justice which prompts people to sin. See Mt 16:23; 18:18.

**Scapagoat** See **Lev 16** and note.

**Scribes** See **Teachers of the Law**.

**Sea of Bronze** (Molten sea) It was the great round bowl mounted on 12 oxen in the esplanade across from the temple: 1 K 7:23.

It contained the water needed for purification. In Rev 4:6, we translate as *platform*.

**Sea of Reeds** It was the place where the Hebrews, under the leadership of Moses, were liberated: Ex 14:2. This sea of reeds usually refers to the Red Sea: Ex 10:19.

**Sects** At the time of Jesus, this word referred to the important groups or movements that divided the Jewish community. According to historian Flavius Josephus, their division was due to a different concept of freedom: in other words, to the way of responding to God's salvific plan. These four sects were: the **Sadducees**, **Pharisees**, **Zealots** and the **Essenes**. At the beginning, the Church was considered as a new sect of Judaism: Acts 24:14; 28:22. Later on, sects appeared within the church itself: Tit 3:10.

**Sem** or **Shem** The first son of Noah: Gen 5:32; 10:21.

**Semitism** What pertains to Semites, Arabs or Jews. Semitism refers to characteristic expression in their languages.

**Sepphoris** The Bible does not mention this city, the Roman capital of Galilee, only 8 km away from Nazareth. Jesus must have often gone there where he probably worked and learned the basics of the Greek that people spoke.

The **Septuagint** Abbreviated as **LXX**, it refers to the Greek version of the Bible that was done in Alexandria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. It was the text that the apostles and the Church used in the Greek-speaking world and, in fact, in the whole Roman Empire for over three centuries.

**Seraphim** See Isaiah 6:1.

**Servant of Yahweh** The second part of the book of Isaiah has four extraordinary poems (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) depicting the perfect servant of Yahweh. From the very beginning, the Church recognized its Lord in the traits of this *holy servant* (Acts 3:13 and 26; 4:27 and 30).

**Seth** Son of Adam and Eve: Gen 4:25.

**Shechem** The Israelites chose this central

and ancient city for their annual liturgy recalling the covenant: Dt 27:1-6 and Jos 8. The renewal of the covenant is mentioned in 2 Chr 29:10 and 34:31. The Assyrians destroyed the city but it was rebuilt in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. During the merciless conflicts between Jews and Samaritans, Shechem was razed by John Hyrcanus 100 years before Christ.

**Shekel** It was a unit of weight that became a gold or silver coin. Six gold shekels were worth 50 silver ones. Half a shekel (for the sanctuary tax) was worth two drachmas (Mt 17:24).

**Shekinah** Dwelling or presence in Hebrew. The presence of God in his temple or his people.

**Shema** In Hebrew, it means *listen*. It is the first word of Dt 6:4. This text is considered as Israel's creed and according to Dt 6:7, it was to be recited in the morning and evening.

**Sheol** This was the name the Israelites gave to the abode of the dead. It was imagined as a dark place where the dead were like shadows, forgotten by God and without hope: 1 S 28:8; Is 38:10; Ezk 32.

**Shepherds** In the O.T., they refer to the authorities of the people of Israel: Jer 2:8; 3:15. In the prophets, God promised to become the Shepherd of his people (Jer 23; Ezk 34). The parable of the Good Shepherd: Jn 10:1. Jesus, the Shepherd of his people: Mt 15:24; Lk 15:3; Heb 13:20; 1 P 5:1. Shepherds in the Church: Jn 21:5; 1 P 5:1.

**Shiloh** For centuries, this small plain near the Jordan had been a sacred place for nomads. The Israelites built a sanctuary there for the Ark (1 S 1-2) and the tribes gathered there: Jos 18:1; Jdg 19-21.

**Shunem** See **Naim**.

**Silas** or **Silvanus** Paul's companion: Acts 15:22-40; 16:19; 17:14; 18:5; 2 Cor 1:19. He became Peter's secretary: 1 P 5:12.

**Simeon** One of the twelve tribes of Israel. It was the name of the old man who prophesied in Lk 2:25.

**Simon** Nicknamed Cephass, he was called Simon Peter in the Greek and Latin Church: Mt 16:16. See **Peter**.

**Simony** Making profit out of sacred things: see Acts 8:9.

**Sin** At first, this term referred to the rebellion against God in spite of the covenant with him. The meaning of sin becomes clearer throughout the Bible. Many victims were offered in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins (Lev 4:1; 8:1; 16:6) but the meaning of sin was becoming more interiorized: Ps 51. See also **sacrifices** and **expiation**. Sins and sin: see the note in Jn 8:31. The forgiveness of sin: see Mt 18:18 and the notes in Jn 20 and James 5:16.

**Sinai** or Horeb At the far south of the peninsula, separating Egypt from Palestine, a mountain with an altitude of 2,300 meters. It was considered as the most probable place of the manifestation of God to this people led by Moses (Ex 19).

**Sinner** This word had different meanings in Jesus' world. Sinners were those who did not observe the law of God out of ignorance or negligence. They were also the social categories whose activities seemed to be condemned by God, like tax collectors, prostitutes or even some professions that required a constant contact with impure people (non-Jews).

**Sodom** A desolate place, an enormous block of salt covered with rocks. It gave rise to many traditions: Gen 13:13; 18:23; 14:10; Ezk 16:49. Sodom is mentioned in Mt 10:15; 11:23 and 2 P 2:6.

**Solomon** Son of David and Bathsheba (2 S 12:24) and king of Israel: 1 K 1-11; 1 Chr 28-29 and 2 Chr 1-9. He had the first Temple of Jerusalem built. The Bible remembered him as a symbol of the past prosperity of the kingdom of Israel and as a wise man who started sapiential literature (Mt 6:29 and Lk 11:31). The Bible chose to ignore his lack of fidelity to Yahweh in the midst of his wives and of his wealth (1 K 12).

**Son of Man** In Hebrew: *Son of Adam*. In the plural, humankind. In the singular, a human being (Ps 49:3). In the O.T., the prophet Ezekiel is often addressed by God as 'son of man' (Ezk 21:1; 22:1; 23:1...). But it is in the vision of Daniel 7:13 that a

"son of man" appeared on the clouds of heaven. He represented the people of God. Jesus applied this vision to himself (Lk 22:69) and that is probably the reason why he calls himself the Son of Man, especially when he speaks about his glorious return (Lk 9:26). When Jesus chose this title, he gave us one of the keys to the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament: what the prophets announced to the people of God was accomplished in Jesus. Note in Jn 5:27: the only place in which the N.T. says a *son of man* not *the Son of Man*.

**Soul** See Biblical Teaching **83** and notes in Mk 8:34 and 1 P 1:9.

**Spirit** In Greek and in Hebrew, it is primarily *breath* or *wind*. Then it takes on all the meanings of the English term *spirit*. Word and Spirit: Gen 1:1. The Spirit of God in the O.T.: Num 11:24 and Jdg 11:1. Wisdom and the Spirit: Wis 1:1 and 7:1. Being born of the Spirit: Jn 3:1 and 7:37. Baptism of the Spirit: Acts 8:14. The flesh and the Spirit: Rom 7:14 and 8:5. Freedom of the Spirit: Gal 4:1. The letter and the Spirit: 2 Cor 4:14. Worship in spirit and truth: Jn 4:24. Body, soul and spirit 1 Thes 5:23.

**Stephen** One of the first seven "deacons": Acts 6:5. The first martyr 6:8-81.

**Sunday** The Jewish week ended with the Sabbath (Gen 2:2). Therefore, Sunday was the first day of the week. The first Christians kept the day on which the Lord rose from the dead to celebrate the Eucharist (Acts 20:7). *Sunday* is a distortion from the Latin: *dies dominicus*, meaning the day of the Lord.

**Susanna** The heroine of the book of Daniel (Dn 13).

**Suzanna** One of the women who followed Jesus: Lk 8:3.

**Synagogue** The Hebrew word is almost the same as church. It means both the community and the place of worship. It was led by a council of officials: Mk 5:22; Acts 18:8 and 17. See the note in Mk 1:21 regarding worship in synagogues.

**Tabitha** Peter raised her up: Acts 9:36.

**Tabor** A relatively low mountain (600 meters), set like a hat over the Plain of Jez-

reel. An ancient sacred place of the Canaanites. The northern tribes met there for their victory over the kings of Canaan (Jdg 4–5). It is the most likely setting of the transfiguration of Jesus: Mk 9:2.

**Talent** The Hebrew word means *round*. At first, it weighed 59 kilos but later, it was reduced to 48 and 35 kilos.

**Talmud** It refers to rabbinical commentaries on Scripture. The oldest ones were written at the same time as the gospels and they constituted the *Mishnah*: its authors were called *the Tannaim*. Later, they added commentaries on the Mishnah, known as the *Gemara*. It was an interpretation of the Law, looking for the literal meaning of the text and also a practical commentary that could go in two directions: moral applications (Halachah), development and ornament (Midrash).

**Tamar** Judah's daughter-in-law: Gen 38; Mt 1:3. In 2 S 13, Tamar was Absalom's sister.

**Ta.Na.Kh** It is the name of the Hebrew Bible. This name is made up of the first letter of the three major sections of the Bible: *Torah* (Law), *Nabim* (Prophets) and *Ketubim* (Writings).

**Targum** An Aramaic word meaning *translation*. An Aramaic rewriting of the Bible that started shortly before the time of Jesus, in a pastoral purpose for the sake of ordinary people who no longer understood Hebrew. It is a rather free translation that includes practical details on how to follow the Law.

**Tarsis** It is Spain. The *ships of Tarsis* were sea-going vessels that could cross the Mediterranean all the way to the Spanish coast.

**Teachers of the Law or Scribes** These middle class people were well-versed in the study of the Scriptures. As a rule, they belonged to the party of the Pharisees (Mk 2:16) and, since the time of queen Alexandra (76-67 B.C.), they formed part of the Sanhedrin. These teachers relied on the tradition that was starting to develop and that would soon be written in rabbinical books. They presided at religious services of the synagogue, gathered dis-

ciples, they were volunteer judges (Lk 12:46; 20:1) and they taught in the temple court (Lk 12:46; 20:1). Jesus was considered as a self-taught teacher of the law (Jn 7:15). This is the reason why his disciples called him *rabbi* (teacher): Mt 8:19; 9:11; 10:24.

**Temple** The Israelites had their first temple in Palestine. Planned by king David (2 S 7:2), it was built by Solomon. See the notes in 1 K 6:2 and 6:4. This temple (the Bible usually speaks of *the House*) replaced the Tent that had been protecting the Ark since the days in the desert (Ex 33:7; Num 16:18; Dt 31:14; 1 S 2:22; 1 K 8:4. Destroyed in 587 B.C., the Temple was rebuilt with meager means upon returning from the Exile. Magnificently rebuilt by Herod (Mt 24:1; Jn 2:20), it was burned and destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

The **Tent** It was the sanctuary of the Hebrews in the desert. See Ex 25–40, the notes in 25:40 and Num 9:15. John used this figure in Jn 1:14.

**Teraphim** It may be a reference to the Urim and Thummim: see **Ephod**.

**Testament** See **Covenant**. See Gal 3:15 and Heb 9:16.

**The Twelve** See **Apostles**.

**Lake of Tiberias** The name (Jn 21:1) comes from the city of Tiberias (Jn 6:23) built on the lakeshore by Herod Antipas at the time of Jesus. In the Old Testament, it was called *Sea of Kinnereth* (Num 34:11; Dt 3:17; 1 K 15:20). In the New Testament, it is called *Sea (Lake) of Gennesareth* (Mt 14:34; Lk 5:1) or *Sea of Galilee*. The Jordan flows into this sea that is 15 km wide and 20 km long. Situated in the great depression, the surface of the lake is 200 meters below sea level.

**Timnah** Timnah was in Philistine territory: Jos 19:43; Jdg 14. South of the Dead Sea, another Timnah had copper mines, later called Solomon's mines. Gen 4:22 and Job 28:1 refer to this other Timnah. Everyone there was a slave of the Pharaoh and worked for him. Nearby, the temple of Hathor had a serpent as an idol: see the note in Num 21:4.

- Timothy** Chosen by Paul: Acts 16:1. With Paul in Acts 17:14; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4. Mentioned in Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1; 1:19; Phil 1:1; 2:19; Col 1:1; 1 Thes 1:1 and 3:2; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 Tim 1:2; Phlm 1; Heb 13:23.
- Tirzah** A very ancient Canaanite city conquered by Joshua (Jos 12:24). After the schism, it became the capital of the northern kingdom for a short period (1 K 14:17; 16:24).
- Tithes** See Dt 14:22 and note.
- Titus** Paul's assistant; his relations with the Corinthians: 2 Cor 2:13; 7; 8; 12:18; the circumcision problem: Gal 2:1; mission in Dalmatia: 2 Tim 4:10.
- Tradition and Traditions** The *apostolic tradition* refers to all the deeds, gestures and words of Jesus that the apostles handed down to the community. Like any community, the Church also has its *traditions*, rules and customs: Mk 7:1; Acts 23:6; 1 Cor 11:17; 11:23; Gal 1:12; 2 Tim 3:14.
- Transjordan** Seen from Jerusalem, it is the land east of the Jordan River, today's Jordan. See **Cisjordan**.
- Tribes** The twelve tribes of Israel, considered as the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons: see the notes in Gen 29:1; 35:23; 49:3. The list of the tribes in Num 1:18; Dt 33; Ezk 38; Rev 7:5. See also Mk 3:13.
- Trinity** It is a way of naming God as he revealed himself in the Bible: the Father, the Son and the Spirit. See Jn 1:1; Eph 3:1; Jn 15:26. See also **Monotheism**.
- Tyre** A Phoenician port and city in northern Palestine: see Is 23:1; 23:15. The king of Tyre, Hiram, was linked to all of Solomon's economic initiatives: 1 K 5:15; 9:11. With their international trade, warehouses and manufacturing centers, Tyre and Sidon were considered as beneficiaries of an ill-acquired wealth. In alliance with Tyre, the kings of Israel had supported Canaanite cults: 1 K 16:30; 21:25. Therefore, their punishment was expected: Ezk 26.
- Unleavened bread** Bread without yeast. See Ex 12:15 and note. This was the name of a Canaanite agricultural feast that the Israelites adopted and combined with Passover.
- Urim** The Urim and Thummim were small sticks that were thrown like dice to get an answer from God: see **Ephod**.
- Vices** List of vices in the N.T.: Mk 7:21; Rom 1:26 and 29; 1 Cor 5:9 and 6:9; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Tim 1:9.
- Virtues** All the Christian virtues are prompted by the so-called theological or divine virtues: faith, hope and charity. See **Bibl. Teach.** **210-228**.
- Vocation** It means being called. The O.T. relates the calls of Moses (Ex 3:1), Gideon (Jdg 6:11), Samuel (1 S 3:1), Elisha (1 K 19:19), Isaiah (Is 6:1), Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), Ezekiel (Ezk 1:5) and Amos (Am 7:14). The N.T. relates the calls of Mary (Lk 1:26), the apostles (Mk 1:16; 2:1; 3:14; Lk 5:11) and Paul (Acts 9:1). The apostles showed that the faith of every baptized person was a response to being called and chosen by God: Rom 1:7; 8:28; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:9 and 26.
- Vulgate** It was the name given to the Latin version of the Bible that was done in 360, by Saint Jerome, a Roman priest from Dalmatia (today's Bosnia). The Vulgate was the official version of the Latin Church until 1950.
- Way** In the primitive church, the Way was the word used to refer to faith and to the Christian life (Acts 9:2; 18:26).
- Wisdom** The third category of sacred books is that of the Wisdom or sapiential books. Divine Wisdom is presented as a person close to God in Pro 8:22 and Sir 24.
- Word of God** We are to look for it in the Bible. But there is no Bible without God's people who live by it and bear witness to it.
- Yahweh** Regarding the meaning of this name, see the notes in Ex 3:14 and 6:2. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, the Jews stopped pronouncing this name although they kept it artificially in the text under the form of Jehovah. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, some bibles use Jehovah. More faithful to the Hebrew spirit, others use YHWH. Here we are keeping the divine

name in the form that Israel, Moses and the prophets knew it and pronounced it for nine centuries.

**Yahwist** It is the name given to one of the documents combined in Genesis and Exodus. It is the oldest document going back to the time of Solomon.

**Zacchaeus** The tax collector: Lk 19:1.

**Zadok** A priest, friend of David (2 S 8:17; 15:24; 17:15). He sided with the party of Solomon (1 K 1) obtaining for his descendants the control of the Jerusalem clergy. Later on, the High Priest would be chosen among his descendants: Ezk 40:46; 43:19; 48:11.

**Zealots** The Zealots were as fanatic as the Essenes and as political as the Sadducees. Among them, there were quite a few Essenes who had come to the conclusion that weapons were more effective than prayers. At the time of the gospels, they were the heirs of a long tradition that, from Phinehas, the priest (Num 25:7), until the Maccabees, had defended the honor of Israel and national independ-

ence. Later on, they organized and played a decisive part in the uprising against Romans in 66.

**Zechariah** A common name in the Bible. It is the name of the prophet who was the author of a book with the same name. It is also the name of the father of John the Baptist: Lk 1:5; 1:59.

**Zedekiah** The last king of Judah: 2 K 24 and 25.

**Zerubbabel** A descendant of the kings of Judah, he was the leader of those who returned from the Exile, but his lineage was lost: Esd 3:2; 5:2; Ne 12:1; Hg 2:20; Mt 1:12; Lk 3:27.

**Zion** This term designates the old city of Jerusalem taken by David around the year 1,000 B.C. (2 S 5:6-10), but with time, Zion became synonymous with Jerusalem. In the N.T., it is the term used to refer to the heavenly Jerusalem. From Zion, we get the term Zionism, a movement that, for over a century, has brought dispersed Jews to colonize and to reconquer Palestine (Is 35:10; 62).

## MEASURES AND MONEY

Length		Weight	
Finger	2cm	Gera	0.6 grams
Palm	7.5 cm	Half-shekel	5.7 grams
Span	22 cm	Shekel	11.4 grams
Cubit	44 cm	Pound	326 grams
Fathom	185 cm	Mina	571 grams
Stadium	185 meters	Talent	34,272 kilos
Mile	1,609 meters		
Capacity (solids)		(Liquids)	
Tenth	4.5 liters	Pint	0.6 liters
Bushel	15 liters	Sixth	7.5 liters
Measure	45 liters	Measure	45 liters
Modias	450 liters	Modias	450 liters

**Money** It appeared in the Near East around the 8th century B.C. and after the return from captivity in biblical texts. The coins mentioned in the N.T. are Greek (tetradrachma, didrachma and drachma) or Roman (denarius, as and quadran).

Tetradrachma	about 16 grams of silver
Drachma and denarius	4 grams of silver
Obol	0.75 grams of silver
As	10 grams of bronze



See:	<i>Calendar</i>	<i>Jewish Feasts</i>
<b>1</b> Nisan (abib)	March-April	Passover
		Feast of Unleavened Bread
		1st loaves
<b>2</b> Iyar (Ziv)	April-May	
<b>3</b> Sivan	May-June	Pentecost
<b>4</b> Tammuz June-July		
<b>5</b> Av	July-August	
<b>6</b> Elul	August-Sept.	
<b>7</b> Tishri	Sept-Oct.	New Year
(Ethanim)		Atonement
		Tents (Booths)
<b>8</b> Marheshvan	Oct.-Nov.	
(Bul)		
<b>9</b> Kislev	Nov.-Dec.	Dedication
<b>10</b> Tevet	Dec.-Jan.	
<b>11</b> Shevat	Jan.-Feb.	
<b>12</b> Adar	Feb.-March	Purim

PAGE 1934 (BLANK)