

Genesis 1:28 includes the word "blessed" in the context of God's blessing to Adam and Eve. In Hebrew, the word for "blessed" used in this verse is "בָּרַךְ" (barak). It signifies bestowing favor, prosperity, or well-being upon someone. In this verse, God blesses Adam and Eve and instructs them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and have dominion over it. This verse is often interpreted as a foundational blessing and commissioning of humanity.

### **Genesis 1:28-30 (NIV):**

"28 God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

29 Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.' And it was so."

Ashre" (אַשְׁרֵי) is a Hebrew word that means "happy" or "blessed." It is often used in the context of expressing a state of well-being, contentment, or a sense of fortunate or blessed circumstances. The term "Ashre" is also commonly used in Jewish liturgy, particularly in the opening of many psalms, where it is translated as "Happy is..." or "Blessed is..." to convey a sense of praise and gratitude to God.

"Barak" in Hebrew and "ashre" in Hebrew can be understood as similar in meaning to the Greek term "makarios" (μακάριος). All three words convey a sense of blessing, happiness, or a state of well-being. They are used to describe a favorable or blessed condition.

In biblical contexts, "barak" in Hebrew and "ashre" in Hebrew are used to express God's bestowal of favor, prosperity, and well-being upon individuals or groups. "Makarios" in Greek is used in a similar manner in the New Testament to convey a state of blessedness or happiness that comes from God.

## **Blessed, you are blessed, blessed is examples from Psalms**

### 1. Psalm 1:1-2 (NIV):

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

### 2. Psalm 2:12 (NIV):

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

### 3. Psalm 32:1-2 (NIV):

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

### 4. Psalm 40:4 (NIV):

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.

### 5. Psalm 41:1 (NIV):

Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.

### 6. Psalm 84:4-5 (NIV):

Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

7. Psalm 106:3 (NIV):

Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right.

8. Psalm 119:1-2 (NIV):

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—

9. Psalm 128:1-2 (NIV):

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.

**Jesus' use of *blessed* in Matthew 5:3-10.**

The Beatitudes are a set of teachings given by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, which is found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5. They are a series of blessings that describe the characteristics and attitudes that Jesus considers to be blessed or fortunate. Here are the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV):

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5:3

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5:4

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 5:5

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 5:6

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 5:7

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 5:8

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 5:9

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5:10

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 5:11

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 5:12

### **Who were the Essenes and what is the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls?**

The War Scroll reference to 'blessed are the 'poor in spirit' as it was understood as 'blessed are the righteous before God.'

The War Scroll is one of the most well-known and significant texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is also sometimes referred to as the "War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness" or simply the "War Scroll." This text was found in Cave 1 at Qumran, one of the locations where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

The War Scroll is essentially a manual for an **apocalyptic, eschatological battle** between the forces of good (referred to as the "Sons of Light") and the forces of evil (referred to as the "Sons of Darkness"). It provides detailed descriptions of various military formations, strategies, and battle plans. The Sons of Light are depicted as being led by a "Prince of Light," while the Sons of Darkness are led by a "Prince of Darkness."

This text is significant for several reasons:

**Insight into the Beliefs of the Community:** It offers valuable insights into the beliefs, worldview, and apocalyptic expectations of the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. It reflects a dualistic understanding of cosmic forces and a belief in a final, decisive battle between good and evil.

**Historical Context:** Some scholars believe that the War Scroll may have been influenced by or related to events or conflicts that occurred in the Second Temple period. It may have had a symbolic or allegorical meaning, but it also could have had practical implications for the community's self-identity.

**Theology and Eschatology:** It provides a window into the theological and *eschatological* perspectives of the community. The text reflects a belief in divine intervention and judgment, as well as an expectation of a future, messianic age.

**Military and Organizational Details:** The War Scroll contains specific details about military organization, weaponry, and strategies. This has led some scholars to speculate about the possible military aspect of the community or whether the descriptions were primarily symbolic.

Overall, the War Scroll is a key text for understanding the **religious and apocalyptic thought** of the community associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. It provides valuable context for interpreting other texts found among the scrolls and sheds light on the diversity of beliefs and practices within Second Temple Judaism.

The War Scroll provides detailed descriptions of military organization, weaponry, and strategies for the apocalyptic battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. Here are some of the key elements mentioned in the text:

## **1. Military Organization:**

- The War Scroll outlines a hierarchical organization of the army of the Sons of Light, with various ranks and divisions.
- It describes a system of captains, officers, and commanders, each with specific responsibilities.
- The text mentions units arranged in specific formations, such as columns, squares, and phalanxes.

## **2. Weaponry:**

- The War Scroll provides extensive details about the weapons that would be used in the apocalyptic battle. These include swords, spears, shields, bows, and arrows.
- It describes different types of arrows, including fiery and poisonous arrows, indicating a symbolic and supernatural aspect to the warfare.
- Strategies:
  - The text outlines specific battle plans, including maneuvers and formations to be employed by the Sons of Light in the conflict.
  - It emphasizes the importance of maintaining strict discipline and adhering to orders during the battle.
  - The War Scroll also contains provisions for the storage and distribution of weapons and supplies.

## **3. Divine Intervention:**

- The War Scroll incorporates the belief in divine intervention, suggesting that the outcome of the battle would ultimately be determined by the intervention of God or heavenly forces.
- It includes prayers and liturgical elements that are to be recited before and during the battle, invoking the assistance of angelic beings and divine powers.

- **4. Symbolic Elements:**
- While the military descriptions are detailed, it's important to note that some scholars believe the War Scroll may have had both literal and symbolic meanings. The battle described may have been seen as a real event by the community, but it may also have had broader eschatological and spiritual significance.

Overall, the War Scroll provides a unique glimpse into the military thinking and organizational structure of the community associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. It combines elements of practical military planning with a strong belief in divine intervention and spiritual warfare. The text's combination of the mundane and the supernatural reflects the complex and multifaceted worldview of the community.

## **What is apocalyptic Literature?**

Apocalyptic literature is a **genre of writing** that emerged in Jewish and Christian circles during a specific historical and cultural context, primarily between the **2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE**. It is characterized by its vivid, symbolic imagery and often portrays a cosmic conflict between forces of good and evil. Apocalyptic literature typically conveys a message of hope, ultimate justice, and divine intervention. It is often defined as **revealing the secrets of the Kingdom of God**.

### **Key features of apocalyptic literature include:**

**Dualism:** Apocalyptic literature often presents a stark dualism between the forces of good (often represented by God or

angelic beings) and the forces of evil (represented by demonic or hostile entities).

**Symbolism:** It makes extensive use of symbolic language, numbers, and images to convey its message. These symbols are often highly metaphorical and may require interpretation to understand their intended meaning.

**Visions and Dreams:** Apocalyptic texts often feature visions or dreams experienced by a prophet or seer. These visions serve as a means of revealing hidden knowledge about the future or the spiritual realm.

**Eschatology:** Apocalyptic literature is focused on the "end times" or the ultimate destiny of humanity and the world. It often includes predictions or descriptions of a final judgment, the coming of a messianic figure, and the establishment of a new, divine order.

**Cosmic Cataclysm:** Apocalyptic texts frequently depict cosmic upheaval, such as earthquakes, celestial disturbances, and supernatural battles. These events signal the transition from the current age to the age to come.

**Pseudonymous Authorship:** Many apocalyptic texts were written under the name of a revered figure from the past, such as a biblical patriarch or prophet. This literary device lent authority to the message and emphasized its continuity with earlier religious traditions.

**Encouragement for the Faithful:** Apocalyptic literature often aims to encourage and console its audience, especially in times of persecution or crisis. It assures the faithful that God is in control and that ultimate victory belongs to the forces of good.

In the Bible, examples of apocalyptic literature can be found in various books, particularly in the Old Testament (e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, portions of Isaiah), and in the New Testament (e.g., the Book of Revelation). Additionally, some ***intertestamental*** Jewish texts (known as the "Second Temple period") are classified as



apocalyptic, including parts of the Book of Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Overall, apocalyptic literature serves as a rich source for understanding the religious, social, and theological concerns of the communities that produced and valued these texts.

### **Why was this type of writing significant?**

Apocalyptic literature emerged in a specific historical and cultural context, primarily during the Second Temple period in ancient Judaism. Several factors contributed to the development of this genre:

1. **Crisis and Turmoil:** The period between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century CE was marked by significant upheaval for Jewish communities. This included events like the Hellenistic influence and rule, the Maccabean Revolt, and later the Roman occupation of Judea. These historical challenges likely prompted intense religious reflection and the search for meaning in the face of adversity.
2. **Theodicy and Divine Justice:** The experience of suffering and oppression led to theological questions about the nature of God and the apparent absence of divine intervention. Apocalyptic literature often addresses these concerns by providing a framework for understanding suffering as part of a larger cosmic plan, ultimately leading to divine judgment and vindication for the righteous.
3. **Eschatological Hope:** The belief in an imminent, transformative event that would bring about a new age of justice, peace, and divine rule was a central theme in apocalyptic literature. This eschatological hope served as a

source of comfort and encouragement for communities facing persecution and hardship.

4. **Response to Foreign Rule:** Apocalyptic writings often arose in response to oppressive foreign rule, whether it was the Hellenistic Seleucids or the Roman Empire. These texts often presented a vision of a future in which God's intervention would lead to the overthrow of oppressive powers and the establishment of God's reign on Earth.
5. **Mystical and Visionary Experiences:** Some apocalyptic literature claims to convey revelations received through visions or dreams. These experiences were often interpreted as messages from the divine realm, providing insight into the hidden mysteries of the universe.
6. **Symbolic Language and Resistance:** Apocalyptic literature frequently used symbolic and coded language to convey its messages. This allowed authors to communicate their beliefs and hopes in a way that could be understood by like-minded individuals while remaining cryptic to outsiders.
7. **Identity and Community Formation:** Apocalyptic literature often served to define and reinforce the identity of particular religious communities. These texts provided a shared narrative, theological framework, and a sense of belonging for those who identified with the beliefs and hopes expressed in the writings.

Overall, apocalyptic literature provided a means for individuals and communities to **grapple with the challenges of their time**, to find meaning in suffering, and to maintain hope for a future in which divine justice would prevail. It served as a powerful form of

religious expression and a source of comfort and inspiration for ancient Jewish communities.

## **Factions and the failure to find unity in Israel.**

It is widely recognized that internal factions among Jewish groups played a significant role in the events leading up to the fall of the Second Temple and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

During the 1st century CE, Judea was under Roman rule, which led to increasing tensions and conflicts between various Jewish factions and with the Roman authorities. Here are some of the key factions and factors that contributed to the fall of the Temple:

**Zealots:** The Zealots were a radical Jewish political movement that advocated for armed resistance against Roman rule. They believed in fighting for Jewish independence and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. The Zealots played a significant role in the First Jewish-Roman War (66-73 CE), which ultimately led to the destruction of the Temple.

**Sicarii:** The Sicarii were a subgroup of the Zealots known for their use of concealed daggers (sicae) to assassinate Roman sympathizers and officials. They were active in Jerusalem and were involved in acts of violence against both Roman authorities and their fellow Jews.

**Moderates and Collaborationists:** Not all Jewish groups supported armed resistance against the Romans. Some advocated for more diplomatic approaches or even collaborated with Roman authorities. This diversity of opinions and strategies led to internal divisions among Jewish communities.

**Religious Differences:** There were also significant theological and religious differences among Jewish factions,

particularly regarding interpretations of Jewish law and the role of the Temple. These differences sometimes escalated into conflicts.

**Social and Economic Disparities:** Economic inequalities and social tensions within Jewish society also contributed to internal strife. Discontent among different social and economic classes further exacerbated existing divisions.

**Roman Response:** The presence of various factions and internal conflicts weakened the overall resistance against the Roman forces. The Romans exploited these divisions to their advantage during the siege of Jerusalem.

The culmination of these factors led to a full-scale war between the Jewish rebels and the Roman legions. The conflict resulted in the siege and eventual destruction of Jerusalem, including the Second Temple, in 70 CE.

It's important to note that while the internal factions certainly played a significant role, the broader context of Roman imperial policies, political dynamics, and military strategies also contributed to the outcome. The fall of the Temple was a complex event influenced by a combination of internal and external factors.

## **The Synoptic gospels as apocalyptic genre.**

Different aspects in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) that are apocalyptic:

### **1. Presentation of Jesus as Messiah:**

**References:**

Matthew 16:13-20 (Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah)

Mark 8:27-30 (Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah)

Luke 9:18-21 (Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah)

**Summary:**

In these passages, Jesus is recognized by Peter as the Messiah, the promised anointed one of God. This is a pivotal moment in the Gospels, affirming Jesus' identity as the prophesied Savior.

**2. Presentation of Jesus as the Son of Man:**

**References:**

Matthew 24:30-31 (Coming of the Son of Man)

Mark 13:26-27 (Coming of the Son of Man)

Luke 21:25-28 (Coming of the Son of Man)

**Summary:**

These passages contain Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" to refer to himself. He associates this title with his coming in glory and power, indicating a divine and eschatological role.

**3. "The Kingdom of God is at hand/within you/among you":**

**References:**

Luke 17:20-21 (The Kingdom of God is within you)

Mark 1:14-15 (Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand)

**Summary:**

Jesus frequently teaches about the imminence and accessibility of the Kingdom of God. He emphasizes that the reign of God is not distant, but

rather present and available for those who believe and follow him.

#### **4. "The Son of Man must be raised up":**

##### **References:**

Matthew 17:22-23 (Jesus predicts his death and resurrection)

Mark 8:31-33 (Jesus predicts his death and resurrection)

Luke 9:22 (Jesus predicts his death and resurrection)

##### **Summary:**

Jesus prophesies his impending suffering, death, and resurrection. This indicates his awareness of a redemptive mission that will culminate in his victory over sin and death.

#### **5. Teaching on Forgiveness of Sins:**

##### **References:**

Matthew 26:27-28 (Jesus' words at the Last Supper)

Mark 2:5-12 (Jesus forgives a paralyzed man)

Luke 23:34 (Jesus' prayer on the cross)

##### **Summary:**

Jesus emphasizes the significance of forgiveness of sins, presenting it as a central aspect of his mission and message. He proclaims the possibility of reconciliation with God through faith.

Overall, In summary, while the Synoptic Gospels contain apocalyptic elements, such as the coming of the Son of Man and discussions about the end times, these are only **one aspect of**

**the broader message** they convey. The Gospels also present Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of Man, and emphasize the accessibility of the Kingdom of God, his impending sacrifice, and the forgiveness of sins. This multifaceted presentation of Jesus reflects the diverse range of his teachings and roles in the salvation of humanity.

### **How did the resurrection confirm Jesus as the Messiah?**

- **Victory Over Death:** Jesus' resurrection from the dead demonstrated his victory over sin and death, validating his claim to be the Son of God and the promised Messiah. It was a powerful sign that he had conquered the forces of darkness and had the authority to grant eternal life.
- **Revelation of Prophecy:** The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies that spoke of a future redemption and restoration, including the promise of a Messianic figure who would bring about a new era of salvation.
- **Authentication of His Teaching:** Jesus' resurrection provided *divine authentication* for his teachings. It affirmed that his message was from God and that he had the *authority* to reveal and interpret the will of God.
- **Establishment of New Covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34:** Through his resurrection, Jesus renewed the covenant between God and humanity which included Gentiles, offering forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God *for all who believe in him*.

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,  
“when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel  
and with the people of Judah.

**32**

It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their ancestors  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to<sup>[d]</sup> them,<sup>[e]</sup>”  
declares the Lord.

**33**

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel  
after that time,” declares the Lord.  
“I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

**34**

No longer will they teach their neighbor,  
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,”  
declares the Lord.  
“For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more.”

**Notice other scripture that includes the law of God:**

Deuteronomy 6

Ezekiel 36:26

2 Corinthians 3:3

Hebrews 8:10—including Jeremiah 31:31-34



Romans 2:12-16

## Where in the Bible is the resurrection presented?

Regarding the theology of the *resurrection of the dead*, it has roots in Jewish thought and scripture. Here are some passages from Job, the Torah, and other Jewish sources that support the belief in the resurrection of the dead:

- **Job 19:25-27** (Job's Confession of Faith):
  - "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"
- **Daniel 12:2** (Prophetic Vision of Resurrection):
  - "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."
- **Ezekiel 37:1-14** (The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones):
  - This vision portrays a restoration of Israel from a state of spiritual death, symbolizing the resurrection of the nation.
  - **Isaiah 26:19** (Prophetic Hope for the Dead):
    - "But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."
- **2 Maccabees 7:9, 14** (Martyrs' Belief in Resurrection):

- This passage from the Apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees records the martyrdom of Jewish brothers who express their belief in the resurrection.

These passages from various Jewish sources indicate a belief in a future resurrection of the dead, a central theme in apocalyptic eschatology. This belief was part of the broader Jewish theological context in which Jesus and his disciples lived and taught.

### **Enoch and Elijah—who are those who did not die?**

There are two notable figures in the Bible who are described as being taken up to heaven without experiencing physical death:

- **Enoch:**
  - Enoch is mentioned in the genealogy of Adam in the Book of Genesis. It is said that Enoch walked faithfully with God, and then "he was no more, because God took him away" (Genesis 5:24, NIV). This brief statement indicates that Enoch did not experience death in the conventional sense but was taken directly into the presence of God.
- **Elijah:**
  - Elijah was a prominent prophet in the Old Testament, known for his powerful miracles and confrontations with the prophets of Baal. In 2 Kings 2:11-12 (NIV), it is recorded that "suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind." Elijah's ascent into heaven is a miraculous event, and he is often associated with future expectations of a return