Resource update index

October 28, 2026

New: Mark 11:22-25

Prayer, faith and forgiveness

Tap a topic or Scripture below to open three related teaching resources.

Mark 11:22-25 >

Prayer >

Faith >

Forgiveness >

Continue to the original book >

All 80 original pages follow unchanged. Their printed page numbers and existing links are retained.

New Testament Reference

People, groups, places, and everyday life in Scripture



One growing reference

The established group entries and Paul introduction, now joined by rulers, places, and the setting of the Gospel accounts.

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Photographs on pages 76-78 show present-day places and remains. Captions distinguish the biblical account from later buildings and site traditions.

The Four Gospels: differences and alleged discrepancies 79·80

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The Pharisees

A Jewish religious group you meet often in the Gospels and again in the early church.



1 Serious about their religion

They studied the Law of Moses and sought to follow it carefully in daily life.

They also followed traditions passed down by earlier teachers about how to keep that Law.

They believed in the resurrection of the dead, angels, and spirits (Acts 23:8).

Sincerity alone does not make us right.

What the illustration shows

Matthew 23:5 mentions **phylacteries** (small containers for Scripture passages) and garment fringes. Tassels reminded Israel to obey God (Numbers 15:38–40).

Artist's reconstruction. Scripture does not specify the face, colors, or every clothing detail shown here.

2 Why many opposed Jesus

Jesus ate with sinners, healed on the Sabbath, and challenged their traditions. These disputes brought His authority into question (Mark 2:15–17; 3:1–6).

He exposed traditions that set aside God's commands, and religious appearances that concealed sinful hearts (Mark 7:6–13; Matthew 23:23–28).

Jesus called them to obey God from the heart.

3 They did not all respond alike

Nicodemus came to Jesus with questions and later helped with His burial (John 3:1–2; 19:39–40). **Paul** had been a Pharisee. He came to trust Christ instead of his own religious accomplishments (Philippians 3:4–9).

Their place in the early church

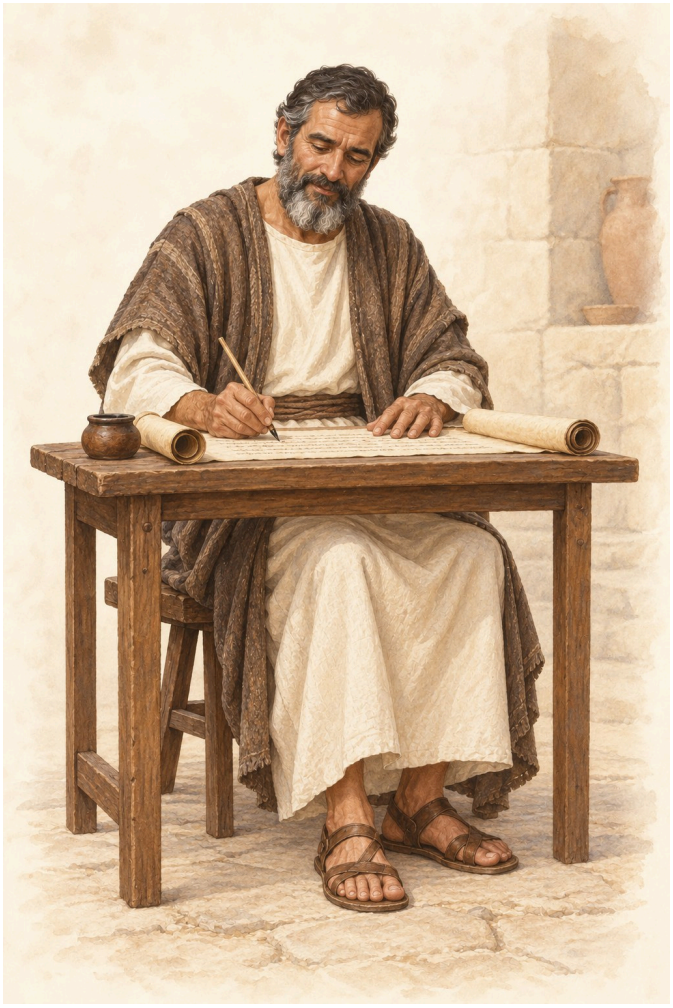
Some Pharisees became believers, yet insisted that Gentiles—people who were not Jews—must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. The apostles rejected that requirement: Jews and Gentiles alike are saved through the grace of Jesus (Acts 15:5–11).

A question for us

When God's Word corrects me, will I bow before Him—or defend myself?

The Scribes

Experts in Jewish law whose teaching helped shape how people understood and practiced their faith.



1 Teachers of God's Law

A scribe copied writings and explained God's Law (Matthew 23:2).

Were scribes and Pharisees the same?

A Pharisee belonged to a movement devoted to the Law and its traditions.

Some men were both (Mark 2:16; Acts 23:9). Not every scribe was a Pharisee, and not every Pharisee was a scribe.

What the illustration shows

A scroll, reed pen, and ink illustrate scribal work. Jesus mentions scribes wearing long robes (Mark 12:38), but Scripture gives no complete description of their clothing.

Artist's reconstruction. The face, clothing details, furniture, and working posture are illustrative.

2 Why many opposed Jesus

When Jesus forgave a man's sins, some scribes accused Him of blasphemy—dishonoring God. They knew that God forgives sins, but failed to recognize Jesus' authority (Mark 2:5–12).

Others objected to His meals with sinners and His disciples' failure to follow ceremonial washing traditions (Mark 2:15–17; 7:1–8).

Jesus exposed how human tradition could take the place of God's Word.

3 They did not all respond alike

One scribe agreed with Jesus that loving God and loving our neighbor matters more than burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus recognized his wise answer and told him he was near God's kingdom (Mark 12:28–34).

Their place in the early church

Scribes were among the leaders who questioned Peter and John after a lame man was healed. That council ordered them to stop speaking and teaching in Jesus' name (Acts 4:5–18).

A question for us

Am I willing to be taught by the very Word I want to teach others?

The Sadducees

A Jewish religious party closely connected with wealth, priestly leadership, and the Jerusalem Temple.



1 A small group with influence

They were closely connected with Jerusalem's wealthy families and priestly leadership.

Acts 5:17 links the high priest and his associates with the Sadducees.

Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, describes their support among the wealthy rather than the wider population.

What the illustration shows

A representative man in first-century Judean clothing, with stone columns suggesting the Temple setting. Scripture does not describe a distinctive Sadducean uniform.

Artist's reconstruction. His face, garments, and surroundings are illustrative, not a portrait or an exact Temple reconstruction.

2 Their beliefs differed

Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead. Acts also says they denied angels and spirits (Acts 23:8).

They treated the written Law as binding, but rejected the Pharisees' inherited traditions as requirements. Josephus records this disagreement.

3 They challenged Jesus

They asked Jesus about a woman who had married seven brothers in succession. Whose wife would she be in the resurrection?

Jesus showed that their argument misunderstood both Scripture and God's power. He answered them from the account of Moses and the burning bush (Mark 12:18–27).

Their opposition to the church

The Sadducees opposed the apostles' preaching of resurrection in Jesus. Acts records arrests of the apostles involving Sadducean leaders (Acts 4:1–3; 5:17–18).

What happened after AD 70

The Romans destroyed Jerusalem's Temple in AD 70. With that center of their power gone, the Sadducees disappeared as an identifiable party.

Historical sources: Josephus, Antiquities 13.10.6; Jewish Encyclopedia, "Sadducees," section on their decline.

The Chief Priests

Leading priests associated with the Jerusalem Temple and its worship.



1 Who were they?

Think of the leading men among the priests, not every priest who served in the Temple.

This group included the current high priest, former high priests, and leading members of influential priestly families.

They held considerable authority in religious matters and public life.

What the illustration shows

Representative priestly leaders in ordinary clothing. Faces, garments, and setting are reconstructed. These are not portraits of named men or a prescribed chief-priest uniform.

High priest or chief priests?

The **high priest** held the highest priestly office. The **chief priests** were the wider leadership group. Caiaphas was high priest during Jesus' trial. Chief priests and elders gathered at his home to plan Jesus' arrest and death (Matthew 26:3–5).

2 Why did they oppose Jesus?

After Jesus drove buyers and sellers from the Temple, the chief priests and scribes sought to destroy Him. They feared Him because the people were astonished at His teaching. They also challenged His authority (Mark 11:15–18, 27–28).

They brought Jesus before Pilate, accused Him, and stirred up the crowd to seek Barabbas's release instead (Mark 15:1–15).

3 As the church began

Peter and John were arrested after preaching about Jesus' resurrection. The council, including members of the high-priestly family, ordered them to stop teaching in His name (Acts 4:1–6, 18).

Many **priests** became obedient to the faith. Scripture does not specifically identify them as **chief priests** (Acts 6:7).

The Elders

Recognized leaders entrusted with guiding and caring for their community.



1 More than age

Age was associated with experience and wisdom. But being older did not automatically make someone a leader.

Israel's elders helped guide the people, settle disputes, and handle community affairs.

"Elder" may describe age or a leadership role. Read the surrounding passage to understand which meaning applies.

What the illustration shows

A representative community elder listening to another man. Faces, clothing, and surroundings are reconstructed. The scene illustrates a leadership role, not a recorded biblical event.

2 Jewish elders in the Gospels

Some elders served in local communities; others served on the ruling council in Jerusalem, commonly called the Sanhedrin. Some joined the chief priests in planning Jesus' arrest and death (Matthew 26:3–5).

Not every elder opposed Him. In Capernaum, Jewish elders asked Jesus to heal a Roman centurion's servant (Luke 7:1–5).

3 Elders in the early church

Christian elders cared for believers, taught faithfully, and guarded against false teaching. Paul told the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit had made them overseers of God's church (Acts 20:17, 28).

Here, **elders** and **overseers** describe the same men. Some translations use **bishops** for overseers. Their qualifications emphasized character, faithfulness, self-control, hospitality, and sound teaching (Titus 1:5–9).

Peter urged elders to shepherd willingly, without greed or domineering, and to lead by example under Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1–4).

Remember: Jewish elders and Christian church elders were not the same leadership body. The same title appears in different settings.

Priests and Levites

Two related groups with different responsibilities in Israel's worship.



1 Who were the priests?

God set apart Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi, but the priesthood was reserved for his family line.

The priests were responsible for the altar, sacrifices, and duties within the sanctuary. Other Levites assisted them but could not take over their priestly work (Numbers 18:1–7).

Being a Levite did not, by itself, qualify a man to serve as a priest.

Representative priest (left) and assisting Levite (right). Clothing, faces, and setting are artistic reconstructions, not prescribed uniforms for both groups.

2 Who were the Levites?

The Levites belonged to the tribe of Levi. When Scripture mentions "priests and Levites" together, it distinguishes Aaron's priestly descendants from the other members of the tribe serving alongside them.

God appointed these other Levites to assist the priests and care for the tabernacle, the place of worship used before the Temple. Their duties included caring for its furnishings and helping guard the sanctuary.

God took the Levites for His service in place of Israel's firstborn sons, whom He had claimed as His own (Numbers 3:5–13).

3 In the New Testament

Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, was a priest. An angel appeared while he was burning incense in the Temple (Luke 1:5–13). Later, priests and Levites were sent to question John about his identity and baptism (John 1:19–25).

In Jesus' parable, a priest and a Levite passed by a wounded man; a Samaritan helped him. Jesus was teaching what it means to show mercy and be a neighbor, not saying every priest or Levite was uncaring (Luke 10:25–37).

How the names fit together

Levites: The tribe set apart for worship-related service.
Priests: Aaron's descendants with priestly duties.
Chief priests: The leading priestly group.
High priest: The highest priestly officeholder.

The Herodians

Supporters of the Herodian ruling family who joined in opposition to Jesus.



1 Political loyalty

The Herodians are generally understood to have supported Herod's ruling family, especially Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee during Jesus' ministry.

Their name points to a political loyalty. It does not identify a separate set of religious beliefs.

We do not know exactly how they were organized or who belonged to the group.

What the illustration shows

Representative supporters of the Herodian family. Their faces, clothing, and setting are illustrative. Scripture does not describe a special Herodian uniform.

In plain terms, the Herodians were Jews who accepted the Herod family's Rome-backed rule and saw it as the way things worked. That put them at odds with the Pharisees, who resented foreign rule and compromise.

2 An alliance against Jesus

After Jesus healed a man's withered hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees went out and consulted with the Herodians about destroying Him (Mark 3:1–6).

That is what makes this so surprising: two groups who disagreed about nearly everything agreed that Jesus had to be stopped. Mark records their cooperation without explaining the personal motives of every man involved.

3 A question meant to trap Him

Later, some Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. They wanted to catch Him in His words (Mark 12:13–17).

The question touched a sensitive issue: Roman authority over the Jewish people. Either answer would have offended one side. Jesus recognized their hypocrisy and asked whose image and inscription were on the coin.

His answer directed them to give Caesar what belonged to Caesar and God what belonged to God. They marveled at Him.

What to remember

The Herodians help us see the political side of the opposition to Jesus. His ministry drew the attention of people concerned with earthly rulers as well as religious leaders.

The Zealots

Jewish resistance to Roman rule joined a desire for freedom with strong religious conviction.



1 God alone as ruler

Some Jews believed that accepting foreign rule denied God's rightful authority over Israel.

Josephus describes followers of Judas the Galilean as deeply committed to liberty and to God alone as their ruler.

For these men, resistance to Rome involved their faith as well as their nation's freedom.

What the illustration shows

A representative supporter of resistance to Rome, not a portrait of Simon the apostle. The weapon and clothing are illustrative; Scripture provides no Zealot uniform.

2 Use the name carefully

Judas the Galilean led resistance connected with the census of AD 6. Acts recalls that he drew people after him, perished, and left his followers scattered (Acts 5:37).

The relationship between this earlier resistance and the organized Zealots of the later Jewish revolt is debated. We should not assume that every opponent of Rome belonged to one continuous organization.

Armed resistance formed part of the troubled setting of the New Testament, but the labels Zealots and Sicarii should not simply be treated as two names for the same group.

3 Simon, one of the Twelve

Luke names one of Jesus' apostles as Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:13–16). The name may point to political associations or to zeal, but the Gospel does not explain his earlier life.

We are not told that Simon fought against Rome, belonged to an organized party, or committed an assassination. We should leave those details unwritten.

What to remember

Some people sought freedom through resistance to Rome. Simon's clear place in Scripture is among the men Jesus chose to be His apostles.

The Samaritans

A distinct religious community in Samaria, the region between Judea and Galilee.



1 A separate community

Samaritans regarded themselves as descendants of Israel and keepers of Moses' Law. They accepted the first five books of Scripture and honored Mount Gerizim as the place of worship.

Their origins are disputed. Second Kings 17:24–41 describes foreign settlers and mixed worship in Samaria, but does not give the whole history of the later Samaritan community.

What the illustration shows

A representative Samaritan family in a village setting. These are not named people from Scripture. Clothing, faces, and landscape are plausible reconstructions, not recorded portraits.

2 A deep religious division

Jews and Samaritans had a long history of hostility. Their disagreement included where God should be worshiped: Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem.

The Samaritan woman was surprised when Jesus, a Jew, asked her for a drink. He spoke truthfully with her about worship and explained that true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:9, 20–24).

3 Jesus crossed the barrier

Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah to that woman. Many Samaritans believed and recognized Him as the Savior of the world (John 4:25–26, 39–42).

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made a Samaritan the example of mercy toward a wounded stranger (Luke 10:25–37).

Their place in the early church

Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and people believed and were baptized. Peter and John came and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5–17).

What to remember: Knowing this division helps us understand the significance of Jesus' words and actions—and the spread of the gospel into Samaria.

The Galileans

People from Galilee, the northern region where Jesus grew up and carried out much of His ministry.



1 A region, not a party

Galileans were people from a place. The name did not mean they all belonged to one religious or political group.

Nazareth and Capernaum were in Galilee. Jesus taught in the region's synagogues (Matthew 4:13, 23).

Fishing was part of life there. Peter, Andrew, James, and John worked as fishermen when Jesus called them (Matthew 4:18–22).

What the illustration shows

Fishermen mending a net beside the Sea of Galilee. This scene illustrates an occupation in the region; it does not identify these men as particular apostles or reproduce an exact shoreline.

2 Recognizable—and sometimes dismissed

Galileans could be recognized by their speech. During Peter's denial of Jesus, people noticed his accent (Matthew 26:69–73).

Some religious leaders spoke dismissively of Galilee. When Nicodemus questioned their treatment of Jesus, they used his supposed connection with Galilee against him (John 7:50–52). Their contempt should not become our judgment of everyone who lived there.

3 Central to Jesus' ministry

Jesus had been brought up in Nazareth and later lived in Capernaum. He taught, proclaimed the kingdom, and healed throughout Galilee, drawing large crowds (Luke 4:16; Matthew 4:13–25).

Yet Galileans did not all welcome Him. People in His own hometown became angry and tried to kill Him (Luke 4:28–30).

Their place in the early church

At Pentecost, the crowd was amazed that Galileans were speaking in the many languages people heard (Acts 2:4–11).

What to remember: Galilee was deeply connected with Jesus' earthly ministry and His first followers. Knowing the region helps us follow the story.

Tax Collectors

People who collected taxes and tolls—often resented, yet repeatedly welcomed and called to repentance by Jesus.



1 A distrusted occupation

Older translations call them publicans. They collected taxes or tolls for governing authorities, though not all worked directly for Rome.

The work offered chances to overcharge. John the Baptist told them to collect only what was authorized (Luke 3:12–13).

Zacchaeus was a wealthy chief tax collector (Luke 19:1–2).

What the illustration shows

A representative toll-collection scene with coins, records, and a traveler's goods. This is not a portrait of Matthew or Zacchaeus. The scene does not imply that every collector was dishonest.

2 Jesus called them to follow Him

Jesus called Matthew from his tax booth, and Matthew followed Him. When Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees questioned His disciples about it (Matthew 9:9–13).

Jesus compared His work to a physician caring for the sick. His welcome did not mean sin no longer mattered; He came to call sinners.

When Jesus visited Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus promised generosity toward the poor and repayment for fraud. Jesus announced salvation for his household and explained His mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:5–10).

3 Repentance mattered more than reputation

In Jesus' parable, a tax collector asked God for mercy while a Pharisee praised his own conduct. Jesus said the repentant tax collector went home justified—accepted as righteous before God (Luke 18:9–14).

Jesus also told religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering God's kingdom ahead of them because they had believed John's message (Matthew 21:31–32).

What to remember

A bad reputation did not put someone beyond God's mercy. These accounts call us to repentance and warn us against trusting our own standing.

The Common People

The ordinary families and neighbors who formed much of the setting of Jesus' ministry.



1 Everyday people

Not every Jewish person was a Pharisee, Sadducee, or religious official. Most lived ordinary lives of work, family, and community.

The expression "people of the land" has different meanings in different settings. Here we use common people broadly, not as the name of an organized party.

Their social standing did not measure their worth before God.

What the illustration shows

A representative village family with the goods of everyday work. Faces, clothing, and setting are illustrative. Ordinary people had varied occupations, circumstances, and responses to Jesus.

2 Faith within daily life

Belief in the one God and the importance of His Law shaped Jewish life. Sabbath observance and the festivals mattered, though people's practices varied. Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem each year for Passover (Luke 2:41).

People also faced ordinary concerns: food, work, illness, and the care of their families. Jesus saw the crowds with compassion because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35–36).

Some leaders dismissed the crowd as ignorant of the Law and cursed (John 7:45–49). That was their judgment, not God's declaration about ordinary people.

3 Different hopes and responses

After Jesus fed the multitude, some wanted to make Him king by force. He withdrew from them (John 6:14–15).

Later, many disciples turned back when His teaching was difficult to accept. Peter, however, affirmed that Jesus had the words of eternal life (John 6:60–69).

What to remember

The crowds were made up of individuals. We should not give them all the same motives or assume everyone responded to Jesus in the same way.

The Hellenists

Greek-speaking Jews whose language and background help explain several events in Acts.



1 Jewish roots

Many came from Jewish communities outside Judea. Greek language and culture were part of their lives.

Speaking Greek did not make someone a Gentile or mean he had abandoned the Jewish faith.

Acts 6:1 distinguishes Greek-speaking believers from the Hebrews, generally understood as primarily Aramaic-speaking Jewish believers.

What the illustration shows

A representative scene of food being provided to a widow, recalling the concern in Acts 6. The people are not identified individuals. Greek-speaking believers had no recorded distinctive uniform.

2 A need the church had to address

As the disciples increased, the Hellenists complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of help. Acts describes a real failure in care, not merely hurt feelings (Acts 6:1–7).

The apostles directed the believers to choose seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom. Stephen and Philip were among those chosen.

This allowed the need to be addressed while the apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Care for vulnerable people belonged within the church's life.

3 The name does not tell us someone's faith

In Acts 9:28–30, Paul disputed with Greek-speaking Jews who tried to kill him. These opponents should not be confused with the Greek-speaking believers whose widows needed help in Acts 6.

Hellenist describes a language and cultural background. It does not mean that everyone bearing the name shared the same beliefs or response to Jesus.

What to remember

The early church brought together people with different backgrounds. Acts shows the importance of addressing practical needs fairly as the gospel spread.

Paul

An enemy of the church became a servant of Jesus Christ.



1 Who was he?

Paul, also known as Saul, was a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen by birth, and a Pharisee educated under Gamaliel.

He knew the Scriptures and pursued his religion intensely. Yet he persecuted Jesus' followers. Religious confidence did not keep him from being terribly wrong about Jesus.

Acts 22:3–5, 27–28;
Philippians 3:5–6

What the illustration shows

An imagined portrait of Paul as a teacher and letter writer. Scripture does not describe his face. His appearance, clothing, and setting are artistic reconstruction, not a recorded scene.

2 What changed him?

On his way to Damascus to arrest believers, Saul encountered the risen Jesus. Blinded, he was led into the city. Through Ananias, the Lord restored his sight; Saul was baptized and began proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:1–22).

The standing he once treasured could not compare with knowing Christ. His hope rested in righteousness received through faith in Him (Philippians 3:4–11).

3 How does he help us know Jesus?

Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. He understood his own calling as a gift of God’s grace (1 Corinthians 15:1–10).

He traveled, taught, and suffered for the gospel. His letters addressed real people facing questions, conflict, grief, and growing faith. Knowing their circumstances helps us understand his words and his care for them.

Back to your Bible

Acts 9:1–22 · Meet the man Jesus called.

Philippians 3:4–11 · Hear what Paul came to treasure.

1 Corinthians 15:1–10 · Read the gospel he proclaimed.

Explore Paul’s life more deeply

Paul’s Life, Journeys, and Letters
A separate illustrated book for a deeper walk through his life and ministry.

Paul's life at a glance

A guide to the sequence. Calendar dates are approximate.

Early life · Born in Tarsus; educated under Gamaliel. A Pharisee and Roman citizen. Birth year unknown. (Acts 22:3, 28; Philippians 3:5)

About AD 33-36 · Persecutes believers; encounters Jesus near Damascus; is baptized and begins preaching. (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-22)

Before the journeys · Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria and Cilicia; then Antioch with Barnabas. (Galatians 1:15-24; Acts 11:25-26)

About AD 46-48 · First journey with Barnabas: Cyprus and southern Galatia; churches established. (Acts 13-14)

About AD 49 · Jerusalem Council: Gentiles need not be circumcised to be saved. (Acts 15:1-35)

About AD 49-52 · Second journey: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth. Timothy joins. (Acts 15:36-18:22)

About AD 52-57 · Third journey: Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece; return to Jerusalem. (Acts 18:23-21:17)

About AD 57-62 · Arrest; Caesarea imprisonment; shipwreck; two years teaching under guard in Rome. (Acts 21:27-28:31)

After Acts ends · Later travel and imprisonment are reconstructed from his letters. He anticipates death (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Death under Nero is early Christian tradition.

The letters in his life

Thirteen letters that help us know Christ and live in Him.

During the journeys · about AD 48-57

Galatians · Faith in Christ, freedom, and life in the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians · Faithful living and hope in Jesus’ return.

2 Thessalonians · The Lord’s coming and responsible living.

1 Corinthians · Unity, holiness, love, and resurrection.

2 Corinthians · Ministry through weakness; generous giving.

Romans · Salvation through faith and a transformed life.

From imprisonment · traditionally Rome, AD 60-62

Ephesians · One people in Christ, saved by grace.

Philippians · Joy and humility centered on Christ.

Colossians · Christ’s supremacy and our new life in Him.

Philemon · Receive Onesimus as a beloved brother.

Later ministry · traditionally about AD 62-67

1 Timothy · Sound teaching and faithful church leadership.

Titus · Healthy teaching that produces godly lives.

2 Timothy · Guard the gospel and remain faithful to Christ.

Dates follow a common chronology and are approximate. Galatians may belong before the Council or during the third journey. Some prison locations and the later sequence are debated. Based on the supplied Paul research and biblical references. Hebrews is not included: it does not name its author.

Pontius Pilate

Who was he?

Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea during Jesus’ public ministry. His formal office was prefect. He represented Rome, and Jesus was brought before him for judgment.

Luke 3:1; Matthew 27:1–2

Why he matters

Pilate repeatedly said he found no guilt deserving death in Jesus. Yet he yielded to the demand for crucifixion. Recognizing innocence did not keep him from doing wrong.

Luke 23:13–25



Artist’s reconstruction, not a recorded portrait of Pilate.

Pilate and Herod became friends

Which Herod?

Herod Antipas—the ruler of Galilee, not Herod the Great from the account of Jesus’ birth. When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Antipas, who was also in Jerusalem.

Luke 23:6–7

Jesus was sent back

Antipas wanted to see a sign. Jesus gave him no answer. Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus, dressed Him in splendid clothing, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:8–11

Enemies became friends

Luke says Pilate and Herod became friends that day; previously they had been enemies. Luke does not explain the origin of their hostility. We should not supply a motive the passage does not give.

Luke 23:12

Return to Jesus

These powerful men could question and condemn, but neither could establish His guilt. Follow the account through Pilate’s final decision.

Luke 23:13–25

The Herods: keep the names clear



Representative Herodian palace setting; not an exact reconstruction of a named room.

Who were the Herods?

The Herods were one family that ruled the Jewish people for Rome across several generations. Their roots were in Idumea (the old land of Edom), south of Judea. The family had been brought into Judaism by force about a century earlier, and many Jews never fully accepted them as their own. Rome named Herod the Great “king of the Jews” in 40 BC. Rome’s terms were simple: keep the peace, collect the taxes and stay loyal. Herod rebuilt the Temple on a grand scale, yet he ruled with fear and suspicion (Matthew 2:16). His sons and grandsons, the Herods of the Gospels and Acts, ruled smaller pieces of the land under the same arrangement.

A useful distinction

The Herods are individual rulers. The Herodians are supporters associated with Herodian rule. They are not another name for the royal family.

Herod the Great and Antipas

Herod the Great: Jesus’ birth

The king who feared the newborn King and ordered the killing of young boys in Bethlehem. Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt; the family returned after Herod died.

Matthew 2:1–23

Herod Antipas: Jesus’ ministry

A son of Herod the Great who governed Galilee and Perea under Rome. He had John the Baptist imprisoned and executed after John confronted his marriage to Herodias.

Luke 3:1, 19–20; Mark 6:14–29

Antipas and Pilate

This is the Herod who questioned and mocked Jesus before returning Him to Pilate. These two rulers became friends that day.

Luke 23:6–12

Agrippa I and Agrippa II

Herod Agrippa I: the early church

A grandson of Herod the Great. The king called Herod in Acts 12 killed James the brother of John and imprisoned Peter. The Lord delivered Peter.

Acts 12:1–19

His death did not stop the gospel

Acts records Agrippa’s judgment and death, then turns our attention to the continuing spread of God’s Word.

Acts 12:20–24

Herod Agrippa II: Paul’s defense

The son of Agrippa I. He and Bernice visited the governor Festus. Paul spoke before them about his former life, his encounter with Jesus, and his mission.

Acts 25:13–26:32

Connect this ruler with Paul

Agrippa II heard Paul; he was not the governor to whom Paul appealed. Festus was governor, and Paul had appealed to Caesar.

Acts 25:1–12

Other names in the family

Archelaus

Matthew names him as ruling Judea after his father, Herod the Great. Joseph was afraid to settle there and withdrew to Galilee.

Matthew 2:22–23

Philip the tetrarch

Luke names Philip as ruler of Ituraea and Trachonitis. Do not automatically identify him with Herodias’s former husband.

Luke 3:1

Herodias and her former husband

Mark calls her former husband Philip, Herod’s brother. Historical discussions commonly identify this man as Herod II, also called Herod Philip, and distinguish him from Philip the tetrarch.

Mark 6:17–18

Find the right Herod quickly

Birth: the Great. John the Baptist and Jesus’ trial: Antipas. James and Peter in Acts 12: Agrippa I. Paul’s defense in Acts 25–26: Agrippa II.

See related entries:

Pontius Pilate Paul Herodians

The Temple in Jerusalem

One central place of sacrifice

The Temple stood in Jerusalem. Priests served there, sacrifices were offered, and worshipers came for the appointed feasts. A synagogue served a different purpose.

Luke 2:41–49; Hebrews 9:6–7

Priest and high priest

Aaron’s descendants served as priests. The high priest held the leading priestly office. On the Day of Atonement, he entered behind the curtain with sacrificial blood.

Exodus 28:1; Leviticus 16:2–17

Holy Place

The outer sanctuary room contained the lampstand, the table with the bread of the Presence, and the incense altar. Priests carried out their regular ministry there.

Exodus 26:33–35; Hebrews 9:2, 6

Most Holy Place

The inner sanctuary was separated by a curtain. Hebrews contrasts the priests’ regular service in the outer room with the high priest’s annual entry into the inner room.

Hebrews 9:6–7

The curtain and our greater High Priest

The curtain was torn

When Jesus died, the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom. Read this alongside Hebrews’ teaching about access to God through Jesus.

Matthew 27:50–51; Hebrews 10:19–22

The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark belonged to Israel’s earlier sanctuary history. Hebrews associates it with the covenant tablets, manna, and Aaron’s staff. It was not present in Herod’s Temple during Jesus’ lifetime.

Exodus 25:10–22; Hebrews 9:4

Jesus is greater

Jesus entered heaven itself on our behalf. His sacrifice does not need to be repeated. Hebrews points beyond the earthly sanctuary to the redemption He secured.

Hebrews 9:11–12, 24–28

Keep the setting clear

Hebrews 9 describes the earlier sanctuary arrangement to explain Christ’s work. Do not assume every object it names was still standing in the Temple in Jesus’ day.

Before we enter the synagogue

A local place of gathering

Jewish communities gathered for Scripture, teaching, prayer, and community life. Sacrifices belonged to the Temple’s worship, not to synagogue gatherings.

Luke 4:16–21; Acts 15:21

Sabbath

The seventh day was set apart for rest. Jesus regularly attended the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8–11; Luke 4:16

Ruler and attendant

The ruler helped oversee the gathering. He was not necessarily a priest. The attendant cared for practical matters; Jesus returned Isaiah’s scroll to the attendant.

Mark 5:22; Luke 4:20

Scroll, reader, teacher

Scripture was read from a handwritten scroll. A reader stood to read, and teaching followed. Jesus read Isaiah and explained its fulfillment in Himself.

Luke 4:16–21

The synagogue in the story

Nazareth

Jesus’ hometown heard His words, but the gathering turned hostile. Familiarity with Him did not ensure faith in Him.

Luke 4:16–30

Capernaum

People heard Jesus teach with authority and saw an unclean spirit obey His command.

Mark 1:21–28

Jairus

This synagogue ruler pleaded for his daughter. Jesus went with him and raised the child.

Mark 5:21–43

Paul

Paul often began in a city’s synagogue, reasoning from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ. This gives the synagogue an important place in the spread of the gospel.

Acts 17:1–4

See related entries:

The Temple and sanctuary Paul Places in the Gospel story

The council and its members

What was the Sanhedrin?

Jerusalem’s leading Jewish council dealt with religious questions and many legal matters while Judea remained under Roman rule. It was a council, not a separate religious party.

Matthew 26:57–68; Acts 5:27–40

Who took part?

The high priest presided among chief priests, elders, and scribes. Caiaphas held the high priesthood during Jesus’ trial; Annas, a former high priest, remained influential.

Matthew 26:57; John 18:13–14, 24

Different descriptions can overlap

High priest names an office. Scribe describes trained work with the Law. Pharisee and Sadducee name different movements. These labels are not successive ranks in one organization.

Acts 23:6–9

The council in the New Testament

Jesus before the leaders

The Gospel accounts describe Jesus’ examination and condemnation, followed by His delivery to Pilate. Keep the Jewish proceedings and the Roman decision distinct.

Matthew 26:57–68; 27:1–2

Why go to Pilate?

John records the leaders seeking a Roman judgment and saying they were not permitted to put anyone to death. This explains their approach in this case; it should not be expanded into an account of every legal practice.

John 18:28–32

The apostles before the council

Acts also shows the apostles questioned and threatened. Gamaliel urged caution about opposing a work that might be from God.

Acts 5:27–40

Paul before the council

Paul’s reference to the resurrection exposed the division between Pharisees and Sadducees. Follow the account into the Roman commander’s intervention.

Acts 23:1–10

Different rulers, different authority

Caesar: the emperor

Caesar became an imperial title. Luke places the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry in the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

Luke 3:1

Governor or prefect

Pilate governed Judea on Rome’s behalf. Prefect was his formal title; the New Testament also uses the broader term governor.

Matthew 27:2

Tetrarch and client ruler

A tetrarch ruled part of a larger territory. Antipas governed Galilee and Perea under Rome. Client ruler describes a local ruler whose position depended on Roman support.

Luke 3:1; 23:6–7

Avoid one chart for every province

Roman offices and arrangements differed by place and period. Pilate, Antipas, and the emperor did not hold the same office.

Why Roman rule matters

Territory explains the transfer

Pilate heard that Jesus was a Galilean and sent Him to Antipas. Knowing who governed where helps us follow Luke’s account.

Luke 23:6–12

Authority did not equal innocence

Pilate’s official position did not make his decision just. The accounts hold human rulers responsible while showing Jesus’ willing submission.

Luke 23:13–25; John 19:10–11

The story continues in Acts

Paul appeared before governors and a king. Festus and Agrippa II were different people with different roles. Paul’s appeal was to Caesar.

Acts 25:1–13

An empire connected many places

Roman roads, travel routes, cities, and political authority formed part of the world through which the gospel spread. Acts follows real journeys through that world.

Acts 13–28

See related entries:

Pontius Pilate Which Herod? Soldiers and Roman citizenship

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Soldiers, centurions, and legions

Roman soldier

Soldiers guarded prisoners, enforced orders, and carried out executions. The Gospels also show soldiers mocking Jesus.

Matthew 27:27–37; Acts 12:4–6

Centurion

An officer commanding a unit called a century. Its strength was not invariably one hundred; about eighty was common in the early imperial legion. The title describes a military responsibility, not a spiritual condition.

Matthew 8:5–13; Acts 10:1–2

Legion

A large Roman military formation numbering several thousand. When Jesus spoke of legions of angels, He was describing overwhelming help available from His Father.

Matthew 26:53

Read each person’s response

The centurion who sought Jesus’ help and Cornelius in Acts deserve attention as individuals. A uniform does not tell us how a person will respond to God.

Matthew 8:5–13; Acts 10

Paul and Roman citizenship

Legal protections mattered

Paul challenged officials who were about to flog him without a trial. When the commander learned Paul was a Roman citizen, he became afraid.

Acts 22:25–29

Born a citizen

The commander said his own citizenship had cost a large sum. Paul replied that he was a citizen by birth. Scripture does not tell us how his family first obtained that status.

Acts 22:28

His appeal to Caesar

Before Festus, Paul appealed to Caesar. That appeal shaped what followed, including his journey as a prisoner toward Rome.

Acts 25:6–12; 27:1

Connect the journey

Paul’s four-page introduction supplies the main sequence and letters. The separate Paul book provides the place for fuller journeys, maps, and the voyage to Rome.

See related entries:

Paul Rome and its rulers Which Herod?

The land where Jesus walked



Representative first-century Galilean shoreline; not an exact view of a named village.

Begin with the setting

Galilee lay to the north, Samaria in the central hill country, and Judea farther south. The Jordan valley helps orient the reader from the Sea of Galilee toward the Dead Sea.

Places are more than scenery

A journey may cross regional, political, or social boundaries. Notice where Jesus goes and whom He meets.

Galilee, Samaria, and Judea

Galilee

The northern region where Jesus grew up and carried out much of His ministry. Nazareth and Capernaum belong here. Galilean is a regional description, not the name of a religious party.

Matthew 2:22–23; 4:12–17

Samaria

The central region between Galilee and Judea. John 4 brings us into the tensions between Jews and Samaritans and shows Jesus offering living water.

John 4:4–42

Judea

The southern region containing Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jerusalem’s Temple made the city central to Jewish worship.

Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:41–49

People and places stay connected

Use the existing Galileans and Samaritans entries for the people. Use these geography pages for their setting.

Across the Jordan

Perea

The region east of the Jordan associated with Antipas’s rule. John describes Jesus going beyond the Jordan to the place where John had first baptized. The Gospel does not use Perea as the location’s name.

John 10:40

Decapolis

A group of Greek-influenced cities, mainly east and southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Mark describes the healed man proclaiming there what Jesus had done for him.

Mark 5:20

Boundaries need care

Regional names do not always describe sharply fixed modern-style borders. Follow the place named in each passage before adding a more precise location.

Grace crossed familiar boundaries

Jesus’ work reached beyond His hometown and beyond comfortable social divisions. Geography can help us notice that movement.

Matthew 4:25; John 4:39–42

The lake and the river

Sea of Galilee

A freshwater lake central to Jesus’ ministry. It is also called the Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias. These names do not mean three different lakes.

Luke 5:1; John 6:1

Work, calling, and faith

Fishing belonged to ordinary life around the lake. Jesus called fishermen to follow Him, taught near its shore, and demonstrated His authority over wind and water.

Mark 1:16–20; 4:35–41

Jordan River

The river flows south from the Sea of Galilee toward the Dead Sea. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan.

Matthew 3:13–17

When another name appears

Check the setting before assuming the story has moved. A lake, a region, and a town are different kinds of place.

See related entries:

Galileans Samaritans Places in the Gospel story

Bethlehem and Nazareth

Bethlehem: Jesus was born here

Luke calls it David’s city. Matthew connects it with the promised ruler and tells of Herod’s violence against its young children.

Luke 2:1–20; Matthew 2:1–18

Nazareth: Jesus grew up here

After the family’s return from Egypt, Joseph settled in Nazareth. Later Jesus read Isaiah in its synagogue.

Matthew 2:19–23; Luke 4:16–21

His hometown rejected Him

The gathering moved from amazement to anger. A familiar place could still be a place of unbelief.

Luke 4:22–30

Keep the two places distinct

Bethlehem belongs to the birth account; Nazareth to His upbringing and hometown ministry. Jesus is called a Nazarene, but that does not move His birthplace.

Capernaum and the Samaritan encounter

Capernaum

A town beside the Sea of Galilee and a center of Jesus’ teaching and healing. The Gospels place His authoritative synagogue teaching and the healing of the paralyzed man here.

Matthew 4:13; Mark 1:21–28; 2:1–12

Sychar in Samaria

John names Sychar near the field Jacob gave Joseph. Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Samaria names the region; Sychar names the town in this account.

John 4:5–6

Many believed

The woman’s testimony brought others to Jesus. They heard Him for themselves and recognized Him as the Savior of the world.

John 4:28–42

Jerusalem

Temple, teaching, and confrontation

Jerusalem was the city of the Temple. Jesus came there for the feasts and taught openly. The closing Gospel chapters bring us repeatedly to this city.

Luke 2:41–49; 19:28–48

The cross and the empty tomb

Jesus was crucified near the city. His burial and resurrection bring us to the heart of the gospel, not merely another stop on a journey.

John 19:20, 41–42; 20:1–18

The witnesses go outward

Jesus’ commission names Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Acts follows the spread of that witness.

Acts 1:8

Connect with Paul

Paul’s story repeatedly returns to Jerusalem: his earlier training, meetings with believers, and eventual arrest.

Acts 22:3; 9:26–30; 21:17–36

Use geography while you read

Ask three simple questions

Where is this happening? Who lives or rules there? What does the location help me understand about the encounter?

Follow the story, not an imagined route

The Gospels do not supply every travel detail. Distinguish a place named in Scripture from a possible route reconstructed by a mapmaker.

A wider world in Acts

Paul’s journeys move beyond these Gospel settings. His introduction gives the sequence. Detailed missionary maps and the prisoner voyage belong with his separate book.

Acts 13–28

Return to the people

Bethlehem connects with Herod the Great; Nazareth and Galilee with Antipas; Jerusalem with the council and Pilate. Those links help keep similar names distinct.

See related entries:

Regions and waters Pontius Pilate Which Herod?

Before we enter the home

Homes varied

Wealth, location, and available materials affected a home’s size and construction. Many used stone, mud plaster, timber, reeds, and earth. Do not treat one drawing as the pattern for every household.

Courtyard or work area

Some homes included an open area for food preparation, household work, and family life. Details in a teaching picture are representative rather than a complete archaeological record.

Flat roof

A roof could be useful household space. Stairs or a ladder gave access; a parapet helped protect those using it. Peter went to a roof to pray.

Deuteronomy 22:8; Acts 10:9

Upper room

A room above the main living area could serve guests or private gatherings. Jesus sent disciples to prepare a large furnished upper room for Passover.

Mark 14:14–15

Light, meals, and welcome

Clay oil lamp

A small lamp held oil and a wick. Its light was useful when placed where the household could benefit from it. Jesus used that familiar picture in His teaching.

Matthew 5:15; Luke 15:8

Reclining at the table

At formal meals, guests might recline rather than sit upright in chairs. This helps explain details such as approaching a guest’s feet.

Luke 7:36–38; John 13:23

Washing feet

Water for dusty feet was a welcome to a guest. Washing another person’s feet was humble service. Jesus took that lowly place with His disciples.

Luke 7:44; John 13:3–17

Hospitality

Welcome involved practical care: food, water, shelter, and attention to a guest’s needs. Scripture calls believers to practice it.

Luke 10:38; Hebrews 13:2

Jesus in the home

Faith brought a man to Him

Four friends opened the roof and lowered a paralyzed man. Jesus forgave his sins and healed him before the gathering.

Mark 2:1–12

Mary listened; Martha was distracted

Martha’s serving became a source of anxiety. Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened. Jesus directed Martha toward the good portion Mary had chosen.

Luke 10:38–42

Jesus ate with sinners

His fellowship with tax collectors and sinners did not excuse sin. It displayed His mission to call sinners, as a physician comes to those who are sick.

Mark 2:15–17

The meal and the servant’s place

The meal pointed to the cross

At Passover, Jesus gave the bread and cup meaning in His body and blood. The ordinary setting became the place where He explained what He was about to give for His people.

Luke 22:7–20

The Lord washed their feet

Jesus used a basin and towel to teach humble service. His disciples were to follow His example. Greatness in His kingdom does not free us from serving.

John 13:1–17

Let the setting serve the Scripture

Roofs, lamps, tables, and upper rooms help us understand the accounts. The center remains Jesus—what He said, what He did, and how people responded.

See related entries:

Tax Collectors Places in the Gospel story

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About this growing reference

Our purpose

To help readers understand the people, groups, places, and ordinary settings they meet in the New Testament—and return to the Bible with greater understanding.

Scripture and historical background

Scripture is paraphrased with references; the ESV is the primary translation. The thirteen established group entries retain their earlier research and wording. Added material has been rewritten from Walking With Jesus and His Apostles, with biblical passages checked where expanded.

About the pictures

Illustrations are created with AI assistance. They are representative reconstructions, not recorded portraits or exact archaeological plans. New Pilate, palace, and Galilee art replaces reliance on small, blurry composite images for these additions.

Paul and the deeper books

Paul’s introduction, timeline, and letters remain on pages 30–33. His separate illustrated book remains a companion resource. A public link must be added when its final website address is established.

Edition note

Integrated review edition; not yet published to the website.

The Sea of Galilee



A shoreline setting for the Gospel story

The lake, rocky shore, and surrounding hills help us picture the setting of Jesus' ministry. Fishing, boats, lakeside teaching, and journeys across the water were part of life here.

Read Mark 1:16-20; 4:1-2, 35-41.

This present-day photograph illustrates the landscape. It does not identify the exact spot of a particular miracle.

Related entry: Regions and waters

Gethsemane



The garden before the arrest

Jesus came to Gethsemane with His disciples. He prayed in anguish and submitted to the Father's will. Judas then arrived with the crowd that arrested Him. The garden setting helps us follow the movement from prayer to arrest.

Read Matthew 26:36-56; John 18:1-12.

Olive trees at the traditional Garden of Gethsemane. We do not claim these visible trunks stood here during Jesus' lifetime.

Related entry: Places in the Gospel story

Back to photo entries

Approaching the Temple



The southern approach includes ancient remains and restoration. The domed building above is Al-Aqsa Mosque, built centuries after Jesus' ministry; it is not the biblical Temple.

The southern steps in Jerusalem

These steps help us picture worshipers approaching the Temple Mount. Jesus came to Jerusalem for the feasts and taught in the Temple. The photograph gives physical context to those accounts.

Read Luke 2:41-50; 19:45-48.

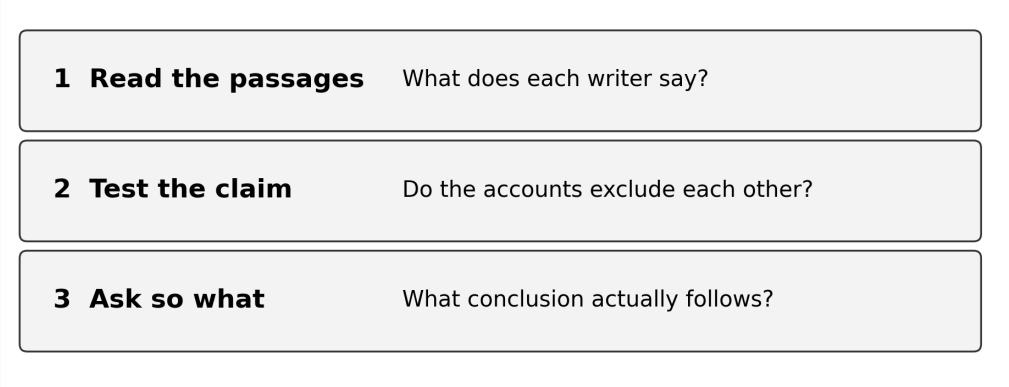
Related entry: The Temple and sanctuary

Back to photo entries

The Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) - Differences and Alleged Discrepancies

A guide to the separate thirty six question study

Believers and nonbelievers alike ask why the four accounts differ. Picture their testimony presented in court: hear each writer, consider the claimed conflict and reasonable inferences, and ask what verdict the whole evidence actually supports.



What the full companion examines

Each question begins with the passages themselves. It then states the skeptical claim fairly, tests the claimed conflict, and leaves unresolved questions plainly marked.

The heart of the inquiry

Paul says Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). Differences about the resurrection reports deserve close study.

Three examples from the full study

The visitors at the tomb

John focuses on Mary Magdalene; the other writers name more women. John 20:2 also records Mary saying “we.” Who was present at each moment must be examined, not assumed.

The healing near Jericho

Matthew reports two blind men; Mark names Bartimaeus. Mark does not say Bartimaeus was alone. Luke’s approach-to-Jericho wording raises a separate, harder question.

The day and the hour

The Passover chronology and the crucifixion hour are genuine questions. A possible explanation is not a proved reconstruction. Their passages need sustained attention.

The courtroom question

What does each account say? Do the accounts truly exclude one another? Even when a detail remains disputed, what conclusion about the central event actually follows from that difference?

Read the separate study:

The Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) - Differences and Alleged Discrepancies.

Prayer, faith and forgiveness

Read Mark 11:22-25 in the context of Mark 11:12-25. Compare these teachings on trusting God, praying in faith and forgiving others.

Nathan Busenitz

The Heart God Hears

Teaching on the heart's posture toward God in prayer.

Watch teaching >

Mandeville Bible Church

October 18, 2026 worship service

Related teaching for studying Mark 11 in its wider setting.

Watch teaching >

Mandeville Bible Church

October 25, 2026 worship service

A further service recording for comparing the passage's themes.

Watch teaching >

Study helps: compare each teacher's explanation with the biblical passage.
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