

NIV

The Bible translated by Nicholas King

About the author

Nicholas King SJ is a Jesuit priest, who taught for many years in South Africa and at Oxford University. He is now on the parish staff at Farm St Church in London

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to very many people, not least to many New Testament scholars and students, notably at the University of Oxford, over the years. In particular I should like to single out Kevin and Barbara Mayhew, who were the first to suggest this project, and whom I cannot sufficiently thank. There are also my Jesuit brethren, who, over many years and many different countries, have given unfailing support. And, last but not least, my beloved family, who have done so much for me.

Preface

This is a strange moment; from 2002 onwards, I spent some 13 years doing the translation of the Bible which Bible Society is now bravely republishing. While I was working on the translation, it did not seem probable that I should ever bring it to a conclusion (there are, you may have noticed, quite a lot of words in the Bible), until I got into the last few scrolls of what Christians call the Old Testament. Then one evening I came down to supper at Campion Hall, Oxford, and found myself telling the then Master, 'I think that I have just finished translating the Bible', which is not a thing that one often gets to say. And now, a good many years later, it is to be republished by Bible Society, which leads me to feel rather surprised.

This translation is done from the Greek; in the case of the New Testament, which came first in the process, that is no real surprise, since it was in Greek that all our New Testament authors were writing. Some readers, however, may be puzzled that the Old Testament is also translated from the Greek version, known as the Septuagint (LXX in its Latin numeration). There are three reasons for this. In the first place, the LXX, and not the Hebrew text (the MT or 'Masoretic Text'), is the version most used by our New Testament authors, for whom the LXX, and not the MT, was 'the Bible'. Secondly, and perhaps rather oddly, the manuscripts for the LXX are older than those of the MT and in some cases preserve a superior reading. They are good evidence for how Greek-speaking Jews of the three centuries before the birth of Christ read their sacred texts. Thirdly, it may be useful to recall that most Jews of the time will have spoken Greek rather than Hebrew, just as today more Jews speak English than Hebrew.

It was decided to include the 'Deutero-Canonical' books. These are the texts that are found in the LXX but not in the MT, and so have always been printed in Catholic versions of the Bible, but not, on the whole, in the editions of the Reformed tradition of Christianity. Biblical scholars are now rediscovering the importance of these works, and learning to value them as evidence of the way Jews were thinking of their role as God's people in the centuries leading up to the birth of Christ. They include Tobit and Judith (two very charming compositions), 1 and 2 Maccabees (helping us to reconstruct the Maccabean Revolt), and The Book of Wisdom, also known as The Wisdom of Solomon (a most interesting attempt by a Greek-speaking Egyptian Jew to teach his co-religionists of the abiding value of their traditions, in the face of the challenge of the brilliant Hellenistic culture). Then there is The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch, as well as some additions to Esther and to Daniel. We should be the poorer without them, and I am glad to be putting them once more before the reading public.

The order of the books is that of the LXX, so you will find that they follow the order of the Catholic Bible. One interesting fact is that the Catholic Bible agrees with the Bibles of the Reformed tradition in placing the Book of Ruth immediately after the Book of Judges, to refresh us after the appalling last two stories that besmirch the end of Judges. In the Hebrew tradition, Ruth comes (where undoubtedly she belongs) among the five Megilloth, or Scrolls, as part of the third division of the Bible, the Writings.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this extraordinary library of books as much as I have enjoyed trying to set them into English.

Nicholas King SJ
Easter Sunday 2023

According to Mark

The Title

1 Beginning of the good news of Jesus Messiah Son of God.

The emergence of John the Baptist

²⁻⁶As it is written in Isaiah the Prophet:

‘Look! I am sending my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way;
a voice of one shouting in the desert:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.”’

There arose John, baptising in the desert and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins. And there journeyed out to him the whole Judaeen region, and all the Jerusalemites, and they wanted to get baptised by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

And John was clothed in camel-hair; and there was a leather belt about his loins. And he was eating locusts and wild honey.

The message of John the Baptist

^{7,8}And he started proclaiming, saying: ‘The Stronger-One-Than-Me is coming after me, of whom I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I baptised you with water, while he will baptise you by the Holy Spirit.’

The baptism of Jesus

⁹⁻¹¹And it happened in those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. And immediately coming up out of the water he saw the heavens dividing and the Spirit like a dove coming down upon him. And a voice came out of the heavens:

‘You are my Son, the beloved; in you I have taken pleasure.’

Jesus in the desert

^{12,13}And immediately the Spirit hurls him out into the desert. And he was in the desert forty days being tested by the Satan, and he was with the beasts. And the angels began to serve him.

The beginning of Jesus' mission

^{14,15}Now after John had been handed over, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, ‘The right-time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the good news.’

The sudden calling of two sets of brothers

¹⁶⁻²⁰And going along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting in the sea (for they were

Mark 1.1

‘Good news’ (in Greek, ‘euangelion’) reflects an Old Testament background, where the word refers to the proclamation of God’s great deeds. As you read this Gospel ask yourself why Mark thinks it’s ‘good news’.

Mark 1.2-6

We notice that John’s mission (and therefore presumably that of Jesus) has something to do with confronting the reality of sin. In what ways were their missions different? In what ways similar?

fishermen). And Jesus said to them, 'Come here, after me, and I'll make you become fishers of human beings.' And immediately abandoning their nets they followed him.

And going a little further he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother – and them in the boat repairing their nets. And immediately he called them. And abandoning their father Zebedee in the boat with the hirelings they went off after him.

In the synagogue at Capernaum

²¹⁻²⁸ And they enter into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath going into the synagogue he began to teach. And they were amazed at his teaching. For he was teaching them as though he had authority, and not like the scribes.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit and he shouted out, saying, 'What do we have to do with you, Jesus Nazarene? You have come to destroy us. I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' And Jesus scolded him, saying, 'Shut up and come out of him.' And the unclean spirit, convulsing and crying with a great cry, came out of him. And they were all astonished, so that they debated with each other, saying, 'What's this? New teaching with authority? He even gives instructions to the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'

And his reputation immediately went out into the whole surrounding area of the Galilee.

Simon Peter's mother-in-law

²⁹⁻³¹ And immediately coming out of the synagogue they came into the house of Simon and of Andrew with James and John. Now the mother-in-law of Simon lay sick, fevered. And immediately they tell him about her. And approaching he raised her up, taking her hand. And the fever abandoned her. And she was serving them.

Healings, once the Sabbath is over

³²⁻³⁴ When it grew late, when the sun set, they brought to him all those who were in a bad way, including those who had demons. And the entire city was gathered at the door. And he cured many who were in a bad way with various diseases. And he hurled out many demons and he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew him.

Jesus at prayer; Jesus misunderstood; Jesus continues the mission

³⁵⁻³⁸ And early in the morning, when it was deep in the night, rising up he went out and went away to a deserted place. And there he began to pray. And Simon and those with him went chasing after him. And they tell him, 'Everyone is looking for you.' And he says to them, 'Let's go elsewhere, to the neighbouring market towns, so that I may proclaim there also. Because for this I came out.'

Teaching, proclamation, exorcism, the healing of a leper

³⁹⁻⁴⁵ And he went into their synagogues, into the whole of the Galilee, proclaiming, and hurling out demons. And a leper comes to him, begging him, falling on his knees and telling him, 'If you

Mark 1:16–20

Mark's Gospel is written to answer two questions: 'Who is Jesus?' and 'What must Jesus' disciples be like?' You might write down your own answer to these as it develops through your reading of the Gospel

Mark 1:35–38

We go further into the mystery of who Jesus is. Here we note that he is one who needs to pray. Is this surprising?

According to Mark

Zechariah

Malachi

According to Matthew

want, you can make me clean.’ And taking pity, stretching out his hand, he touched him and tells him, ‘I do want: be made clean’. And immediately the leprosy went away from him, and he was made clean. And sternly warning him he immediately drove him out. And he tells him, ‘See that you say nothing to anybody. Instead, go, show yourself, and make the offering that Moses prescribed with regard to your cleansing, as a witness to them.’ But he went out and he started to proclaim many things and to spread the word; so that he could no longer go into a city; instead, he was outside, in deserted places. And they started to come to him from all sides.

The paralytic who came through the roof

2¹⁻¹² And coming again into Capernaum several days later, it was heard that he was in [the] house. And many gathered so that he could no longer go, not even to the door, and he began to speak to them The Message. And they came, carrying to him a paralytic lifted up by four [people]. And not being able to bring [him] to him, because of the crowd, they unroofed the roof [of the house] where he was, and digging out [the clay of the roof?] they let down the mattress where the paralytic lay. And seeing their faith Jesus says to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are forgiven.’ Now there were some of the scribes sitting, and arguing in their hearts, ‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? He blasphemes. Who can forgive sin, except one person, namely God?’ And immediately Jesus, knowing in his spirit that they were arguing in their hearts in this way, says to them, ‘Why do you argue these things in your heart? What is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say “Arise and take up your mattress and walk”? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth’ – he says to the paralytic – ‘To you I say, arise, take up your mattress, and go to your house.’ And he arose and immediately taking up the mattress he went out before all of them.

The result was that all were beside themselves, and glorified God, saying, ‘Like this we never saw.’

Jesus and revenue collectors

¹³⁻¹⁷ And he went out again, beside the sea. And the whole crowd came to him, and he was teaching them. And passing by he saw Levi of Alphaeus sitting at the revenue office. And he says to him, ‘Follow me.’ And rising up he followed him.

And it happens that he is lying down [to dine] in his house, and many revenue collectors and sinners lay down [to dine] with Jesus and with his disciples. For they were many, and they followed him.

And the scribes of the Pharisees, seeing that he was eating with sinners and revenue collectors, started saying to his disciples, ‘He’s eating with revenue collectors and sinners.’ Jesus overheard and says to them, ‘The strong do not have need of a doctor, but those who are in a bad way. I did not come to call the just, but sinners.’

Jesus' disciples don't fast!

¹⁸⁻²² And the disciples of John, and the Pharisees, were fasting. And they come and say to him, ‘Why do the disciples of John, and

Mark 2:13-37

Here Jesus announces his rather subversive mission-statement: ‘I did not come to call the just, but sinners.’

What do you make of that agenda?
How does the church live that mission?

the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Surely the sons of the bridal chamber can't fast during the time when the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

'No one sows a patch of new cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new one takes the fullness away from the old one, and the tear becomes worse.

'And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the wine will break the skins, and so both the wine and the skins are destroyed. So: New Wine into New Flasks.'

Jesus' disciples don't keep Sabbath

²³⁻²⁸ And it happened that on the Sabbath he was journeying through the sown fields, and his disciples started to make their way plucking the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look: they are doing something on the Sabbath for which there is no authority.' And he says to them, 'Did you never read what David did, when he had need, and he and those with him were hungry, how he entered the house of God, in the days of Abiathar the priest, and devoured the loaves of presentation, which no one except the priests has authority to eat, and he gave them to those who were with him?' And he said to them, 'The Sabbath came into existence for the sake of human beings, and not human beings for the sake of the Sabbath, so that the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.'

Healing on the Sabbath (in a synagogue!) – and a plot to commit murder

3¹⁻⁶ And he came back into the synagogue; and there was there a man who had his hand dried up. And they watched him, in case he should heal him on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse him. And he says to the man who had the dried hand, 'Rise up into the middle.' And he says to them, 'Is there authority on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil? To save a life or to kill?' But they were silent. And looking around them with anger, grieving with [at] the hardness of their heart, he says to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out. And his hand was restored.

And the Pharisees, going out immediately, hatched a conspiracy with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

A summary of Jesus' activities

⁷⁻¹² And Jesus with his disciples went up to the Sea. And a great number from the Galilee followed [him]. And from Judaea, and from Jerusalem and from Idumaea and across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon, a great number, hearing what things he was doing, came to him. And he told his disciples that a boat should be ready for him, on account of the crowd, so that they should not press upon him. For he cured many, so that whoever had afflictions fell upon him, that they might touch him.

And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, fell down before him, and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' And often he scolded them, that they should not make him known.

According to Mark

Zechariah

Malachi

According to Matthew

Appointment of the Twelve

¹³⁻¹⁹ And he goes up to the mountain, and he summons whom he wanted. And they came to him. And he made twelve, that they should be with him, and that he should send them to proclaim, and to have authority to throw out the demons. And he made twelve. And he put the name on Simon of 'Rock'. And James the [son] of Zebedee and John the brother of James, and he put the name on them of Boanerges, which is 'sons of thunder'. And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus and Simon the Canaanite. And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Jesus the embarrassing

²⁰⁻³⁵ And he comes to [the] house. And again the crowd comes together, so that they could not even eat bread. And 'his people' hearing [it] came out to arrest him. For they said, 'He's beside himself.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzeboul' and 'It is by the ruler of the demons that he casts out the demons'. And summoning them in parables he began to say to them, 'How can Satan cast out Satan?' And, 'If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.' And, 'If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And so if Satan rose up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end is coming. But no one can enter the house of the strong one to plunder his property unless he first binds the strong one and then plunders his house. Amen I tell you, all their sins and all their blasphemies that they blaspheme will be forgiven to human beings. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, does not have forgiveness for ever, but is guilty of an everlasting sin.' This was because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

And his mother and his brothers come; and standing outside they sent to him, calling him. And a crowd sat about him, and they tell him, 'Look: your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside. They are looking for you.'

And answering he says to them, 'Who is my mother, and brothers?' And looking round at those who sat about him in a circle, he says, 'Look - my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'

The setting for the parables; the first parable (the Sower), and an explanation of it

4 ¹⁻²⁰ And again he began to teach by the sea; and a very great crowd gathers to him, so that he boards a ship and sits on the sea, and the whole crowd was facing the sea, on land. And he began to teach them many things in parables, and he said to them in his teachings, 'Listen - Look! The sower went out to sow, and it happened as he sowed that some fell beside the road, and the birds came and devoured it. And other [seed] fell on the rocky ground, where there was not much earth. And immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; and when the sun rose it was scorched, and because it had no root it was dried up. And other [seed] fell on thorns, and the thorns came up and suffocated it, and it did not yield fruit. And other [seed] fell on good earth,

Mark 3.20-35

We may take heart from Jesus' statement that anyone who does God's will is Jesus' 'brother and sister and mother': the idea of family is redefined.

Is this helpful for you to know? Why?

and yielded fruit, coming up and growing, and it bore as much as thirty times, and even sixty times, and a hundred.’ And he said, ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.’

And when he was alone, those with him, with the twelve, asked him [about] the parables. And he said to them, ‘To you the mystery is given of the kingdom of God; whereas to those outside everything happens in parables, so that

“Looking they may look and not see
and hearing they may hear and not understand
lest they return and it be forgiven them.”’

And he says to them, ‘Do you not know this parable – and how will you know all the other parables? The sower is sowing the word. But these are the ones beside the road, where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes, and takes the word that is sown into them. And those likewise [are] the ones who are sown on the rocky bits, who whenever they hear the word immediately accept it with joy, and do not have root in themselves, but are momentary, then when there comes trouble or persecution on account of the word, they are immediately made to stumble. And others there are who are sown into the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, and the concerns of the world, and the deceit of wealth, and desire for all the other things march in and suffocate the word, and it becomes sterile. And these are the ones who are sown into good earth, who hear the word and receive it and bear fruit, in thirties and sixties and hundreds.’

Three (or four) more parables

²¹⁻³⁴ And he said to them, ‘Surely the lamp does not come so as to be put under the bushel or under the bed? Is it not intended to be put on the lamp-stand? For there is nothing hidden, except so that it should be revealed; nor did it become obscured, except that it should come into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.’

And he said to them, ‘Look at what you hear. In the measure that you measure out it will be measured out to you, and it will be added to you. For whoever has, it will be given to that person. And whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken away from them.’

And he said, ‘So is the kingdom of God, as a man sows seed on the earth; and he sleeps and wakes, night and day, and the seed sprouts and lengthens, in a way that he himself does not know. The earth yields fruit automatically, first a stalk of grain, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. But when the fruit comes, immediately “he sends out the sickle, because the harvest has drawn near.”’

And he said, ‘How shall we liken the kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we place it? It is like a grain of mustard, which when it is sown into the earth, being smaller than all the seeds which are on the earth. And when it is sown, it comes up and becomes bigger than all the vegetables, and it makes big branches, so that “under its shadow the birds of the air find shade”’.

Mark 4.21-34

Mark continues to give us the flavour of Jesus’ teaching, its combination of plain common sense and obscurity; and there is a feeling that Jesus wanted his disciples to grasp it, but others to remain uninitiated.

Why would that be?

According to Mark

Zechariah

Malachi

According to Matthew

And with many such parables he spoke the word to them, just as they were able to hear. But apart from a parable, he did not speak to them; but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Who is this, then?

³⁵⁻⁴¹ And he says to them on that day, as it grew late, 'Let us go through to the other side.' And abandoning the crowd, they took him as he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. And there comes a great storm of wind, and the waves beat upon and into the boat; so that already the boat was beginning to be filled. And he was in the stern, sleeping on the pillow. And they arouse him and say to him, 'Teacher, don't you care that we are being destroyed?' And being thoroughly aroused, he scolded the wind, and said to the sea, 'Silence; be quiet'; and there came a great calm. And he says to them, 'Why are you such cowards? How do you not have faith?' And they feared, a great fear. And they said to each other, 'Who is this, then? Because both the wind and the sea obey him.'

The possessed man in the land of the Gerasenes

5 And they came to the other side of the sea, into the land of the Gerasenes. And as he came out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs. And not even with chains could anyone bind him, on account of the fact that he had often been bound with fetters and chains. And the chains and the fetters had been torn apart by him, and broken. And no one was strong enough to tame him. And all night and day he was in the tombs and in the mountains, shouting out and cutting himself with stones. And seeing Jesus from afar he ran and worshipped him, and shouting in a loud voice he says, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I conjure you by God, do not torture me.' For he was saying to him, 'Come out, unclean spirit, from the man.' And he asked him, 'What name [do they give] to you?' And he said to him, 'Legion is the name [they give] to me, because we are many.' And he begged him, many times over, not to send them out of the region. And there was there, near the mountain, a large herd of pigs feeding. And they begged him, saying, 'Send us into the pigs, that we may enter into them.' And he allowed them. And the unclean spirits going out went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the slope into the sea, about two thousand, and they suffocated in the sea. And those who looked after them fled and announced into the city and into the fields. And they came to see what had happened. And they come to Jesus, and they see the possessed man sitting down, clothed and sober, the one who had had the Legion. And they were afraid. And those who saw explained to them how it happened to the possessed man, and about the pigs. And they began to beg him to go away from their frontiers. And as he was going on board the boat, the man who had been possessed begged him that he might be with him. And he did not allow him, but says to him, 'Go into your house, to your people, and announce to them what

Mark 5:1-20

The healed man wants to stay with Jesus; but you can't choose discipleship - it is discipleship that chooses you, and instead the man is told to go and preach at home.

In what way has discipleship chosen you?

things the Lord has done for you and had mercy on you.' And he went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him. And they were all amazed.

Two stories 'sandwiched' round each other

²¹⁻⁴³ And when Jesus had crossed in the boat back to the other side, a great crowd gathered upon him. And he was by the sea. And one of the synagogue rulers comes to him, Jairus by name, and seeing him he falls at his feet and begs him many things, saying, 'My little daughter is in extremis; do come and lay hands on her, so that she may be saved and may live.' And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and they pressed upon him.

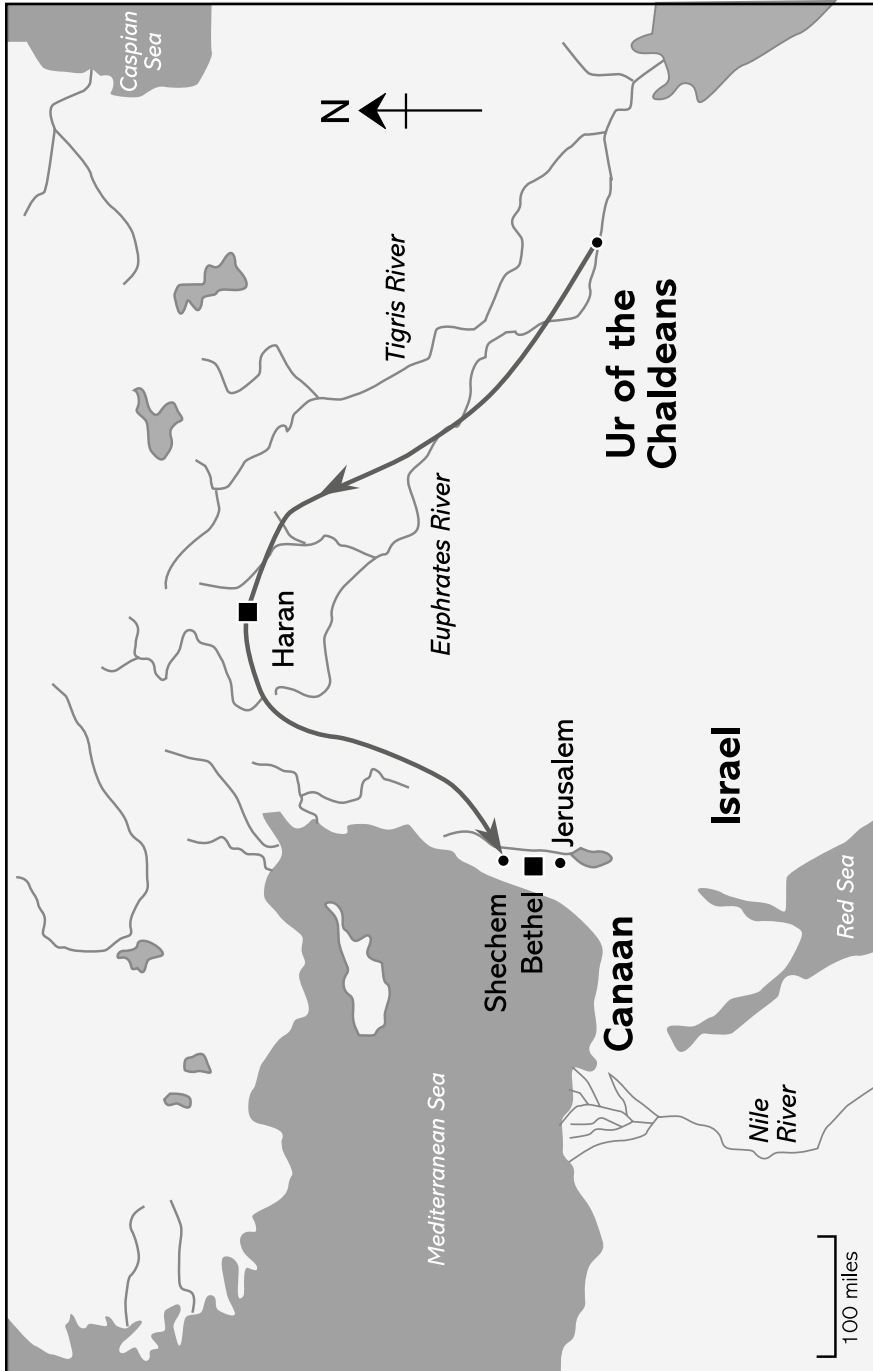
And a woman, who had been in haemorrhage for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many doctors, and had spent all that she had, and she was no way helped, but rather she went downhill, having heard the things about Jesus, coming in the crowd from behind touched his garment. For she was saying [to herself], 'If I were just to touch his garments, I shall be saved.' And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she knew in her body that she was healed from her scourge. And immediately, Jesus, knowing in himself that the power had gone out of him, turning round in the crowd said, 'Who touched my garments?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing upon you, and you say, "Who touched me?"' And he looked about to see the woman who had done this. And the woman, afraid and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.'

While he was still speaking, they come from the [house of the] synagogue ruler, saying, 'Your daughter died. Why still bother the teacher?' But Jesus, overhearing the message being uttered, says to the synagogue ruler, 'Do not be afraid. Only believe.' And he did not allow anyone to follow along with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. And they came to the house of the synagogue ruler and he sees a disturbance, and people weeping, and wailing loudly. And going in he says to them, 'Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but asleep.' And they jeered at him. And he threw them all out, and takes the father of the child, and the mother, and those with him, and he goes in where the child was. And taking the hand of the child, he says to her, 'Talitha Koum', which in translation is, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' And immediately the little girl arose and walked. For she was twelve years old. And immediately they were beside themselves with great ecstasy. And he strongly commanded them that no one should know this. And he said that she be given [something] to eat. And he went out from there.

An unsuccessful return home

6¹⁻⁶ And he comes to his homeland. And they followed him, his disciples. And when a Sabbath arrived, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many [people] hearing were astounded, saying, 'From where [have] these things [come] to this [fellow]?'

The Call of Abram (Genesis 12)



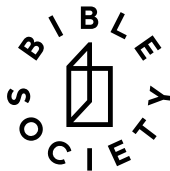
Palestine of the New Testament



An evocative translation with depth and drama

Translated from the Greek by outstanding scholar and Jesuit priest Nicholas King, this Bible aims to bring you as close as possible to the original biblical voices, in all their rawness and grandeur.

The text itself, and the reflective questions placed at intervals in the margins, invite you into an ancient world that still resonates with our contemporary culture.



Bible Society, Stonehill Green
Westlea, Swindon SN5 7DG
biblesociety.org.uk