

# Welcome to the Good News Bible

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The Good News Bible is a clear, easy-to-read translation of the Bible. It uses simple, everyday language so that as many people as possible can read and understand it. This has made it a very popular translation, selling over 150 million copies worldwide.

## What is the Bible?

The Bible isn't one book but a collection of books. These books were written at different times by different people. They include many types of writing: laws, stories, history, poetry, short sayings and proverbs, letters, visions, hymns and prayers, to name but a few.

One of the most important things to do when you start reading a different part of the Bible is to ask yourself what kind of writing you think it is. This will help you to understand what you are reading.

## How are the books ordered?

It is also important to remember that the Bible is not organised according to when the books were written or when the events in them are set. The order of the books in the Bible is affected by what type of book they are. So all the books that contain laws are grouped together; all the books that tell the history of Israel are in one place; the Gospels are found next to each other, and so are the letters.

This can be confusing because when you read through the Bible, the time jumps around. It is worth remembering that this is because they are ordered by subject, not by historical date.

## Why does the Bible have two sections?

The Bible has two main sections, known as 'Testaments'. This word means 'covenant' or 'promise' and refers to the promises God made to his people.

The first section, called by Christians the Old Testament, contains the story of God's

relationship with his people, now known as the Jews. This part of the Bible is seen as holy by Jews as well as by Christians and is known by a variety of names, including the Hebrew Scriptures.

The second section, the New Testament, tells the good news of Jesus Christ and what happened to Jesus' first followers. It is called the New Testament to emphasise that it is a continuation of the story in the Old Testament.

## Finding your way around the Bible

When the different books of the Bible were first written, it was very hard to find your way around them. There were no chapters, no verses and, in the Greek New Testament, not even any spaces between words.

Over the years, people have developed ways of finding your way around the Bible more easily.

1. First you need to know whether a book is in the Old or the New Testament, and which page number it starts on. For this, turn to the Table of Contents and find its page number.

To make things easier, in this Bible we have produced two Tables of Contents, one showing the order in which the books appear in the Bible and the other in alphabetical order so that you can find the book title more easily.

2. Next you need to look at the reference for the verse you need. References are always given in this order: book title, chapter number and verse number. (The chapter and verse numbers are separated by a full stop.)

For example, Genesis 12.2 means the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis and the second verse of that chapter.

In this version, the book title and chapter numbers are repeated at the top of each page so that you can find them more easily.

3. Once you have found the book and the chapter number, you can find the verse number that you need within that chapter.

section of the Bible you are reading (see pages vi–vii)

name of the book you are reading, plus the chapters that appear on that page

page number

\* at the end of a word tells you there is more information in the notes at the bottom of the column

\* at the start of a word shows that there is a cross reference at the bottom of the column

chapter number

numbers in bold, e.g. 27.13, point to the chapter and verse

footnotes give information on the meaning of the text, notes on the translation, or different interpretations of what the original text meant

Major Prophets

ISAIAH 26–28

841

their ghosts will not rise, for you have punished them and destroyed them.

No one remembers them any more.

**15** LORD, you have made our nation grow, enlarging its territory on every side, and this has brought you honour.

**16** You punished your people, LORD, and in anguish they prayed to you.

**17** You, LORD, have made us cry out, as a woman in labour cries out in pain.

**18** We were in pain and agony, but we gave birth to nothing. We have won no victory for our land; we have accomplished nothing.\*

**19** Those of our people who have died will live again! Their bodies will come back to life. All those sleeping in their graves will wake up and sing for joy. As the sparkling dew refreshes the earth, so the LORD will revive those who have long been dead.

**Judgement and Restoration**

**20** Go into your houses, my people, and shut the door behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until God's anger is over.

**21** The LORD is coming from his heavenly dwelling place to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The murders that were secretly committed on the earth will be revealed, and the ground will no longer hide those who have been killed.

**27** <sup>1</sup>On that day the LORD will use his powerful and deadly sword to punish Leviathan, that wriggling, twisting dragon, and to kill the monster\* that lives in the sea.

<sup>2</sup>On that day the LORD will say of his pleasant vineyard, <sup>3</sup>"I watch over it and water it continually. I guard it night and day so that no one will harm it. <sup>4</sup>I am no longer angry with the vineyard. If only there were thorns and briars to fight against, then

**26.16** Verse 16 in Hebrew is unclear.

**26.18** We have won... nothing; Hebrew unclear.


**27.1** Leviathan... monster: Legendary monsters which were symbols of the nations oppressing Israel.

**See also:** **26.19:** Dan 12.2 **27.1:** Job 41.1; Ps 74.14, 104.26

I would burn them up completely. <sup>5</sup>But if the enemies of my people want my protection, let them make peace with me. Yes, let them make peace with me."

**6** In days to come the people of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, will take root like a tree, and they will blossom and bud. The earth will be covered with the fruit they produce.

**7** Israel has not been punished by the LORD as severely as its enemies, nor lost as many people. **8** The LORD punished his people by sending them into exile. He took them away with a cruel wind from the east. <sup>9</sup>But Israel's sins will be forgiven only when the stones of pagan altars are ground up like chalk, and no more incense altars or



The fortified city lies in ruins (27.10)

symbols of the goddess Asherah are left.

**10** The fortified city lies in ruins. It is deserted like an empty wilderness. It has become a pasture for cattle, where they can rest and graze. **11** The branches of the trees are withered and broken, and women gather them for firewood. Because the people have understood nothing, God their Creator will not pity them or show them any mercy.

**12** On that day, from the Euphrates to the Egyptian border, the LORD will gather his people one by one, like someone separating the wheat from the chaff.

**13** When that day comes, a trumpet will be blown to call back from Assyria and Egypt all the Israelites who are in exile there. They will come and worship the LORD in Jerusalem, on his sacred hill.\*

**A Warning to the Northern Kingdom**

**28** <sup>1</sup>The kingdom of Israel is doomed! Its glory is fading like the crowns of flowers on the heads of its drunken leaders. Their proud heads are well perfumed,

**27.8** Verse 8 in Hebrew is unclear.

**See also:** **27.13** sacred hill: See 2.3.

29

Isaiah

Jerem. Lamen. Baruch Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habak. Zephani. Haggai Zechar. Malachi Matt. Mark Luke

sidebar navigation:

book number, in order of books of the Bible

name of the book you are reading

either the books that come next or, on the opposite page, those that come before the book you are reading

cross references show you other Bible passages that deal with the same or similar ideas

# Where do I begin?

When you start to read the Bible it can be hard to know where to begin, and once begun, it can be hard to know where to go next.

The choice of where to start depends entirely on you. You may like to read whole books at a time. You may like to read to understand the big picture of the message of the Bible. You may like to read some of the most famous stories, story by story. Or you may like to explore themes. Whatever you choose, there are some ideas below to help you get started.

## Reading a whole book at a time

If you want to read a whole book at a time, it is good to start with the books that are easier to read and move on to the more challenging ones later. In other words, don't start with Leviticus, which is a list of instructions that many people struggle to read; start with a story that is much easier to understand.

### 1. Start with a Gospel.

- Mark's Gospel is the shortest and is very easy to read (p. 1131).
- You could try Luke's Gospel first (p. 1158) and then, straight away, read Acts (p. 1230). Acts was also written by Luke and goes on to tell the story of how the good news of Jesus spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

### 2. Next, try a book with a good story from the Old Testament.

- Ruth (p. 249) and Jonah (p. 1055) are both great stories and fun to read.
- 1 Samuel (p. 254) also has some interesting stories in it.
- Genesis (p. 3) has some of the best-known stories in the whole Bible.

### 3. Then you might like to look at one of the letters in the New Testament.

- Philippians (p. 1323), Ephesians (p. 1317) and Colossians (p. 1328)

are all good places to start with Paul's letters. Romans (p. 1268) is the longest and most complicated of them all, so you may like to leave that until you have read some of his other letters.

- Don't just read Paul's letters. Try 1 Peter (p. 1370) or James (p. 1363), which were written by other early Christians.

### 4. It is also good to read some of the prophecy and poetry in the Old Testament.

- The Psalms (p. 619) have been used in Jewish and Christian worship for over 2,500 years. Read some of the Psalms: some of the most popular are 1, 23, 37, 40, 46, 62, 84, 117, 121 and 139.
- The book of Isaiah (p. 820) has some inspiring passages. Have a look at 9.2–7; 35.1–10; 40.1–31; 52.13–53.12 and 61.1–11

You may notice that the laws (e.g. Leviticus) and the visions (e.g. Revelation) aren't on this list. This is because they are the hardest books in the Bible to read. Do read them, but get used to reading some of the other books first, and then, when you are ready, turn your attention to the more complicated parts of the Bible.

## Reading to understand the big picture

Running through the Bible is the message of God's love for the world that he created. The story of the Bible is the story of how God tried to draw people back to him and mend their broken relationship. It can be helpful to trace this story through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

You can read the whole of this story through the 40 passages below. (If you don't have time to read them all, just read numbers 1, 2, 7, 15, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30 and 33.)

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### The Old Testament

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1. *The world was created by God and it was good: **Genesis 1—2***  
In the beginning, God created the world and all living creatures, including human beings.
2. *But it went wrong: **Genesis 3***  
Adam and Eve disobeyed God and could no longer stay in the garden of Eden.
3. *So God decided to start again: **Genesis 6.5—22 and 8.1—9.17***  
God decided to flood the world and start again, but he saved Noah and Noah's family and gave a rainbow as a sign that he would never flood the world again.
4. *God chose a family – the family of Abraham – to be his people: **Genesis 12.1—8***  
God called Abraham to leave his home and follow him, and God promised that he would bless Abraham.
5. *God promised that Abraham's family would become a great nation: **Genesis 17.15—18.15***  
God promised the elderly Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son together.
6. *But his family became slaves in Egypt: **Exodus 1***  
Abraham's grandson, Jacob, moved to Egypt with his twelve sons (one of whom was Joseph), but as time went by, their descendants became slaves of Pharaoh.
7. *So God called Moses to free his people from slavery: **Exodus 3.1—4.13***  
God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and called him to set his people free.
8. *And Moses led them out of Egypt: **Exodus 14—15***  
Moses led the people out of slavery in Egypt. After crossing the Red Sea, they wandered in the wilderness.
9. *In the wilderness, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments: **Deuteronomy 5.1—22***  
God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on the top of Mount Sinai.
10. *After 40 years, a new leader brought God's people to the Promised Land: **Joshua 3.1—4.7***  
Joshua entered the Promised Land with God's people, and the twelve tribes settled there.
11. *In the Promised Land, they faced many enemies: **Judges 6—7***  
God raised up a number of different leaders to face the people's enemies; one of these was Gideon, who led an army against the Midianites.
12. *And so the people asked for a king to lead them in battle: **1 Samuel 8.1—10.1***  
Despite the prophet Samuel's uncertainty, God asked him to anoint Saul as king.
13. *God then chose David to be king: **1 Samuel 16***  
Saul could not live up to the calling to be king, so God chose David to be king instead of him.

# What to bear in mind as you read

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Throughout Christian history, people have found the Bible to be inspiring but not always easy to read. There are a few things to keep in mind, which may help you as you read the Bible.

## **1. Recognise that the Bible was written a long time ago.**

Even the newest parts of the Bible are about 2,000 years old. Remember this as you read it, and try to imagine what it might have been like to live when the books were first written.

## **2. Don't read passages entirely on their own; look at what comes before and after them.**

It's easy to take verses, or sometimes whole stories, out of context, by reading them by themselves. Try to work out where they fit in the bigger story or argument of the book. You'll get a much better sense of what's going on and what it all means.

## **3. Ask yourself what type of book you are reading.**

We read different types of books differently. You would never read a list of phone numbers in the same way as you read a novel, so work out if the passage you are reading is poetry or prose, law or history, wise sayings or a vision, and then read with that in mind. It will make a big difference.

## **4. Read what's actually there, not what you think might be there.**

It is all too easy to assume that we know what a Bible story says. This is particularly true for famous stories; we can think we know what it is about and not actually read it. So slow down and chew the story over. You'll often find that you understand it in a new way.

## **5. Read the Bible with other people.**

We all bring our own experiences and thoughts to the Bible. It can help, therefore,

to ask how other people see it and read it. You'll gain a sense of what other people think the Bible says.

## **6. Don't read the Bible from start to finish, as you would a novel.**

The Bible is not one book; it is a library of books. The books are not always printed in time order; instead, they often jump around from time period to time period. As a result, reading them in the order they are printed can be confusing and unhelpful.

## **7. Ask questions.**

Use your brain while you read. Ask questions. Explore ideas. If you really can't understand something, make a note of it and come back later. Sometimes, returning to a difficult question can help.

## **8. Keep a notebook of your questions.**

Make notes as you read. What inspires you? What confuses you? Which are your favourite verses? Jot them down. If you return to your notes later, they will remind you of what you enjoyed before. Sometimes, when you look back at what confused you, it is less troubling than it was before.

## **9. Don't worry about it.**

Many people find parts of the Bible difficult to understand. It was written a long time ago. It comes from a different culture. If you find something difficult, move on. Focus on the parts you do understand and not the parts you don't.

## **10. Do keep going.**

Above all, keep going. The more you read, the easier it gets. The ten commandments (Deuteronomy 5)

# The main collections of books in the Bible

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## Old Testament

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### Law

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These books set out God's commandments for his people alongside the stories about their relationship with God.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

### Historical books

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These books lay out the history of God's people as they settled in the Promised Land, began to look for a king, went into exile in Babylon and then returned home.

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Tobit
- Judith
- Esther
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

### Poetic books

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These books contain a range of poems, prayers and wise advice.

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Songs
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
- Lamentations

### Major Prophets

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These books contain prophecies from four of Israel's prophets. They are called the Major Prophets because of the length of their books, not necessarily the importance of the prophets.

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Baruch
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

### Minor Prophets

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These books contain prophecies from twelve of Israel's prophets. They are called the Minor Prophets because of the length of their books, not necessarily the importance of the prophets.

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah

- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

## New Testament

### Gospels

Four different accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

### Prophecy

A vision of heaven seen by John

- Revelation

### The good news spreads

The story of how the good news about Jesus spread from Jerusalem all the way to Rome.

- Acts

### Letters

A number of letters from various key leaders of the earliest Christians, especially the apostle Paul, addressing issues of life, God and faith.

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James

## 1

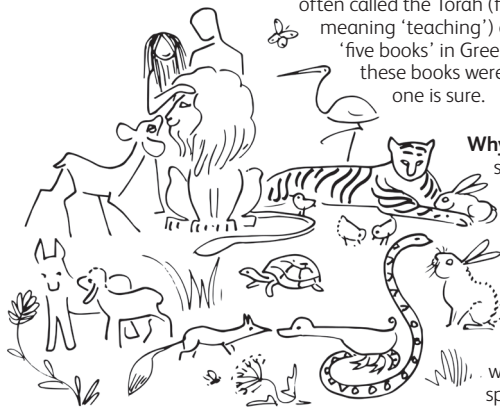
# GENESIS

## The start of all things

**What's it about?** Genesis is all about beginnings: the beginnings of time, the beginnings of the universe, the beginnings of God's people ... and the beginnings of his people going their own way.

**Who wrote it?** The first five books of the Bible are often called the Torah (from the Hebrew word meaning 'teaching') or Pentateuch (meaning 'five books' in Greek). Tradition has it that these books were written by Moses, but no one is sure.

**Why read it?** These ancient stories were passed down from generation to generation, and they tell us many things about God, us and our relationship with him. The people in this book are not so different from us: they triumph with God's help and fail spectacularly when they turn against him.



**What's it to me?** Genesis raises some of the big questions of life and gives us space to discover answers to those questions.

### The Story of Creation

**1** <sup>1</sup>In the beginning, when God created the universe,\* <sup>2</sup>the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the Spirit of God\* was moving over the water. <sup>3</sup>\*Then God commanded, "Let there be light" — and light appeared. <sup>4</sup> God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, <sup>5</sup> and he named the light "Day"

**1.1** *In the beginning... the universe; or In the beginning God created the universe; or When God began to create the universe.*

**1.2** *the Spirit of God; or the power of God; or a wind from God; or an awesome wind.*

**See also:** 1.3: 2 Cor 4.6

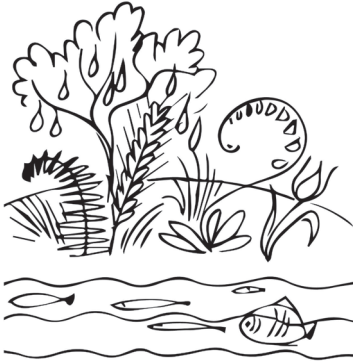
and the darkness "Night". Evening passed and morning came — that was the first day.

**6-7**\*Then God commanded, "Let there be a dome to divide the water and to keep it in two separate places" — and it was done. So God made a dome, and it separated the water under it from the water above it. <sup>8</sup> He named the dome "Sky". Evening passed and morning came — that was the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God commanded, "Let the water below the sky come together in one place, so that the land will appear" — and it was done. <sup>10</sup> He named the land "Earth", and the water which had come together he

**See also:** 1.6-8: 2 Pet 3.5





Let the earth produce all kinds of plants ... creatures that live in the water (1.11, 21)

## Genesis

1

named “Sea”. And God was pleased with what he saw. **11** Then he commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit” — and it was done. **12** So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased with what he saw. **13** Evening passed and morning came — that was the third day.

**14** Then God commanded, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate day from night and to show the time when days, years, and religious festivals\* begin; **15** they will shine in the sky to give light to the earth” — and it was done. **16** So God made the two larger lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night; he also made the stars. **17** He placed the lights in the sky to shine on the earth, **18** to rule over the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God was pleased with what he saw. **19** Evening passed and morning came — that was the fourth day.

**20** Then God commanded, “Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds.” **21** So God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. **22** He blessed them all and told the creatures that live in the water to reproduce, and to fill the sea, and he told

the birds to increase in number. **23** Evening passed and morning came — that was the fifth day.

**24** Then God commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small” — and it was done. **25** So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.

**26** \*Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild,\* large and small.” **27** \*So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, **28** blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals. **29** I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat; **30** but for all the wild animals and for all the birds I have provided grass and leafy plants for food” — and it was done. **31** God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased. Evening passed and morning came — that was the sixth day.

**2** **1** And so the whole universe was completed. **2** \*By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. **3** He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation\* and stopped working. **4** And that is how the universe was created.

## The Garden of Eden

When the LORD\* God made the universe, **5** there were no plants on the earth and no seeds had sprouted, because he had not sent any rain, and there was no one to cultivate the land; **6** but water would come up from beneath the surface and water the ground.

**1.26** One ancient translation *animals, domestic and wild*; Hebrew *domestic animals and all the earth*.

**2.3** *by that day he had completed his creation; or on that day he completed his creation.*

**2.4** *the LORD*: See LORD in Word List

**See also:** **1.26:** 1 Cor 11.7 **1.27:** Mt 19.4;

Mk 10.6 **1.27–28:** Gen 5.1–2 **2.2:** Heb 4.4, 10

**2.2–3:** Ex 20.11

**See also:** **1.14** *religious festivals; or seasons.*

7\*Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground\* and formed a man\* out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live.

8 Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he put the man he had formed. 9\*He made all kinds of beautiful trees grow there and produce good fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.\*

10 A stream flowed in Eden and watered the garden; beyond Eden it divided into four rivers. 11 The first river is the Pishon; it flows round the country of Havilah. 12 (Pure gold is found there and also rare perfume and precious stones.) 13 The second river is the Gihon; it flows round the country of Cush.\* 14 The third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria, and the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. 16 He said to him, "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, 17 except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.\* You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him." 19 So he took some soil from the ground and formed all the animals and all the birds. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they all got their names. 20 So the man named all the birds and all the animals; but not one of them was a suitable companion to help him.

21 Then the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. 22 He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him. 23 Then the man said,

"At last, here is one of my own kind —

Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh.

'Woman' is her name because she was taken out of man.\*\*

24\*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one.

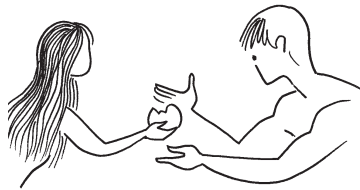
25 The man and the woman were both naked, but they were not embarrassed.

### Human Disobedience

3 1\*Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

2 "We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden," the woman answered, 3 "except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die."

4 The snake replied, "That's not true; you will not die. 5 God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God\* and know what is good and what is bad.\*\*"



*How wonderful it would be to become wise (3.6)*

6 The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to

2.23 *woman... man*: The Hebrew words for "woman" and "man" have similar sounds.

3.5 *God; or the gods.*

3.5 *know what is good and what is bad; or know everything.*

**See also:** 2.24: Mt 19.5; Mk 10.7–8; 1 Cor 6.16; Eph 5.31 3.1: Rev 12.9; 20.2

1

### Genesis

Exodus  
Leviticus  
Num.  
Deuter.  
Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Sam.  
2 Sam.  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chron.  
2 Chron.  
Ezra  
Nehem.  
Tobit  
Judith  
Esther  
1 Macc.  
2 Macc.

2.7 *ground... man*: The Hebrew words for "man" and "ground" have similar sounds.

2.9; 2.17 *knowledge of what is good and what is bad; or knowledge of everything.*

2.13 *Cush (of Mesopotamia); or Ethiopia.*

**See also:** 2.7: 1 Cor 15.45 2.9: Rev 2.7; 22.2, 14

her husband, and he also ate it. **7** As soon as they had eaten it, they were given understanding and realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves.

**8** That evening they heard the LORD God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees. **9** But the LORD God called out to the man, "Where are you?"

**10** He answered, "I heard you in the garden; I was afraid and hid from you, because I was naked."

**11** "Who told you that you were naked?" God asked. "Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?"

**12** The man answered, "The woman you put here with me gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

**13** \*The LORD God asked the woman, "Why did you do this?"

She replied, "The snake tricked me into eating it."

### God Pronounces Judgement

**14** Then the LORD God said to the snake, "You will be punished for this; you alone of all the animals must bear this curse: from now on you will crawl on your belly, and you will have to eat dust as long as you live.

**15** \*I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel."

**16** And he said to the woman, "I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your husband, yet you will be subject to him."

**17** \*And he said to the man, "You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. **18** It will produce weeds and thorns, and you will have to eat wild plants. **19** You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again."

**3.15** *her offspring's; or their.*

**See also:** **3.13:** 2 Cor 11.3; 1 Tim 2.14  
**3.15:** Rev 12.17 **3.17-18:** Heb 6.8

**20** Adam\* named his wife Eve,\* because she was the mother of all human beings. **21** And the LORD God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and his wife, and he clothed them.

### Adam and Eve are Sent Out of the Garden

**22** \*Then the LORD God said, "Now the man has become like one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad.\* He must not be allowed to take fruit from the tree that gives life, eat it, and live for ever." **23** So the LORD God sent him out of the Garden of Eden and made him cultivate the soil from which he had been formed. **24** Then at the east side of the garden he put living creatures\* and a flaming sword which turned in all directions. This was to keep anyone from coming near the tree that gives life.

### Cain and Abel

**4** **1** Then Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she became pregnant. She bore a son and said, "By the LORD's help I have acquired a son." So she named him Cain.\* **2** Later she gave birth to another son, Abel. Abel became a shepherd, but Cain was a farmer. **3** After some time, Cain brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the LORD. **4** \*Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, **5** but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. **6** Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? **7** If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling,\* but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it."

**3.20** *Adam:* This name in Hebrew means "humanity".

**3.20** *Eve:* This name sounds similar to the Hebrew word for "living", which is rendered in this context as "human beings".

**3.22** *knowledge of what is good and what is bad; or knowledge of everything.*

**3.24** *living creatures:* See Word List.

**4.1** *Cain:* This name sounds like the Hebrew for "acquired".

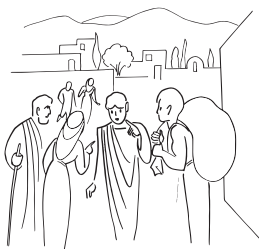
**4.7** *you would be smiling; or I would have accepted your offering.*

**See also:** **3.22:** Rev 22.14 **4.4:** Heb 11.4

# THE BOOK OF TOBIT

## A love story guided by an angel

**What's it about?** A devout man called Tobit is suddenly blinded. His son Tobias, guided by the disguised angel Raphael, sets out to help his father and marries Sarah. Tobias drives away a demon from Sarah, which has killed her seven previous husbands on the wedding night. Tobit regains his sight and dies a rich and happy man.



**Who wrote it?** The author is unknown but the book was probably written in Palestine about 200 BC, in Aramaic. The writer seems to be familiar with Genesis, Deuteronomy, Job and some of the prophets.

**Why read it?** God's will is to save his people from their enemies and to restore the ruins of Jerusalem. The book models trust in God even in exile, with prayer, fasting and almsgiving. There is a strong belief in angels who do God's work: the angel here is Raphael, whose name means 'God has healed'. God does not abandon his people, no matter how bad life may appear.

**What's it to me?** Tobit shows us ordinary men and women trying to live ordinary lives in faithfulness to God. There is plenty of humour and far more dialogue than in most of the books of the Bible.

**1** I am Tobit and this is the story of my life. My father was Tobiel, my grandfather was Ananiel, and my great-grandfather was Aduel. Aduel's father was Gabael; his grandfather was Raphael; and his great-grandfather was Raguel, who belonged to the clan of Asiel, a part of the tribe of Naphtali. **2** \*During the time that Shalmaneser was emperor of Assyria, I was taken captive in my home town of Thisbe, located in northern Galilee, south of Kadesh in Naphtali, north-west of Hazor, and north of Phogor.

### Tobit's Early Life

**3** All my life I have been honest and have tried to do what was right. I have often given money to help needy relatives and fellow-Jews who were deported with me to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

**4** When I was young, I lived in northern Israel. All the tribes in Israel were supposed to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem. It was the one city that God had chosen from among all the Israelite cities as the place where his Temple was to be built for his holy and eternal home. But my entire tribe of Naphtali rejected the city of Jerusalem and the kings descended from David. **5** \*Like

everyone else in this tribe, my own family used to go to the city of Dan in the mountains of northern Galilee to offer sacrifices to the gold bull-calf which King Jeroboam of Israel had set up there.

### Tobit's Faithfulness to His Religion

Genesis 6 \*I was the only one in my family who  
Exodus regularly went to Jerusalem to celebrate  
Leviticus the religious festivals, as the Law of Moses  
Num. commands everyone to do. I would hurry  
Deuter. off to Jerusalem with the first part of  
Joshua my harvest, the firstborn of my animals,  
Judges a tenth of my cattle, and the freshly clipped  
Ruth wool from my sheep. Then I would stand  
1 Sam. before the altar in the Temple, and give  
2 Sam. these offerings to the priests, the descend-  
1 Kings ants of Aaron. 7 I would give a tenth of my  
2 Kings grain, wine, olive-oil, pomegranates, figs  
1 Chron. and other fruits to the Levites who served  
2 Chron. God in Jerusalem. Every year, except the  
Ezra seventh year when the land was at rest,\*  
Nehem. I would sell a second tenth of my posses-  
sions and spend the money in Jerusalem  
on the festival meal.

**Tobit** 8 But every third year, I would give a third  
tithe\* to widows and orphans and to for-  
eigners living among my people, and we  
would eat the festival meal together. I did  
this in keeping with the Law of Moses,  
which Deborah, the mother of my grand-  
father Ananiel, had taught me to obey.  
(I had been left an orphan when my father  
died.)

### Tobit's Faithfulness in Exile

9 When I grew up, I married Anna, a member of my own tribe. We had a son and named him Tobias. 10 Later, I was taken captive and deported to Assyria, and that is how I came to live in Nineveh.

While we lived in Nineveh, all my relatives and fellow-Jews used to eat the same kind of food as the other people who lived there, 11 but I refused to do so. 12 Since I took seriously the commands of the Most High God, 13 he made Emperor Shalmaneser respect me, and I was placed in charge of purchasing all the emperor's supplies.

1.7 the land was at rest: See Lev 25.1–7.

1.8 a third tithe; some manuscripts have the money.

See also: 1.6: Deut 16.16

14 Before the emperor died, I made regular visits to the land of Media to buy things for him there. Once, when I was in the city of Rages in Media, I left some bags of money there with Gabael, Gabrias' brother, and asked him to keep them for me. There were more than 300 kilogrammes of silver coins in those bags. 15 When Shalmaneser died, his son Sennacherib succeeded him as emperor. It soon became so dangerous to travel on the roads in Media that I could no longer go there.

### Tobit Buries the Dead

16 While Shalmaneser was still emperor, I took good care of my fellow-Jews whenever they were in need. 17 \*If they were hungry, I shared my food with them; if they needed clothes, I gave them some of my own. Whenever I saw that the dead body of one of my people had been thrown outside the city wall, I gave it a decent burial.

18 One day Sennacherib cursed God, the King of Heaven; God punished him, and Sennacherib had to retreat from Judah. On his way back to Media he was so furious that he killed many Israelites. But I secretly removed the bodies and buried them; and when Sennacherib later searched for the bodies, he could not find them.

19 Then someone from Nineveh told the emperor that I was the one who had been burying his victims. As soon as I realized that the emperor knew all about me and that my life was in danger, I became frightened. So I ran away and hid. 20 Everything I owned was seized and put in the royal treasury. My wife Anna and my son Tobias were all I had left.

### Tobit's Nephew Rescues Him

21 About six weeks later, two of Sennacherib's sons assassinated him and then escaped to the mountains of Ararat. Another son, Esarhaddon, became emperor and put Ahikar, my brother Anael's son, in charge of all the financial affairs of the empire. 22 This was actually the second time Ahikar was appointed to this position, for when Sennacherib was emperor of Assyria, Ahikar had been wine

See also: 1.17: Job 31.16–20

steward, treasurer, and accountant, and had been in charge of the official seal. Since Ahikar was my nephew, he put in a good word for me with the emperor, and I was allowed to return to Nineveh.

### A Family Celebration

**2** <sup>1</sup>When I returned home I was reunited with my wife Anna and my son Tobias. At the Harvest Festival, which is also called the Festival of Weeks, I sat down to a delicious meal. <sup>2</sup>When I saw how much food there was on the table, I said to Tobias, “My son, go out and find some fellow-Jew who is living in poverty here in exile, someone who takes God’s commands seriously. Bring him back with you, so that he can share this festival meal with us. I won’t start eating until you come back.”

### A Murder in Nineveh

<sup>3</sup>So Tobias went out to look for such a person. But he quickly returned, shouting, “Father! Father!”

“Yes, what is it?” I asked.

“One of our people has just been murdered! Someone strangled him and threw his body into the market-place.”

<sup>4</sup>I jumped up and left the table without even touching my food. I removed the body from the street and carried it to a little shed, where I left it until sunset, when I could bury it. <sup>5</sup>Then I returned home and washed, so as to purify myself. In deep sorrow I ate my dinner. <sup>6</sup>I was reminded of what the prophet Amos had said to the people of Bethel:

“Your festivals will be turned into funerals,  
and your glad songs will become cries of grief.”

I began to weep.

<sup>7</sup>After sunset I went out, dug a grave, and buried the man. <sup>8</sup>My neighbours thought I was mad. “Haven’t you learnt anything?” they asked. “You have already been in danger once for burying the dead, and you would have been killed if you had not run away. But here you are doing the same thing all over again.”



*You have already been in danger once for burying the dead (2.8)*

### Tobit Is Blinded

<sup>9</sup>That night I washed, so as to purify myself, and went out into my courtyard to sleep by the wall. It was a hot night, and I did not pull the cover up over my head. <sup>10</sup>Sparrows were on the wall right above me, but I did not know it. Their warm droppings fell into my eyes, causing a white film to form on them. I went to one doctor after another, but the more they treated me with their medicines, the worse my eyes became, until finally I was completely blind.

For four years I could see nothing. My relatives were deeply concerned about my condition, and Ahikar supported me for two years before he went to the land of Elam.

**17**

**Tobit**

Judith  
Esther  
1 Macc.  
2 Macc.  
Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Eccles.  
Songs  
Wisdom  
Sirach  
Isaiah  
Jerem.  
Lamen.  
Baruch  
Ezekiel  
Daniel  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos

### A Family Quarrel

<sup>11</sup>After Ahikar left, my wife Anna had to go to work, so she took up weaving, like many other women. <sup>12</sup>The people she worked for would pay her when she delivered the cloth. One spring day, she cut a finished piece of cloth from the loom and



*“Take it straight back to its owners.” (2.13)*

.....  
**See also:** 2.1: Ex 23.16    2.5: Num 19.11–13  
2.6: Amos 8.10

took it to the people who had ordered it. They paid her the full price and also gave her a goat.

<sup>13</sup> When Anna came home with the goat, it began to bleat. I called out, "Where did that goat come from? You stole it, didn't you? Take it straight back to its owners. It's not right to eat stolen food!"

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Num.

Deuter.

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Sam.

2 Sam.

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chron.

2 Chron.

Ezra

Nehem.

.....

.....

Tobit

17

<sup>14</sup> "No!" she replied. "It was given to me as a gift in addition to what I got for the cloth." But I didn't believe her, and I blushed for shame for what she had done. I ordered her to return the goat to its owners, but she had the last word. "Now I see what you are really like!" she shouted. "Where is all that concern of yours for others? What about all those good deeds you used to do?"

### Tobit's Prayer

**3** <sup>1</sup> I was so embarrassed and ashamed that I sighed and began to cry. Then, as I choked back my tears, I prayed:

<sup>2</sup> "You are righteous, O Lord!

You are merciful\* in all you do,  
faithful in all your ways.

You are the judge of this world.\*

<sup>3-4</sup> I beg you, treat me with kindness.

Do not punish me for my sins,  
not even for sins of which I am  
unaware.

My ancestors rebelled and  
disobeyed\* your commands,  
but do not punish me for their sins.  
You let our people be plundered,  
taken captive and killed.

You made an example of our people,  
an object of contempt and disgrace  
in all the nations where you  
scattered us.

<sup>5</sup> You have often judged my ancestors  
for their sins  
and punished me for mine.

We were disloyal and rejected your  
commands,  
so our punishment has always  
been just.

<sup>6</sup> "Now treat me as you please.  
Take my life away and free me from  
this world;

.....  
**3.2** *merciful*; some manuscripts add *and just*.

**3.2** *You are the judge of this world*; some manuscripts  
have *You are always fair and just when you judge*.

**3.3-4** *My ancestors... disobeyed*; some manuscripts  
have *I disobeyed*.

let my body return to the earth.

I would be better off dead.

I am tormented by insults I don't  
deserve,

and weighed down with despair.

Lord, give the command —  
bring all my troubles to an end,  
take me to my eternal rest.

Don't reject my prayer.

I would rather die than live in misery  
and face such cruel insults."

### Sarah's Troubles

<sup>7</sup> That same day in the city of Ecbatana in Media, it happened that Sarah, the daughter of a man named Raguel, was insulted by one of her father's servant women. <sup>8</sup> Sarah had been married seven times, but the evil demon, Asmodeus, killed each husband before the marriage could be consummated. The servant woman said to Sarah, "You husband-killer! Look at you! You've already had seven husbands, but not one of them lived long enough to give you a son.\* <sup>9</sup> Why should you take it out on us? Why don't you go and join your dead husbands? I hope we never see a child of yours!"

<sup>10</sup> Sarah was so depressed that she burst into tears and went upstairs determined to hang herself. But when she thought it over, she said to herself, "No, I won't do it! People would insult my father and say, 'You had only one child, a daughter whom you loved dearly, but she hanged herself because she felt so miserable.' Such grief would bring my grey-haired father to his grave, and I would be responsible. I won't kill myself; I'll just beg the Lord to let me die. Then I won't have to listen to those insults any longer!"

### Sarah's Prayer

<sup>11</sup> Then Sarah stood by the window, raised her arms in prayer, and said:

"God of mercy, worthy of our  
praise,

may your name always be  
honoured,

may all your creation praise you  
for ever.

.....  
**3.8** *but... son*; some manuscripts have *but it hasn't  
done you a bit of good*.



Sarah's prayer (3.11)

- 12 "Lord, I look to you for help.  
 13 Speak the word and set me free from this life;  
 then I will no longer have to hear these insults.  
 14 You know, O Lord, that I'm still a virgin;  
 I have never been defiled by a man.  
 15 Never have I disgraced myself or my father's name,  
 as long as we have lived in this land of exile.  
 My father has no other child to be his heir,  
 and there is no relative\* whom I can marry.  
 I have already lost seven husbands,  
 so why should I live any longer?  
 But if it is not your will to take my life,  
 at least show mercy to me.  
 Don't let me hear those insults again!"\*

**God Hears the Prayers of Tobit and Sarah**

16 As Tobit and Sarah were praying, God in heaven heard their prayers 17\* and sent his angel Raphael to help them. He was sent to remove the white film from Tobit's eyes, so that he could see again, and to arrange a marriage between Sarah and Tobit's son Tobias, who, as her cousin, had

3.15 *relative*: In Israel it was customary to marry within one's own tribe.  
 3.15 *at least... again*; some manuscripts have *at least listen to my complaint*.

the right to marry her. Raphael was also ordered to expel the demon Asmodeus from Sarah. At the very moment that Tobit went back into his house from the courtyard, Sarah, in her house in Ecbatana, was coming downstairs.

**Tobit's Advice to Tobias**

4 1 That same day, Tobit remembered the money that he had left with Gabael at Rages in Media. 2 He thought to himself, "Now that I have asked God to let me die, I should call my son Tobias and tell him about the money."

3-4 So Tobit called Tobias and said to him, "My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. And after I'm gone, show respect to your mother. Take care of her for the rest of her life, and when she dies, bury her beside me. Remember, she risked her life to bring you into this world, so try to make her happy and never do anything that would worry her.

5 "Every day of your life, keep the Lord our God in mind. Never sin deliberately or disobey any of his commands. Always do what is right and never get involved in anything evil. 6 Be honest, and you will succeed in whatever you do.

7\*\* "Give generously to anyone who faithfully obeys God.\* If you are stingy in giving to the poor, God will be stingy in giving to you. 8 Give according to what you have. The more you have, the more you should give. Even if you have only a little, be sure to give something. 9 This is as good as money saved. You will have your reward in a time of trouble. 10-11 Taking care of the poor is the kind of offering that pleases God in heaven. Do this, and you will be kept safe from the dark world of the dead.

12 "My son, be on your guard against prostitutes. Above all, marry a woman of our tribe, because we are descendants of the prophets. Do not marry anyone who is not related to us. Remember that Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, our earliest ancestors, all married relatives. God blessed them with children, and so their

17

**Tobit**

- .....
- Judith
- Esther
- 1 Macc.
- 2 Macc.
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Eccles.
- Songs
- Wisdom
- Sirach
- Isaiah
- Jerem.
- Lamen.
- Baruch
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- .....
- Amos

4.7 The translation of verses 7b–19b, accidentally omitted in the Greek manuscript that this translation normally follows, is based on other Greek manuscripts.

See also: 3.17: Num 36.6–9; Tob 6.10–12  
 4.7: Deut 15.7–8; Prov 19.17; Sir 3.30–4.6; 1 Jn 3.17



# About the Good News Bible

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In September 1966 the American Bible Society published *The New Testament in Today's English Version*, the first publication of a new Bible translation intended for people everywhere for whom English is either their mother tongue or an acquired language. Shortly thereafter the United Bible Societies (UBS) requested the American Bible Society (ABS) to undertake on its behalf a translation of the Old Testament following the same principles. Accordingly the American Bible Society appointed a group of translators to prepare the translation. The translation of the Old Testament, which was completed in 1976, was joined to the fourth edition New Testament, thus completing the first edition of the translation which came to be known as the Good News Bible.

## The text used for this translation

The basic Hebrew (and Aramaic) text for the Old Testament is the Masoretic Text made available through printed editions, published by the UBS, and since 1977 under the title of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. In some instances the words of the printed consonantal text have been divided differently or have been read with a different set of vowels; at times a variant reading in the margin of the Hebrew text (*qere*) has been followed instead of the reading in the text (*kethiv*); and in other instances a variant reading supported by one or more Hebrew manuscripts has been adopted. Where no Hebrew source yields a satisfactory meaning in the context, the translation has either followed one or more of the ancient versions (e.g. Greek, Syriac, Latin) or has adopted a reconstructed text (technically referred to as a conjectural emendation) based on scholarly consensus; such departures from the Hebrew are indicated in footnotes.

The basic text for the translation of the New Testament is *The Greek New Testament*

published by the UBS (3rd edition, 1975), but in a few instances the translation is based on a variant reading supported by one or more Greek manuscripts.

## The translation process

The primary concern of the translators was to provide a faithful translation of the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Their first task was to understand correctly the meaning of the original. All aids available were used in this task, including the ancient versions (e.g., the Septuagint Greek text of the Old Testament, the Vulgate of Jerome and Old Latin texts as available) and the modern translations in English and other languages.

After ascertaining as accurately as possible the meaning of the original, the translators' next task was to express that meaning in a manner and form easily understood by the readers. Since this translation is intended for all who use English as a means of communication, the translators have tried to avoid words and forms not in current or widespread use; but no artificial limit has been set to the range of the vocabulary employed. Every effort has been made to use language that is natural, clear, simple, and unambiguous.

Faithfulness in translation also includes a faithful representation of the cultural and historical features of the original. Certain features, however, such as the hours of the day and the measures of weight, capacity, distance, and area, are given their modern equivalents, since the information in those terms conveys more meaning to the reader than the biblical form of those terms.

Following an ancient tradition, the distinctive Hebrew name for God (usually transliterated *Yahweh*, and earlier *Jehovah*) is in this translation represented by "LORD." When *Adonai*, normally translated "Lord," is followed by *Yahweh*, the combination is rendered by the phrase "Sovereign LORD."

### **Two ways to present the deuterocanonical books**

The translation of the books of the Deuterocanon and others classed as Apocrypha was completed in 1978, and the first edition of the Good News Bible with Deuterocanonicals and Apocrypha was published in 1979, with the Imprimatur of the Most Reverend John F. Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford, Connecticut. The 1979 publication was an interconfessional edition in which these books were grouped in a separate section between the Old and the New Testaments.

In this present edition the deuterocanonical books are arranged in the order most familiar to Roman Catholics. Most of these books were written or have their settings in the last several centuries BC. The book of Baruch is positioned after Lamentations, as part of the Jeremiah grouping. The Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach, being wisdom books, are located among the other Old Testament Wisdom books, immediately following Song of Songs. The three additions to the book of Daniel, which are presented as separate books in the interconfessional edition of the Good News Bible, are presented here in the way most familiar to Roman Catholics. Susanna and Bel and the Dragon are traditionally treated as chapters 13 and 14 of Daniel. The third addition has its location between verses 23 and 24 of chapter 3 in the Hebrew text because this is the position it holds in the Septuagint. Known as the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, this addition to Daniel provides the text of the prayer offered by Azariah and of the song he and his companions sang while in the midst of the flames in the fiery furnace. The result is an Old Testament with 46 books, several of which contain significant additions. These books formed part of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was in circulation at the time of Christ.

Prior to Jerome's great Latin translation, which came to be known as the Vulgata (the common language), there were numerous Latin translations in circulation, all of which had been done from the Greek Septuagint. The great significance of Jerome's work, at least for the Old Testament (AD 389–405), is that he broke from that tradition and based his translation on the received

consonantal Hebrew text. His knowledge of Hebrew was excellent, and he had recourse to Jewish text scholars wherever he had questions. For the sections of Esther and Daniel not in the Hebrew canon, Jerome worked from the ancient Greek text. For Tobit and Judith his base texts were (no longer extant) Aramaic editions of these books. Already before taking on the Old Testament books, Jerome had prepared a revised edition of the Gospels (revising the Old Latin text in light of the best Greek manuscripts available to him). The rest of the Vulgate New Testament text is also attributed to Jerome. The influence of the Vulgate in western Christendom remained unsurpassed from his time until the era of the Reformation and the proliferation of vernacular Bible translations, well over one thousand years later.

### **The revision of the Good News Bible**

In December 1986, acting in response to a mounting perception of a need for text revisions, the ABS Board of Managers approved the undertaking of a revision of the Good News translation. The revision was restricted to two main areas of concern that had been raised and discussed over the years since the first appearance of the translation: (1) passages in which the English style had been unnecessarily exclusive and inattentive to gender concerns, and (2) passages in which the translation had been seen as problematic from either a stylistic or an exegetical viewpoint.

In the decade and a half since the initial publication of the Good News Bible, many Bible readers had become sensitive to the negative effects of exclusive language; that is, to the ways in which the built-in linguistic biases of the ancient languages and the English language toward the masculine gender has led some Bible readers to feel excluded from being addressed by the scriptural Word. This concern led to the revision of most major English translations during the 1980s, and, increasingly, readers of the Good News translation wrote to request that the Bible Society take this concern into consideration in preparing any revision. In practical terms what this means is that, where references in particular passages are to both men and women, the revision aims at language that

is not exclusively masculine-oriented. At the same time, however, great care was taken not to distort the historical reality of the ancient patriarchal culture of Bible times.

### Helps for the reader

In order to make the text easier to understand, various kinds of readers' helps are supplied. The text itself has been divided into sections, and headings are provided which indicate the contents of the section. Where there are parallel accounts elsewhere in the Bible, a reference to such a passage appears within parentheses below the heading. There are, in addition, several kinds of notes which appear at the bottom of the page. (1) *Cultural or Historical Notes*. These provide information required to enable readers to understand the meaning of the text in terms of its original setting (e.g. the explanation of *Rahab* in Psalm 89.10, and of *Day of Atonement* in Acts 27.9). (2) *Textual Notes*. In the Old Testament these indicate primarily those passages where the Hebrew word or words may be unclear in meaning, or where one or more of the ancient translations (e.g., the Septuagint, Vulgate, or Syriac) appears to preserve the original wording better than the received Hebrew text. Where one or more of the ancient versions were followed, the note

indicates this by *One ancient translation* (e.g. Genesis 1.26) or *Some ancient translations* (e.g. Genesis 4.8); where a conjectural emendation was adopted, the note reads *Probable text* (e.g. Genesis 10.14). Where the Greek is the primary text, such as in the New Testament, there are textual notes indicating some of the places where there are significant differences among the ancient manuscripts. These differences may consist of additions to the text (e.g. Matthew 21.43), deletions (e.g. Matthew 24.36), or substitutions (e.g. Mark 1.41). (3) *Alternative Renderings*. In many places the precise meaning of the original text is in dispute, and there are two or more different ways in which the text may be understood. In some of the more important of such instances an alternative rendering is given (e.g. Genesis 2.9; Matthew 6.11). (4) *References to Other Passages*. In addition, many editions of the Good News Bible include references (by book, chapter, and verse) to other places in the Bible where identical or similar matters or ideas are dealt with.

A *Word List* identifies many objects or cultural features whose meaning may not be known to all readers. The *Maps* are designed to help the reader to visualise the geographical setting of countries and localities mentioned in the Bible at different points in their history.