



B I B L I C A L

volume 44 number 4 summer 2018

ILLUSTRATOR



SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP *Its Origins*

Ships and Shipping in the New Testament World

David's Last Hymn

HAVE YOU EVER known someone with a seemingly flawless memory? I had a seminary professor with that kind of memory. If someone asked a question, he would reply, “You’ll find that in the Bettenson’s book, *Documents of The Christian Church*, about half-way down page 149.” Some of us went to the library early in the semester to check his accuracy. The amazing thing—he was ALWAYS right! Most of us do not have flawless memories. Absorption through repetition can help us remember. Tying the new information to what we already know can help us remember. Sometimes we depend on triggers to help us remember facts and information.



Knowing Bible history is no different. Some things we have to set down as foundational. Dates can be this way. Some basic dates we should just “nail down” include:

- 1446 BC The exodus
- 1010–970 David reigned
- 931 Kingdom divided
- 722 Israel fell to the Assyrians
- 586 Judah fell to the Babylonians
- 539 Jews returned from exile
- AD 70 Jerusalem fell to the Romans

Once you have these dates nailed down, what do you add? Forty years. The Israelites entered the promised land forty years after the exodus. Saul reigned about forty years before David—and Solomon, for almost forty years after David.

Another help is that a lot of details are alphabetical, moving left to right, top to bottom, and first to last. For instance, on a map, you get to the Euphrates River before you do the Tigris River. When the United Kingdom divided, Israel was in the north and Judah in the south. Assyria conquered the north—Babylon, the south. Again, alphabetical order.

The great kingdoms of the holy land are almost in alphabetical order. The region was conquered by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and then the Romans.

Finally, three cities were in the Lycus Valley. The city’s water temperature starts with the same letter as its name: Colossae had cold water; Hierapolis, hot; and Laodicea, lukewarm.

These are little triggers that can help you remember. Oh how I wish someone had taught me these when I was in seminary!

Eric Geiger
Senior Vice President, LifeWay Resources

G. B. Howell, Jr.
Content Editor

Dwayne McCrary
Team Leader

Ken Braddy
Director, Adult Ongoing Curriculum

Michael Kelley
Director, Group Ministry

Send questions/comments to: Team Leader
by email to: Dwayne McCrary@lifeway.com
or by mail to: Team Leader, *Biblical Illustrator*
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234
Or make comments on the Web at www.lifeway.com
@B_Illustrator
visit www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator

Biblical Illustrator (ISSN 0195-1351, Item 005075109) is published quarterly by LifeWay, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Thom S. Rainer, President. © 2017 LifeWay.

For ordering or inquiries visit www.lifeway.com, or write LifeWay Resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For subscriptions or subscription address changes, e-mail subscribe@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5818, or write to the above address. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, fax (615) 251-5933, e-mail orderentry@lifeway.com, or write to the above address.

Annual individual subscription, \$28.00. Bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address when ordered with other literature, \$6.55 each per quarter, plus shipping. Please allow six to eight weeks for arrival of first issue.

Biblical Illustrator is designed to support the Bible study sessions in the student and adult Bible Studies for Life curriculum, the Explore the Bible curriculum, and The Gospel Project curriculum series. Bible background articles and accompanying illustrative material are based on the passages studied in these curriculum series.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay’s doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Scripture quotations marked CSB® are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from English Standard Version® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

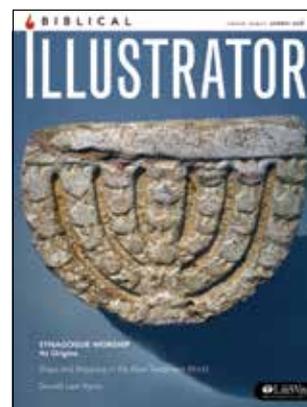
Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®.

Scripture quotations marked (RSV) are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952, © 1971, 1973.

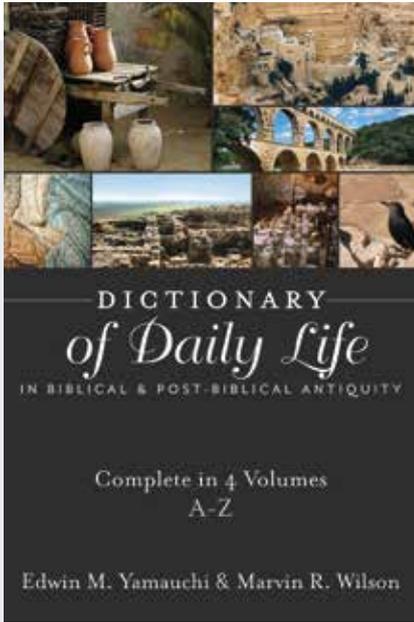
Printed in the United States of America

1105



About the Cover:
Limestone menorah from the synagogue at Tiberias, dates from the 4th-5th centuries AD. It is decorated with the “calyx and petals” pattern of the Temple menorah. Depressions at the top of its branches originally held oil lamps lit as part of the service.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BRENT BRUCE/ ISRAEL MUSEUM/ JERUSALEM (139/B/2376)



THE DICTIONARY OF *Daily Life in Biblical & Post-Biblical Antiquity* edited by the eminent historian Edwin M. Yamauchi and the evangelical Bible scholar Marvin R. Wilson is a unique treasure trove of much-needed information for any Bible student, teacher, or church or university library. Originally published 2014-2016 as four volumes, the 2017 single volume is easier to use.

Most Bible dictionaries focus on technicalities of biblical words, places, names, and concepts. In contrast, this dictionary provides 115 articles on a wide range of cultural and background topics that feature religious practices, social structures, laws, manners and customs, ancient technology, and cultural practices. Articles range from six pages (i.e., "Abortion" and "Camels" to thirty-eight pages (i.e., "Metallurgy").

Articles cover the period from 2000 BC to AD 600. Information on early Christian practice after the New Testament often reveals the early church's application of biblical texts. Each article includes six subsections: 1) the Old Testament, 2) the New Testament, 3) the Near Eastern world, 4) the Greco-Roman world, 5) the Jewish world, and 6) the Christian world. A detailed bibliography for each

article is an added bonus.

Some articles will have initial appeal to *Illustrator* readers: "Boats & Ships," "Death & the Afterlife," "Human Sacrifice," "Names," "Slavery," and "Time." Some articles especially reveal daily life: "Age & the Aged," "Banquets," "Baths & Bathing," "Clothing," "Cosmetics," "Doors & Keys," "Furniture," "Hair," "Nursing & Wet Nurses," "Sanitation," and "Widows & Orphans."

"Police & Prisons," using sources from the ancient world, reveals the awful conditions of Roman prisons. In the section on the Christian world, however, the author reveals through ancient sources how "The Christianization of the Empire brought discernible change [i.e., some better conditions] for prisoners" (p. 1414).

This dictionary will have widespread use because it actively engages readers with ancient sources that reveal the daily lives of Bible people. I recommend it highly. 

Bennie R. Crockett, Jr., is professor of religion and philosophy and is co-director of the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey at William Carey University, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

On a scale of 1-10, this book receives a rating of 9.5 camels.



The Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical & Post-Biblical Antiquity by Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson; Hendrickson; 1818 pages; ISBN: 978-1-61970-145-8.

Book reviews are limited to those the Illustrator staff feels confident to recommend, based on ease of reading, quality of content, and doctrinal viewpoint. Each book is reviewed within LifeWay's doctrinal guidelines. The 1 to 10 scale reflects overall quality and usefulness.

YES! PLEASE SEND ME AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION TO BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR (1105):
1 Year Subscription: \$28.00

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Daytime Telephone (_____) _____

Please charge:

LifeWay Account # _____

Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Duplicate this form as needed for additional subscriptions. Allow six to eight weeks for arrival of first issue. Make checks payable to: LifeWay Christian Resources. Foreign subscription payment checks should be drawn on U.S. banks for U.S. dollars. Price includes surface mail.

MAIL TO:
LIFEWAY CHURCH RESOURCES CUSTOMER SERVICE
ONE LIFEWAY PLAZA, NASHVILLE, TN 37234-0113
TO ORDER BY TELEPHONE, CALL 1-800-458-2772 OR
BY FAX (615) 251-5933

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

75 "The Spirit of God Was Hovering"

by Joel F. Drinkard, Jr.
June 3 // Session 1

67 The Last of the Prophets: John the Baptist

by Michael W. Olewski
June 24 // Session 4

InSites (between pages 66-67)

Time Line of Prophets and Prophetesses
June 24 // Session 4

6 Baptism in the Early Church

by Rex D. Butler
July 1 // Session 5

33 What Is a Statute?

by Francis X. Kimmitt
July 15 // Special Focus

54 QuickBites: Time Line for Nehemiah

July 22 // Session 1

56 The Gates of the City

by Bryan E. Beyer
July 29 // Session 2

47 Economic Hardships in Nehemiah's Day

by T. J. Betts
August 12 // Session 4

84 Synagogue Worship: Its Origins

by Kevin C. Peacock
August 19 // Session 5

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

26 Swords in the Ancient Near East

by Dorman Laird
June 3 // Session 1

60 Ish-bosheth: The Importance of a Name

by R. Kelvin Moore
June 10 // Session 2

88 Jerusalem in the Time of David

by David M. Wallace
June 24 // Session 4

17 Nathan the Prophet

by George H. Shaddix
July 8 // Session 6

InSites (between pages 66-67)

Time Line of Prophets and Prophetesses
July 8 // Session 6



10 Rape, Murder, and Ancient Jewish Law

by Robert D. Bergen
July 15 // Session 7

71 Joab, A Man After His Own Heart

by T. Van McClain
July 29 // Session 9

13 Abel-beth-maacah: Its History and Significance

by Eric A. Mitchell
August 5 // Session 10

40 David's Last Hymn

by Becky Lombard
August 19 // Session 12

20 QuickBites: David's Mighty Men

August 19 // Session 12

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

36 Resurrection in Jewish Thought

by Lynn O. Traylor
June 3 // Session 1

63 Ships and Shipping in the New Testament World

by Gerald L. Stevens
June 17 // Session 3

InSites (between pages 66–67)

Boats in the Biblical Period

June 17 // Session 3

80 Understanding God's Glory

by Philip Nation
July 1 // Session 5

22 The Day of the Lord

by Hal Lane
July 15 // Session 7

51 Contending for the Faith

by Randall L. Adkisson
July 22 // Session 8

29 Peter's Theology of Hope

by Warren McWilliams
July 29 // Session 9

44 The Lycus Valley

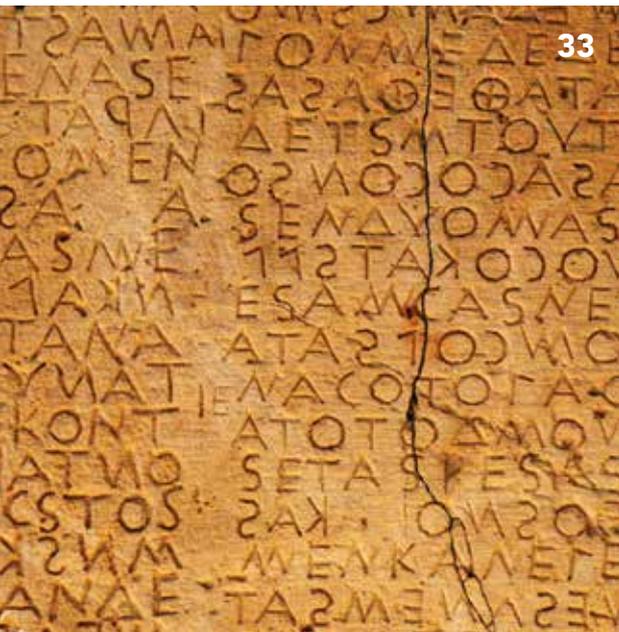
by Roy E. Lucas, Jr.
August 12 // Session 11

92 QuickBites: Churches of the Revelation

August 12 // Session 11

94 Christianity at the End of the First Century

by Gregory T. Pouncey
August 26 // Session 13





BSFL: Acts 2:37-47

BAPTISM

IN THE EARLY CHURCH

ISTOCK PHOTOS

BY REX D. BUTLER

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, at the conclusion of his sermon, Peter exhorted his audience: “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38, CSB). In the aftermath of this invitation, about three thousand new believers were baptized that day.

How did the apostles manage to baptize so many new Christians in such a short period of time? They most likely utilized the 150 *mikvehs*, or ritual baths in Jerusalem at that time. Jewish priests and worshipers would regularly immerse themselves in these pools for purification before offering sacrifices and fulfilling vows.¹

When the apostles baptized the converts, however, they infused the Jewish ritual with entirely new meanings. Instead of only purifications, which must be repeated, Christian baptism was a one-time ceremony, performed “in the name of Jesus Christ” and representing forgiveness of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit. Not only did the baptizer invoke the name of Jesus, but the new believer also called upon His name (Acts 22:16) and thus proclaimed the gospel.

Implied in these early baptisms was the idea Paul later clarified that the believer is united with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection:² “Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4, CSB).

Although every baptism recorded in Acts was conducted in the name of Jesus, within a few decades, the Trinitarian formula began to be invoked, following the pattern of

Right: Young lady, left, embraces her friend, a new convert who has just been baptized in the Jordan River.

Below: Limestone relief, thought to be from Rome, depicts Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Because of the work of the early apostles, Gentiles began to respond to the gospel.



echoing Jesus’ warnings in Matthew 7:13-14. Fasting also was an important preparation for baptism. According to the *Didache*, the candidate, the administrator, and able members of the congregation fasted for a day or two (*Didache* 7.4).

At the turn of the first century, we find that New Testament baptism remained basically unchanged. In this early church manual, baptism retained its simplicity.

Fast-forward a century or so, and baptism transformed into an elaborate ritual full of symbolism. The *Apostolic Tradition*, an early third-century church manual attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, included a lengthy description of the baptismal process. Catechism now lasted up to three years, during which candidates learned God’s Word and became “active in well-doing” (*Apostolic Tradition* 20.1). During the final week, candidates submitted to exorcism daily. On Thursday, they bathed, and after fasting on Friday, they assembled on Saturday and knelt in prayer before

Matthew 28:18-20. The *Didache*, a church manual composed at the end of the first century, instructed administrators to baptize three times in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*Didache* 7.1).

The *Didache* also listed three possible modes of baptism. The use of “living,” or running, water was preferred. The next best option was water, preferably cold, collected in a cistern. And finally, pouring was allowed in arid regions where water would be scarce (*Didache* 7.1-3). Clearly, however, immersion was the favored mode of baptism wherever possible.

In its early history, the church began teaching catechism to new believers. The *Didache* prefaced baptismal instructions with the Two Ways Tract. This tract instructed baptismal candidates to live the “Way of Life” and to reject the “Way of Death,”



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ GB HOWELL (35/62/95)

the administrator, who laid his hands on them to complete their exorcism. According to Tertullian of Carthage, Easter or Pentecost added solemnity to the occasion, but any Sunday was acceptable (*On Baptism* 19.2-3).

On Sunday, the candidates prepared for baptism by removing their clothing. Yes, that's right—naked baptism! My seminary students always wake up when I mention this in my lecture. As I explain to them, several factors allay our concerns about this seemingly unusual practice.

Nudity was not scandalous in a culture where public baths were common.³ Usually baptisteries were separate from the church, and not in the front of a sanctuary. Symbolically, new Christians emerged from the water of new birth in the same naked condition of their first birth. Furthermore, the newly baptized received a white linen robe, a picture of Paul's admonition to put off the old self and put on the new (Col. 3:9-10). In the early church, baptism was a living illustration of the believer's being raised in newness of life.

The church continued to practice triple immersion but added a baptismal creed in the form of three questions. The administrator asked: "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty? Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?" After

Above: One of the mikveh located at the foot of the Southern Steps at the Temple Mount.

Right: Model of today's Temple Mount includes the Southern Steps. Religious leaders would regularly teach their disciples here. Mikvehs, Jewish ritualistic cleansing baths, were located at the foot of the steps. Some believe that on Pentecost, Simon Peter preached to the crowds from these steps and that the new believers were baptized in the mikvehs below.



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ GB HOWELL (35/55/67)

each question, the candidate responded, "I believe," and was immersed (*Apostolic Tradition* 21:12-18). The questions instructed the new believers in correct orthodoxy and weeded out possible heretics.⁴

At the conclusion of the baptismal service, the entire community prayed together and closed the prayer service with the kiss of peace, signs of filial love and of welcome into God's family. The new members of the Christian community had their first Lord's Supper, which included bread and three cups: one of wine; then a mixture of milk and honey, symbolizing

entrance into the promised land; and, finally, a cup of water, which provided the inner person with the baptism (*Apostolic Tradition* 21.1-23:3).

Evangelicals may be surprised to read that infant baptism began by early in the third century. Around 200, Tertullian first mentioned the practice, but he discouraged it (*On Baptism* 18) and preferred to postpone it until the age of accountability, which he identified as fourteen years old (*On Baptism* 18; *On the Soul* 38.1). Nonetheless, other third-century early church fathers, such as Origen of Alexandria and Cyprian



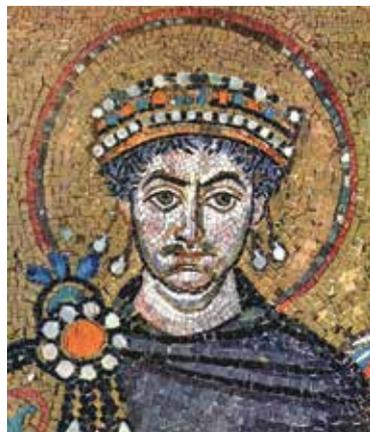
Waterway, restored, at Qumran; this collected and channeled water to the mikveh on the site. The community at Qumran was established by a group (possibly the Essenes) who

were separating themselves from the rest of society as they awaited the coming of the Lord. While waiting, they copied biblical and religious texts we know as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

ISTOCK PHOTO



PUBLIC DOMAIN



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Far left: Roman sculpture, thought to be Hippolytus of Rome, dated to the 4th–5th centuries AD.

Left: Mosaic at the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, depicts Justinian I, who was emperor of the Byzantine Empire 527–565. He declared that infant baptism was mandatory.

of Carthage, accepted the practice. Hippolytus instructed: “And first baptize the little ones; if they can speak for themselves, they shall do so; if not, their parents or other relatives shall speak for them” (*Apostolic Tradition* 21.4).⁵ Even as infant baptism made inroads into the church, though, many Christian parents delayed baptism for their offspring, including Basil the Great and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine—each born in the fourth century. Ironically, Augustine codified the practice and theology of infant baptism by teaching that children were born guilty of Adam’s sin and required baptismal cleansing. In

the sixth century, when church and state were united, Emperor Justinian I declared infant baptism mandatory.⁶

During the church’s first six centuries, immersion was the expected mode of baptism. With the exception of the provision in the *Didache*, all descriptions of baptism clearly indicate the administrator placed his hand on candidate’s head and immersed him or her as a symbol of the new believer’s union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.⁷ Traveling, I have seen a number of ancient baptisteries that prove the practice of immersion in such widespread regions as the Negev desert and Beth-shan, Israel; the Basilica of Saint Clement, Rome; and Sbeitla, Tunisia.⁸

From its inception, the church has observed Jesus’ command to baptize, but baptism’s rituals and meanings changed through Christianity’s first six centuries. For a century or so, baptism retained the simplicity of the New Testament practice. Eventually the ritual took on layers of symbolism, intended to illustrate new believers’ initiation into the Christian community. And regrettably, unbiblical practices of infant baptism and sprinkling replaced the clear biblical teaching of believer’s baptism by immersion. 🕯

1. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 63–65, 170.

2. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 100.

3. Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 367.

4. Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 77–78.

5. *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, trans. Burton Scott Easton (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1934), 45.

6. Everett Ferguson, “Baptism” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 162.

7. *Ibid.*, 161.

8. For other examples of early Christian baptisteries, see Everett Ferguson, “Baptistry” in *ibid.*, 164–66.

Rex D. Butler is professor of church history and patristics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana.



BY ROBERT D. BERGEN



RAPE, MURDER, AND

ANCIENT JEWISH LAW

TWO OF THE MOST HEINOUS CRIMES against persons are rape and murder; both destroy people's lives and tear the fabric of society. Not surprisingly, the Law of Moses and other ancient western Asian law codes dealt extensively with both of these issues—sexual rights and the unauthorized taking of human life. Yet a careful study of the ancient legal guidelines regarding rape and murder clearly shows that differences exist between the contemporary western perspective and that of ancient Asia.

To understand laws in the Old Testament world regarding the crimes of rape and homicide, one must touch briefly on “big picture” matters, namely those of ancient western Asian social and legal theory. All the people groups in the Old Testament world of which we have any knowledge were patriarchal. That meant the adult, non-slave male members of the community provided leadership in all social institutions and had the weighty responsibilities of providing food, protection, and justice for all community members. Accordingly, the law's function in these societies was primarily to support the free, adult male members of society in fulfilling these vital roles. The verbs expressing commands in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20; Deut. 5) reflect this emphasis on the role of the adult male. All of these

imperative verbs are masculine, singular in form—that is, they are addressed to individual males. Though women, children, and slaves were given legal rights and protections, those rights were fewer in number and generally less well defined than those of free adult males.

Rape in Ancient Israelite Law

In order to make sense of the Old Testament view of rape, to clarify our own society's definition of this crime is helpful. Within the United States, rape is defined as initiating sexual intercourse with a person who is either incapacitated, forcibly compelled, or underage. The exact circumstances of the crime determine the penalty; some states have a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.¹

Cultures in the Old Testament world certainly had laws defining sexual misconduct, but what constituted a sexual offense in ancient western Asia differs considerably from the modern American definition of rape. Within those cultures criminal sexual conduct focused on the violation of the sexual rights or honor of a free adult male. Unlike modern Euro-American law, no ancient Near Eastern law codes addressed sexual crimes with a consideration for a victim's age, state of incapacitation, or mental capacity.

The worst possible sexual crimes in the ancient western Asian societies—transgressions that were always treated as capital offenses—involved engaging in sexual intercourse with another man's wife or fiancée (Lev. 20:10-12; Deut. 22:22,25).² Yet, violating another man's wife or fiancée

Left: Samaritan inscription bearing excerpts from the Ten Commandments; from Kefar Bilu, a village in central Israel. The text reads, “In the beginning God created; I the Lord am your God; You shall have no other gods; You shall not make for yourself; You shall

not take in vain; You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear; You shall not covet.” The stone probably sat beside an exterior door, in keeping with Deut. 6:9.

Below: Wood was expensive, thus only wealthy

Egyptians could afford such a bed. The short legs are in the form of bull legs; the hooves stand on short spools that protect the carved feet. The bed would have had a reed- or grass-stuffed mattress; dated ca. 2400 BC. The slats are not original to the bed.



was not automatically considered rape; instead, it was treated as adultery unless a third party could provide evidence of the woman resisting, or if the attack occurred in the countryside (vv. 22-27). The distinction is important, since the penalty for adultery was death for both the adulterer and adulteress (Lev. 20:10).

Having forcible sexual intercourse with an unmarried, unengaged female was also not categorized as rape. Though it was certainly considered a serious mistreatment of the woman (2 Sam. 13:16), for legal purposes it was treated as both an economic crime against the girl's father (Ex. 22:16,17; Deut. 22:28-29) and an act that diminished the family's honor (see v. 17). Thus the offender was required to pay the father reparations and could be compelled to marry the woman, presumably to transfer to the offender the ongoing financial responsibilities associated with the woman.

Murder in Ancient Israelite Law

Murder, the unauthorized taking of a human life, represents the ultimate denial of another's rights. Not surprisingly, the Torah gives significantly more attention to the subject of murder than it does rape. Early on, it established a principle widely recognized in ancient Near Eastern civilizations: "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed" (Gen. 9:6a, CSB; see Ex. 21:12). Unlike other ancient law codes, however, the Law of Moses provides a theological basis for this law: "God made humans in his image" (Gen. 9:6b, CSB). Old Testament scholar Roland DeVaux lists twelve different offenses for which killing the offender was authorized: adultery, abduction with the intent to sell the abducted person into slavery, bestiality, blasphemy, different forms of incest, grave sins against parents, idolatry, intentional homicide, profaning the Sabbath, prostitution by a priest's daughter, sodomy, and sorcery.³ Killing another person for any other reason, except in enemy combat, was unauthorized.

Legal Dimensions of the Incident

Within the context of ancient Near Eastern cultures, people would have viewed Amnon's violation of his unmarried half-sister Tamar primarily as an offense against Tamar's father, King David (see Tamar's comment in 2 Sam. 13:13).

Amnon's greatest offense resulted from his subsequent unwillingness to marry Tamar (see v. 16). Rejecting one of his primary duties—taking responsibility for a woman who properly belonged under his care—created major problems for Tamar and Absalom's family. It inflicted an irreparable loss of honor and prestige (see v. 19), ended Tamar's chances for a prestigious marriage, and increased expenses for her family.

Amnon's despicable actions created a dilemma for his father, David. On the one hand, the Torah authorized David to force Amnon to marry Tamar (Deut. 22:29). On the other hand, the Torah prohibited Amnon from marrying his half-sister (Lev. 18:9). David could not put his son to death for what he had done to Tamar, but he could have fined him fifty shekels of silver. Amnon, however, was Israel's crown prince and undoubtedly quite wealthy; thus, the penalty would have been virtually meaningless. David's response to this incident was understandably indecisive: "He was furious" (2 Sam. 13:21b, CSB), but apparently did nothing.

David's inaction led Tamar's brother Absalom to take steps to resolve the situation himself. Though unauthorized to do so, he took over David's role as his sister's protector. Then, borrowing a page from a different part of the Torah, he followed the infamous example of Simeon and Levi, who violently took the life of the one who had deflowered their sister Dinah (Gen. 34:25-26). Interestingly, King David did not treat Absalom as a murderer (2 Sam. 13:39). In this he was probably attempting to follow the example of the patriarch Jacob, Simeon and Levi's father, who also did not treat his sons as murderers (Gen. 34:30). ❧

1. Typical of U.S. laws regarding rape are found in Missouri criminal law statutes Title XXXVIII Crimes and Punishments: 566.030 – 566.040. revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=566.030&bid=29388&hl=rape%3f.

2. See also "The Laws of Eshnunna," no. 26, and "The Code of Hammurabi," no. 155 in *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 1, ed. J. B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1958), 162, 172. Reflective of the seriousness of this crime is the fact that it is the subject of the sixth of the Ten Commandments.

3. Roland DeVaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 158.

Robert D. Bergen is the associate dean of academic administration and distinguished professor of Old Testament at Hannibal-LaGrange University, Hannibal, Missouri.

The area of Endor, where Saul met the witch to communicate with Samuel after the prophet's death.

Like murder, sorcery was, according to the Old Testament, an offense deserving of death.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO / KRISTEN HILLER (48/3239)

PETER'S THEOLOGY OF HOPE

ISTOCK PHOTO



ISTOCK PHOTO

H By Warren McWilliams

AVE YOU EVER HOPED for something to happen, but it never did? A famous comic strip character waited in his pumpkin patch every Halloween, hoping the Great Pumpkin would visit him. I do not recall that fictional pumpkin ever appearing! The sense of disappointment we sometimes feel in everyday life is reflected in a deeper way in 2 Peter 3:1-13. The purpose of this article is to provide a context for understanding that text in light of Simon Peter's eschatology.

In general the term "eschatology" refers to the study of last things or the end of time. Some scholars suggest the term relates directly to the biblical theme of hope.¹ New Testament eschatology includes topics such as the return of Jesus, judgment, physical death, bodily resurrection, the millennium, hell, and heaven.

Simon Peter's Background

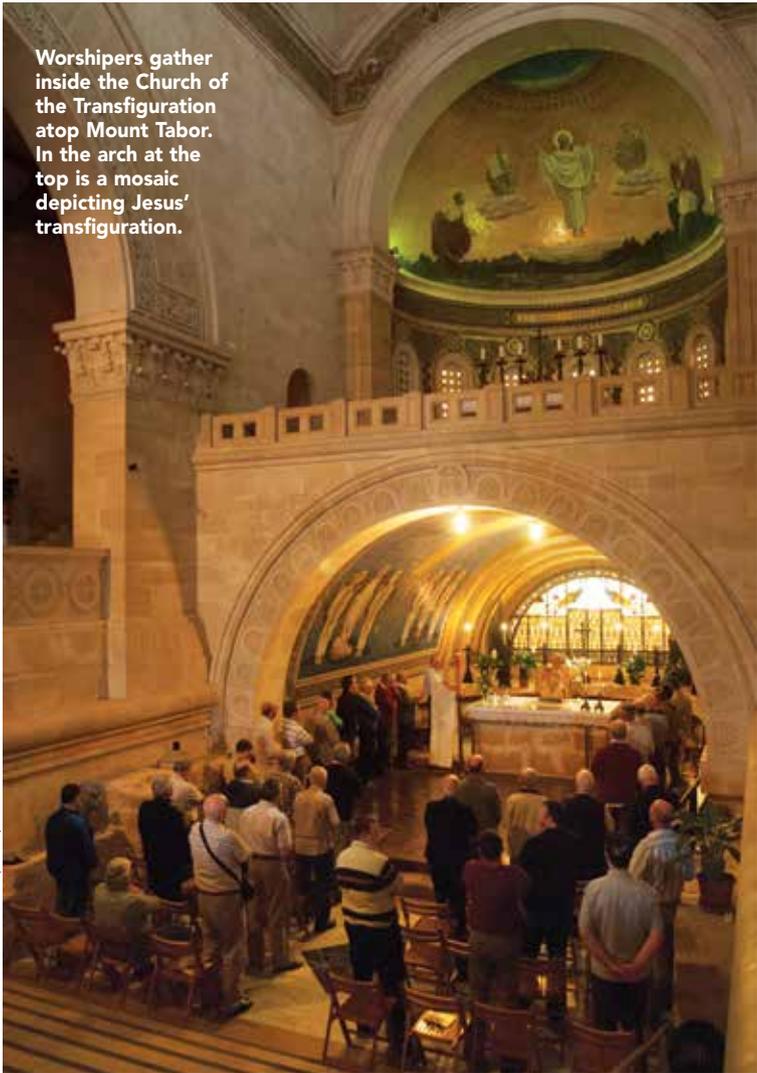
Many factors shaped Simon Peter's interest in eschatology. His relation to Jesus was the primary factor. Peter recognized that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jewish hope for a Messiah, even though he only gradually comprehended how Jesus would be a suffering Messiah. Peter heard Jesus proclaim His message about the kingdom of God, which would be fulfilled at the end of time. Peter had witnessed Jesus' transfiguration, which was a foreshadowing of Jesus' majesty (2 Pet. 1:16). Crucial to Peter's eschatology was his belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In his first letter, Peter mentioned that his readers' "living hope" was based on Jesus' resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3).² Peter saw the risen Christ several times before His ascension, and at one point Jesus said Peter would eventually become a martyr (John 21:18-19).

Page 29: Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives. From there, He ascended into the clouds. As they looked upward, "suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven'" (Acts 1:10-11, CSB).

Above: Aerial view of the ruins at Capernaum, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The large open structure in the bottom-right corner is the synagogue (partially reconstructed); it dates to the 4th cent. AD. Below its floor is a black basalt foundation that dates to the time of Christ. The covered structure in the center is an eight-sided church built over what is believed to have been the site of Simon Peter's house.

Simon Peter's Eschatology

Peter revealed his views on eschatology in the sermons he preached and in his two letters. In his sermons reported in the Book of Acts, for instance, Peter highlighted the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection for the



Worshippers gather inside the Church of the Transfiguration atop Mount Tabor. In the arch at the top is a mosaic depicting Jesus' transfiguration.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ KRISTEN HILLER (47/3036)



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ GB HOWELL (35/42/34)

Above: Waterfront at Thessalonica.



ISTOCK PHOTO

Left: Image of Martin Luther; when asked what he would do if he knew the end of the world was today, he replied he would "plant a tree and pay his taxes," meaning his life would not change. He already made it his practice to live in light of the end of the world.

Christian faith (Acts 2:24,32-36; 3:15; 10:40). In his first letter, Peter used the word "hope" (noun or verb) five times. Indeed, 1 Peter has been called the "Epistle of Hope."³ Peter reminded his readers, "The end of all things is near" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Comments by some false teachers who ridiculed believing in Jesus' return triggered Peter's thoughts on eschatology in 2 Peter. He warned his readers: "Scoffers will come in the last days" (2 Pet. 3:3). Commentators often label this criticism the "delay of the Parousia."⁴ The Greek word *parousia* can be rendered "arrival," "return," or "coming." Presuming Simon Peter wrote 2 Peter in the 60s, over thirty

years had passed since Jesus' resurrection. Maybe even some believers had started to wonder about Jesus' return. Certainly Paul tackled a similar concern among Christians in Thessalonica. Those believers seem to have been surprised that some Christians had died, yet Jesus had not returned (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

In 2 Peter 2, the apostle had responded to the threat of false teachers, and he assured his readers that God would punish those teachers. In 2 Peter 3, he focused on a specific threat, the scoffers or hecklers who ridiculed belief in Jesus' return. These heretics presumed that history was moving on without any sign of divine intervention.

According to the heretics, nothing really new or novel had happened since the death of the "ancestors" (2 Pet. 3:4). Although these ancestors might be the first generation of Christians—most of whom may have died—more likely the "ancestors" to which Peter referred were the patriarchs of the Old Testament. Peter reminded his readers that God had indeed dramatically intervened in history in the past. Peter's prime example was the flood in the time of Noah. The cynics had conveniently overlooked this fact (vv. 5-6). Peter explained that in the future, God would use fire rather than flood to impact human history (v. 7).

Peter used other arguments to



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO / BRENT BRUCE (07/19)

Above: Rising 95 feet, the bronze canopy is over the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. According to tradition, Simon

Peter's tomb is located below the altar. Italian artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini designed the canopy; it was constructed 1623-1634.

respond to these scoffers. His replies are a case study in his earlier encouragement for his audience to be “ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). In 2 Peter 3, the apostle defended Christian belief in the certainty of Jesus’ eventual return.

Peter next explained that God did not count time the same way humans do. Drawing on Psalm 90:4, Peter insisted that one day and a thousand years are similar in God’s time table. The apparent “delay of the parousia” might not be a “delay” at all in God’s calendar!

Peter also pointed to the relevance of God’s character. God does not work

on a human time table because He is “patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). God’s patience had been highlighted in a number of ways in the Old Testament. For example, God described Himself to Moses as “slow to anger” (Ex. 34:6). Paul reaffirmed God’s patience (Rom. 2:4). Peter saw a clear link between God’s patience and human salvation (2 Pet. 3:15).

Second Peter 3:10 includes several key emphases in Peter’s eschatology. For instance, Peter echoed Jesus’ teaching by using the analogy of a thief arriving in the middle of the night (Matt. 24:43). The term “day of the Lord” was a common Old Testament way of referring to a future action by God. That term could refer to an invasion of Israel by a foreign nation. Here Peter used it for events connected to Jesus’ return. Peter also touched on cosmic eschatology, or the impact of the end-time on all of the world (Greek, *cosmos*). The day of the Lord would be a “day of judgment” (2 Pet. 3:7) impacting heaven and earth. The “day of God” would reveal a transformation of the entire world (v. 12).

Besides the return of Jesus, divine judgment, and cosmic eschatology, Peter also briefly touched on the topics of death and life after death. He was aware that his own death was imminent (1:12-15). He was ready for his own “departure.”

Eschatological Ethics

Peter clearly saw the connection between correct beliefs about the future and correct actions. One scholar explained, “Eschatology and ethics are firmly wed in 2 Peter.”⁵ Since Jesus is definitely returning someday, Peter posed the issue of “what sort of people you should be” (3:11). Years ago I heard that waiting is not the same as loitering. Likewise, Peter expected his readers to be active in the Christian life as they waited for Jesus. In this letter Peter

especially highlighted “holy conduct and godliness” (v. 11).

In his first epistle, Peter also discussed eschatological ethics (1 Pet. 4:7-19). In that letter his greater concern was the persecution his readers would face—rather than the threat of ridicule by cynics. They would encounter a “fiery ordeal” that would “test” them (v. 12). Peter covered a wide range of ethical behavior in 1 Peter. For example, he stressed the need for love. Christians should be “hospitable to one another” (v. 9). They should exercise their spiritual gifts wisely. They should rejoice even though they suffered (v. 13). Their suffering was not a punishment for sin but a testing of their faith.

One scholar stated, “Eschatology is invariably used to encourage believers to live in a godly way.”⁶ Indeed, as believers we should live in such a way that our daily activities indicate that we are ready for Jesus’ return. Reading Peter’s response to the critics of his day should motivate us to active service today.

We do not stand, as did the cartoon character, waiting for an event that never occurs. Instead we can have hope, indeed, assurance that, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that [Peter and the other disciples saw] him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11). 🇵

1. Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), 16.
 2. All Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).
 3. Archibald M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 168.
 4. Ray Summers, “2 Peter” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Clifton J. Allen, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), 185.
 5. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1,2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 388.
 6. *Ibid.*, 211.

Warren McWilliams is the Auguie Henry Professor of Bible at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma.