

Biblical Glossary -A-

A - B - C - D - E - F - G - H - I - J - K - L - M - N - O - P - Q - R - S - T - U - V - W - X - Y - Z

AbbaAn Aramaic word for father, used by Jesus and St. Paul to address God in a relation of personal intimacy.

AbominationAnything associated with the worship of other gods and any behavior that perverts the lifestyle God intended human beings to live. Leviticus 18 contains a list of unlawful behaviors (e.g., incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality). As he demonstrated by sending the flood, the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, and various judgments on the Israelites, God will judge people who practice these behaviors.

AbrahamThe father of the Jewish nation (Gen. 12-25). God called Abraham out of his home country and promised to give him the land of Canaan (Gen. 15). God also promised that all the people on earth would be blessed through Abraham; God's people today can learn from Abraham what true faith is.

AbyssMeans "bottomless pit." In the New Testament, the sea symbolized chaos, evil, and evil beings. The depths of the sea were seen as the home of demons, or the Abyss, according to Jewish tradition. At one point during his ministry, Jesus compared the fates of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying that Capernaum would go down to the "depths." Most likely, the people understood this as a reference to hell itself. To them, Jesus' miracles on the sea meant more than simply that he had power over the forces of nature—they also symbolized his power over evil.

AchishThe king of the Philistine city of Gath, who twice gave refuge to David. (1 Sam. 21:10-15).

AcropolisA fortified hilltop, often the highest hill in the area.

AdamThe first man God created. He did not obey God and brought sin and death into the world (Gen 1-5). Jesus is compared to Adam because Jesus is a new beginning for the human race. Jesus brings life to those who believe in him.

Aegean SeaBody of water east of Greece dotted with many islands. Scholars believe the Philistines came from this area.

Aelia CapitolinaHadrian, the Roman emperor, destroyed Jerusalem after defeating the Jews during the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132-135). He renamed it Aelia Capitolina and erected a temple to the Roman god Jupiter.

AgoraPublic square of marketplace.

Agrippa IThe grandson of Herod the Great, to whom Emperor Claudius gave Herod the Great's entire kingdom. He arrested Christians, had James put to death, and imprisoned Peter. Agrippa I died when he allowed people to treat him like a god (Acts 12:21—23).

Agrippa IIThe great-grandson of Herod the Great. He discussed St. Paul's case in Caesarea with governor Festus, heard St. Paul's conversion testimony, and recognized that St. Paul was trying to persuade him to become a Christian (Acts 25:13—14, 23;26:1—29).

AiCity near Bethel, north of Jerusalem, that was destroyed by Joshua. It controlled the approach to the mountain range from the east.

Aijalon ValleyValley connecting the coastal plain and the Judea Mountains where Joshua made the sun stand still.

AltarA place where people would bring gifts to God. Altars were usually flat on top, and made of dirt, rocks, wood, or metal.

Altar of incenseLocated in the holy place or priests' room of the tabernacle or temple, just outside the Holy of Holies. The altar was 1.5 feet square and 3 feet high. The incense symbolized the "sweet smell" of the worshipers' prayers going up to God.

Altar of sacrificeStructure used for presenting sacrifices to God. A large altar of sacrifice stood in the outer court of the temple at Jerusalem. It symbolically stood before God's presence to indicate the need for forgiveness before approaching God.

AmenMeans "Yes, this is true!" or "Let it be so!"

AmphitheaterElliptical or circular space surrounded by seats; used by Romans for gladiator contests.

AnatoliaLand of the rising sun or "the East" refers to the Asiatic part of Turkey.

AnointTo pour oil on a person's head. It meant that God's Spirit was helping that person to do a special job (1 Sam. 16:1—13, 1 John 2:20—21).

AntipasSon of Herod the Great. He heard about Jesus, listened to John the Baptist's teachings, met Jesus but sent him to Pilate (Mark 6:14—20; Luke 23:8—12).

AntoniaHerod the Great rebuilt the Hasmonian fortress (Bira) in Jerusalem next to the Temple Mount and renamed it the Antonia after Mark Anthony. Roman troops were stationed here.

AphroditeGreek god of love and beauty. Daughter of Zeus and Dione (or did she spring from foam in the sea?)

ApolloGreek god of light, music, and poetry. He is often pictured with bow and arrow; Son of Zeus and Leto.

ApostlesThe leaders that Jesus chose to bring his message to the world. Jesus first chose 12 men and then later St. Paul and some others became apostles.

ApotheosisA Roman emperor was declared to be divine when a witness came forward claiming to have seen the emperor ascend to heaven or claiming to have seen the emperor's father ascend to heaven (making the current emperor the "Son of God"). This process was called apotheosis.

ApseSemicircular recess in a wall, especially in a church or Roman law court.

AsclepiusGreek and Roman god of healing. Son of Apollo and Coronis (the daughter of King Phlegyas in Thesaly). He has four daughters: Iaso, Aceso, Panacea, and Hygeia.

AradTown 17 miles north of Beersheba at the edge of the Negev and the Hebron Mountains. It was an important fortress city and protected the southern approaches to Jerusalem.

AresGreek god of war. Son of Zeus and Hera.

Ark of the covenantThe Hebrew word means "box," or "chest." It contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The ark of the covenant was as sign to the people of Israel that God was with them, and the cover represented God's throne.

ArmageddonTransliteration of the Hebrew har megiddon, which means literally the "hill of Megiddo." Revelation 16:16 uses this place to symbolize the final great battle between good and evil. Many battles were fought at this location because the main trade route went through a mountain pass nearby.

ArtemisGreek god of marriage, chastity, hunting, and moonlight. Twin sister of Apollo, daughter of Zeus and Leto.

AshdodPhilistine city-state on the Mediterranean Sea

AsherahCanaanite goddess of fertility. She is portrayed as a nude female, sometimes pregnant, with exaggerated breasts that she holds out as symbols of her fertility. The Bible indicates that she was worshiped near trees and poles, called Asherah poles.

AshkelonPhilistine city-state on the Mediterranean Sea and the Via Maris trade route.

Ashlar stonesHand-shaped stones (found near the Temple) brought from a quarry nearly a mile away. One 45-foot-long stone weighs nearly 600 tons.

AshtorethCanaanite goddess of fertility and love. She is thought to be the daughter of the fertility goddess Asherah.

AssyriaNation in Mesopotamia that became a large empire in the time of the kings of Israel and Judah. Its capital was Ninevah. The Assyrians were extremely cruel and God used them to punish the northern kingdom for its Baal worship.

AstragalMolding on top of base or column.

AthenaGreek goddess of wisdom

and skill. Daughter of Zeus. Atonement A payment or offering to remove or forgive sins. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel sacrificed animals to show that atonement must be made for their sins. When Jesus came, he gave up his own life to make atonement for the sins of his people. Atonement seat Slab of gold on top of the ark of the covenant on which the golden cherubim stood. It symbolized God's throne. Atrium Court of a Roman house, roofed at the sides and open in the middle; also the entrance to a Byzantine church. Azekah Small city above the Elah Valley where David fought Goliath.