

raised when, at Jesus' command, a pallet is carried on the Sabbath (5:10) and exacerbated when it is learned that Jesus has healed on that day (5:15-16). Remarkably, the Johannine Jesus concedes that he "works" on the Sabbath (5:17)—precisely what the Law prohibits—but claims that he is merely acting as God his father does. The charge that Jesus breaks the Sabbath is thus conceded (5:18), but the interest of the Evangelist is rather on the christological claim to which it leads. In John 7:22-23 the unreasonableness of Jesus' opponents seems the point: they permit Sabbath circumcision but object to the restoration of a man's health. Similarly, in John 9 the Sabbath healing gives the Evangelist the opportunity to show Jesus' opponents as blind to the manifest workings of God in their midst (9:30-33), a blindness\* induced by their insistence that a divine representative must conform to the niceties of the old code (9:16). The memory of Sabbath disputes aroused by Jesus is preserved in John, but it becomes the starting-point for the pursuit of favorite Johannine themes: the divine sonship of Jesus and the necessity of faith\* in him.

### 3. Conclusion.

As we have seen, Sabbath controversies are found in Mark (2:23-28; 3:1-6), in material common to Matthew and Luke (Mt 12:11-12a par. Lk 14:5), in material unique to Matthew (12:5-7) and Luke (13:10-17; the incident of 14:1-6), and in John (5; 7:22-23; 9). Furthermore, the authenticity of crucial logia (Mk 2:27; 3:4; etc.) is widely conceded. At the roots of the Gospel tradition, then, are memories of opposition to Jesus' Sabbath behavior aroused among his contemporaries.

Opponents saw the divine will as requiring conformity with the terms of Torah's statutes as interpreted by legal authorities. Hence activities which could be construed as the "work" which Torah forbade were to be avoided unless extenuating circumstances (as defined by the legal experts) could be found to legitimate the activity. Jesus' behavior (and, according to one story, that of his disciples) was found to violate this stricture. The basic line of Jesus' defense as portrayed in the Gospels shows a different approach to the understanding of the divine will. No more than Jesus allows the terminology of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to define the propriety of divorce\* (Mk 10:1-12) or the terminology of scriptural Law to define norms for oaths\* (Mt 5:33-36), does he allow that the divine will for the Sabbath rests in the proper interpretation of the word "work." When opposed he does not reply by arguing that, counter to his opponents' claims, "work" has not been done nor the command transgressed.

He insists that doing "good" can never be wrong on the Sabbath (Mk 3:4—a criterion quite different from the question whether or not "work" has been done), that compassion is a better guide to proper behavior than rules defined by legal experts (Mt 12:10-11a), that God's intentions with the Sabbath are distorted when humans are subjected to a rigid code (Mk 2:27). Implicit in each case, and explicit at various points in the Gospel narrative, is the claim that Jesus has authority to interpret the divine will.

Only for Matthew is it likely that proper Sabbath observance remained an issue. Only in this Gospel is it likely that the relevant pericopes were intended to provide guidance in the matter. In the other Gospels the traditional material serves other ends. Sabbath discussions provide the opportunity to highlight Jesus' authority, his compassion and the nature of his opposition.

See also LAW.

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S. Westerholm

**SABBATH YEAR.** See JUBILEE.

**SACRIFICE.** See DEATH OF JESUS.

**SADDUCEES.** See HERODIAN DYNASTY; JUDAISM.

## SALVATION

The term *salvation* (with its associated word group)

has become widely used in Christian theology to express the provision of God\* for our human situation of need and sin. The word group has a less prominent theological role in the Gospels but nevertheless is important in expressing the effects of the ministry of Jesus. The present article is largely confined to the use of the word group and does not develop the broader concept of salvation at length.

1. Overview of Linguistic Usage
2. Background to the Usage in the Gospels
3. Salvation in the Individual Gospels
4. The Understanding of Salvation in the Gospels

### 1. Overview of Linguistic Usage.

**1.1. The Verb *Sōzō*.** According to Louw and Nida the verb *to save* (*sōzō*) has three meanings in the NT: (1) "To rescue from danger and to restore to a former state of safety and well being"; (2) "to cause someone to become well again after having been sick"; (3) "to cause someone to experience divine salvation—'to save.'"

The verb is found frequently in the Gospels (Mt 15 x; Mk 14 x + Mk 16:16; Lk 17 x; Jn 6 x; the sayings in Mt 18:11 and Lk 9:56 are not found in the oldest MSS; Mk 16:16 is part of a later addition to the Gospel). It has various senses.

**1.1.1. The Synoptics.** (1) The verb means "to deliver" from danger. So in Matthew 8:25 and 14:30 it is used of rescue from the danger of drowning. In Matthew 27:40 (par. Mk 15:30); 27:42b (par. Mk 15:31b and Lk 23:35b); 27:49; Luke 23:37, 39 it is used of Jesus being delivered from dying on the cross (presumably by miraculous means or by Elijah\* coming to help him). It is probably in this same general sense that reference is made to Jesus "saving" others (Mt 27:42a par. Mk 15:31 and Lk 23:35a).

In the passive the verb can mean "to come" or to be brought safely through a period of danger to life (Mt 10:22 and 24:13 par. Mk 13:13; cf. Mt 24:22 par. Mk 13:20).

A more metaphorical use is found in Luke 19:10, where Jesus is like a shepherd who seeks out and saves the lost [sheep] from danger of death (*see* Shepherd, Sheep).

(2) The verb often has the meaning "to heal" (namely, from disease; *see* Healing). It is so used in Matthew 9:21 (par. Mk 5:28); 9:22a (par. Mk 5:34 and Lk 8:48); 9:22b; Mark 5:23; 6:56 (par. Mt 14:36, Gk *diasōzō*); 10:52 (par. Lk 18:42); Luke 7:50; 8:36, 50; 17:19 (note also Lk 7:3, Gk *diasōzō*). In some of these cases the reference is to deliverance from the power of evil spirits by exorcism (*see* Demon, Devil, Satan) or to the raising of the dead (*see* Resurrection). In Mark

3:4 (par. Lk 6:9) "to save a life" (Gk *psychē* may have the sense "person" here) is contrasted with killing. The phrase is used in the context of healing in a broad sense of doing whatever is needed to promote life and health, and the thought is probably of physical life.

(3) In the story of the conversation between Jesus, the rich young man and the disciples\* the phrases "to inherit eternal life" (*see* Life), "to enter the kingdom of God" (*see* Kingdom of God) and "to be saved" appear to be used synonymously (Mk 10:17, 23-25, 26; cf. Mt 19:16, 23-24, 25; Lk 18:18, 24-25, 26). What might be regarded as a technical usage of spiritual salvation is found in Luke 13:23 ("are 'the saved' few?") and in Luke 8:12 ("so that they may not believe and be saved"). Jesus is so named according to the angel of the Lord in Matthew 1:21 because "he will save his people from their sins."

In a paradoxical saying Jesus talks about people who want to save their lives and lose them (Mt 16:25 par. Mk 8:35a and Lk 9:24a) in contrast to those who lose their lives and (thus) save them (Mk 8:35b par. Lk 9:24b).

(4) In some passages the language is ambiguous, and it is not clear whether the reference is purely to physical and mental health and well-being or also to spiritual salvation (e.g., Lk 7:50, "Your faith has saved you"; note that this phrase is used elsewhere of physical healing: Mk 5:34 par. Lk 8:48; Mk 10:52 par. Lk 18:42; cf. Lk 8:50; 17:19).

**1.1.2. John.** The usage in John is similar to that of the Synoptics.

(1) In John 12:27 Jesus prays about the possibility of being delivered from having to undergo the cross. In John 10:9 he refers to people being like sheep who enter the sheepfold and live in safety.

(2) In John 11:12 Lazarus is thought to be asleep (i.e., in a coma) and therefore capable of being healed.

(3) Jesus is said to have come to save the world\* (Jn 3:17), and he refers to this as his purpose in 12:47. He speaks of his hearers being saved in 5:34.

**1.2. The Verb *Rhyomai*.** Meaning "to rescue, deliver," *rhyomai* is used much less frequently, generally with reference to deliverance from extreme danger, such as death or falling into the hands of enemies. In Matthew 27:43 it is found in the satirical quotation of Psalm 22:8 by the Jewish leaders to Jesus on the cross. In Luke 1:74 deliverance from enemies is part of the salvation awaited by Zechariah. In Matthew 6:13 the disciples are encouraged to pray (*see* Prayer) for deliverance from the evil one (or from evil).

**1.3. The Noun *Sōtēr*.** *Sōtēr*, meaning "savior," is used

by Mary with reference to God in Luke 1:47, and Jesus is so designated at his birth by the angel\* of the Lord to the shepherds (Lk 2:11). In John 4:42 the Samaritan\* people who have responded to Jesus declare that he is "the Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42).

**1.4. The Noun *Sōtēria*.** *Sōtēria*, a noun meaning "salvation," can refer to the process of saving or to the result. It is found in Luke 1:69 where Zechariah declares that God has raised up "a horn of salvation," and then defines God's gift more closely as "salvation [deliverance] from our enemies." Later, in the same hymn the task of his son John (see John the Baptist) is defined as giving to his people "the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." Jesus comments that his visit to Zacchaeus has brought "salvation" to his household (Lk 19:9). And Jesus tells the woman of Samaria that "salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22).

**1.5. The Noun *Sōtērion*.** Another word meaning "salvation," *sōtērion*, is found in Luke 2:30 where Simeon says that his eyes have seen God's salvation, and in Luke 3:6 where the Evangelist himself quotes Isaiah 40:5, "And all humanity will see God's salvation." According to Louw and Nida this word signifies rather "the means by which people experience divine salvation."

**1.6. Salvation in a Spiritual Sense.** This survey demonstrates that the spiritual sense is clearly present in Matthew (1:21) and Mark (10:26), but that it is most prominent in Luke, who alone of the Synoptic Evangelists develops the use of the nouns alongside the verb. One interesting fact which emerges is that the "literal" meaning of the word can be either broadly to "rescue" or to "heal," and both of these meanings can underlie the "spiritual" usage of the terminology. Louw and Nida (1:241 n. 4) comment that on the whole Bible translators have used words reflecting the former meaning, but that there has been a shift to using words reflecting the latter meaning or to using words that signify more "to restore, recreate." Thus, the accent has shifted from the action of God or the newness of what he creates to the restoration of what has been lost or marred.

## 2. Background to the Usage in the Gospels.

The Gospels were written at a time when the church had already developed a special vocabulary to refer to Christian experience. We may envisage a two-way process whereby the vocabulary of the Christians will have been influenced by that of Jesus and conversely the diction of the Gospels may have been influenced by that of the church. The modes of expression of Jesus and his followers will also have been influenced

by their heritage in the OT and Judaism,\* and to some extent also by the need to speak in terms that would be readily understood in the wider world.

The extensive and readable survey by E. M. B. Green considers the background to the NT use of the concept. There is a considerable amount of material in the OT where the corresponding Hebrew words are often used of deliverance in times of conflict, especially war. But the idea of deliverance is much wider and refers to being set free from all kinds of perils and dangers to life and even more generally to the state of well-being which God desires for his people. The Israelites naturally looked to God as their supreme and ultimate deliverer from all kinds of trouble and distress. He is the Savior *par excellence* (cf. Ps 27:1 and frequently).

The term *savior* was well known in the Greco-Roman world as an epithet for gods in their roles as helpers of humanity and particular communities; the god Asclepius was particularly important as the healer of the sick at various shrines. It was also used of statesmen, and when a religious cult of rulers developed, *savior* was one of the honorific titles used in this connection.

## 3. Salvation in the Individual Gospels.

### 3.1. Matthew.

**3.1.1. Salvation from Sin.** Right at the outset Matthew's Gospel announces that "Jesus" is to be so-called because he will save his people from their sins (see Forgiveness of Sins). In this context the "people" is a designation for Israel which is regarded as a sinful nation. Deliverance from sin is associated with the response of the people to John the Baptist (Mt 3:6) and with the sovereign declarations of Jesus as the Son of man (Mt 9:2, 5, 6; see Son of Man). At the Last Supper (see Last Supper) Jesus declares that his blood is to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28). He also states that he has come with a mission to sinful people (Mt 9:10-13; cf. 11:19). The significance of "saving" is not spelled out in detail, but the three references to forgiveness indicate clearly enough what is probably in mind. One would naturally think of delivering people from the effects of their sins, but at the same time enabling them not to sin is in mind. In the ironic summary on the lips of the Jewish leaders at the crucifixion: "He saved others" (Mt 27:42a), the verb is used in a broad sense and is not to be limited to the sense of saving a person from death (Mt 27:42b). However, it is unlikely that we are to find a spiritual significance on the level of the original speakers.

**3.1.2. Salvation As Physical and Spiritual.** The ref-

erences to deliverance from impending death at sea and to the cure of physical ailments need not necessarily imply anything further than this. However, a number of factors may suggest a different understanding.

First, there is the fact that stories in the Gospels about physical "salvation" may well have been used in the church with a symbolic significance; thus the story of the disciples in the boat during a storm has been taken to symbolize the church in the world suffering tribulation. In this case it is the followers of Jesus who cry out to the Lord to "save" them in the difficulties of life, and the answer to their prayers may lie in the removing or mitigating of their trials, or their being brought safely through them, or their being brought to final salvation despite even death itself. The collocation of healing a paralyzed man and forgiving his sins may equally have led to seeing healing as symbolic of spiritual forgiveness and salvation.

Second, there is the fact that the formula translated elsewhere in the Gospels as "your faith\* has healed you" is used once in Luke (7:50) of a sinful woman who had experienced forgiveness. Here the formula is naturally translated as "your faith has saved you" (so NIV), which is essentially the same as Ephesians 2:8 (cf. Acts 15:11 [if translated with F. F. Bruce, "we believe (so as) to be saved"]; 16:31; Rom 10:9; Jas 2:14; in the longer addition to Mark [16:16] the same church terminology is to be found). In view of the ambiguity of the formula when taken out of a healing context, it is quite probable that early Christians were led to see healing as symbolic of salvation and to draw the parallel between healing by faith and salvation by faith.

Third, no hard and fast line was drawn between the physical and the spiritual in the ancient world. In fact, the same is often true today. If Christians pray for God to "bless" somebody, it is often hard to say whether they are thinking of successfully carrying through some piece of business or aspect of daily life or enjoying some kind of sense of divine favor or doing some aspect of Christian ministry and service successfully. It would, therefore, be hard to distinguish between a physical healing and the healing of the "inner person" (cf. Lk 17:19, where it is not clear whether the statement refers purely to the cure of the leprosy).

It is therefore likely that the healing stories in the Gospels were understood as accounts of a process that involved the whole person and not merely a physical or mental healing.

**3.1.3. Salvation Despite Persecution.** Matthew 10:22 and parallels could refer to being brought through

persecution in physical safety; however, the reference to possible death in verse 21 suggests that the verse is about standing firm in loyalty to Jesus despite persecution and that standing firm leads to "final salvation." However, in Matthew 24:22 (par. Mk 13:20) the force could be that if persecution went on too long, nobody would survive alive, and therefore there would be nobody left alive to welcome the Son of man at his coming. The saying cannot mean that nobody would stand firm to the point of martyrdom. Here, then, we have two different uses of the word quite close to each other.

**3.1.4. Final Salvation.** Similarly, Matthew 19:25 and parallels must refer to "final salvation." It is about a future state of being saved as opposed to being lost, and in the imagery of the Gospels signifies entry to the heavenly banquet instead of exclusion, a welcome by the Son of man and entry to the heavenly kingdom instead of rejection and consignment to eternal fire (see Judgment). This raises the question whether "being saved" refers exclusively to a future state in the next world, or whether it can also refer to those who are already sure of entry to the kingdom.

**3.1.5. Saving and Losing One's Life.** In Matthew 16:25 and parallels there is an important set of sayings about saving and losing one's life. The difficulty here is partly caused by the ambiguity and uncertainty of the word *life* (Gk *psychē*) which can refer to the "soul" as distinct from the body (and hence signify an individual person), or to "life" or to one's "real life." Jesus appears to be saying that those who try to "save" (i.e., preserve) their lives, either in the sense of avoiding martyrdom or by holding fast to the things that give them pleasure and satisfaction in this world, will in the end "lose" their lives, either by finding that death cannot be kept at bay or that attachment to earthly things leads to loss at the final judgment and hence in the next world. On the other hand, those who are prepared to say "no" to their self, possibly even by dying, for the sake of Jesus (Mark adds "and the gospel"), find that they will "save" their lives in the sense that they will attain to the kingdom of God and enjoy the blessings that are really worth having (cf. the parallel in somewhat different wording in Mt 10:39 par. Lk 17:33).

**3.2. Mark.** The picture in Mark's Gospel is simpler than in Matthew. The one significant reference not paralleled in Matthew is Mark 3:4, where Jesus comments on the lawfulness of doing good and "saving life" on the Sabbath\* in the broad sense of healing a sick man. The phrase stands in contrast to "killing" and is pointedly directed against what Jesus implies to be the secret intentions of his critics who

attacked him for healing on the Sabbath. Otherwise, Mark lacks the programmatic text found in Matthew 1:21, and only in Mark 10:26 is there an explicitly theological use of the term.

**3.3. Luke.** The case is different with Luke. He has the same broad pattern of usage as the other two Gospels, but there is a special emphasis on salvation which is not found in them.

**3.3.1. *The Overture to the Story of Salvation.*** This is clear above all from the birth stories (*see* Birth of Jesus), which function like an overture, setting out the main themes of the following drama, but doing so with their own distinctive music. One of the most characteristic tones here is that of salvation, with six significant references.

The note is first struck in Luke 1:47 where Mary, as the mother-to-be of the Messiah aligns herself with the people of God and rejoices in God her savior (*see* Mary's Song). The development of her song makes it clear that he is savior both of her and of the people. God's action is depicted in terms of powerful action against the mighty and the proud and on behalf of the poor and humble. These sets of terms connote respectively those who are opposed to God and those who trust him to provide for their needs. Further, God's action is seen as forming part of a long history of merciful concern for the people of his choice.

In the second song, that of Zechariah (*see* Zechariah's Song), the nature of salvation is brought out more clearly. Again, the note of powerful intervention is struck—"a horn of salvation" (1:69)—and it is associated with the coming of the Messiah (*see* Christ). Again we hear of God's action against the powerful wicked people making it possible for his people to serve him righteously without fear of attack (1:71). But above all Zechariah speaks of an experience (Gk *gnōsis*, "knowledge") of salvation which is closely associated with the forgiveness of sins (1:77). What Matthew 1:21 said with the utmost brevity Luke expresses on a broader canvas. It is not surprising after all this that when Jesus is born, the lofty language used to describe him refers not only to his Davidic links, to his messiahship and his position as Lord,\* but also to his being a savior (2:11). And the whole drama is summed up in the comment of Simeon (*see* Simeon's Song) that he has seen the salvation which the Lord has prepared—a salvation which is for all peoples (NIV "for all people" [singular] is not sufficiently literal), including the Gentiles\* (Lk 2:30-32).

**3.3.2. *Salvation As the Mission of the Son of Man.*** The notes of this overture are intended to stay in our ears as we continue to listen to Luke's Gospel, and other

uses of the "salvation" terminology should resonate with what we have already heard. Luke repeats a good deal of what we have already found in Matthew and Mark. We may note that in recounting material parallel to that in Mark he has added a reference in 8:12 to the way in which the devil snatches away the word from some hearers "so they may not believe and be saved" (Lk 8:12). Here the language of the early church is echoed, and Luke is clearly referring to the experience of spiritual salvation which comes through hearing the word of God. The same is true in Luke 13:23 where Jesus is asked whether "the saved" are few. This question should be interpreted in the light of Matthew 7:13-14, which speaks of the many people who tread the road to destruction and the few who find the way to life, and of the equating of terms which we saw in Mark 10. This is confirmed by the context which refers to the coming feast in the kingdom of God.

Luke's theology of salvation is summed up in Luke 19:10 where the Son of man's mission is to seek and to save the lost. The language is that of shepherding and refers to the rescue of sheep from death in various possible ways. The metaphorical usage of such language to refer to God's care of his people was well established and is echoed here. In consequence of the coming of Jesus to him, it can be said that salvation has come to Zacchaeus's house there and then (Lk 19:9). It is thus a present experience involving the table fellowship (*see* Table Fellowship) between Jesus and Zacchaeus and the commencement of a new way of life in which the latter abandons the sinful habits of the past. Jesus emphasizes that even though Zacchaeus is a sinner,\* yet he is one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel and therefore a rightful object of his mission.

**3.4. John.** In the Gospel of John salvation is associated with the mission of the Son of God (*see* Son of God) and is placed in direct contrast with the possibility of condemnation and perishing. To be saved is thus the opposite of being judged and destroyed. It is the same as to gain eternal life (Jn 3:16-17; cf. 12:47). Salvation is not confined to the Jewish people. It is for the world, and this includes the Samaritans,\* whom Jewish orthodoxy regarded as excluded from God's favor: it is they who confess that Jesus is the "savior of the world" (Jn 4:42), even if it is true that salvation comes to the world "from the Jews." It follows that testimony to Jesus is what can lead people to experience salvation (Jn 5:34). The shepherding metaphor (*see* Shepherd, Sheep) is also used to express the role of Jesus in this Gospel, but here Jesus functions as the door through which the sheep enter into the safety of the

fold and so are free from the dangers outside. (The metaphor is not to be pressed; the sheep can go freely in and out in safety; the implication is that those who "belong" to the sheepfold are assured of the protection of the shepherd wherever they are.)

#### 4. The Understanding of Salvation in the Gospels.

Sufficient has been said to show that salvation is not a dominant word group in the Gospels in the same way as, say, the kingdom of God is. This is particularly obvious in Mark. Matthew associates the coming of Jesus with his role as a savior, but does not develop the terminology significantly. Luke makes much of the theme in the birth narratives, and never altogether loses sight of it thereafter, but the terminology can scarcely be said to be prominent. In John the word group occupies a minor but significant role, alongside other word groups that receive much greater attention.

It is obvious that the Evangelists are here reflecting the historical realities of the situation, that this was not a word group used greatly by Jesus, especially in its full theological sense. Nevertheless, it is arguable that the Evangelists have correctly represented the situation in that they recognized that the mission of Jesus was ultimately concerned with salvation. Jesus announced the kingdom of God with its attendant blessings; the language of salvation spells out what this means in terms of the benefits for humankind.

Several themes emerge from the Gospels:

(1) Salvation is closely related to Jesus and his mission. It is a comprehensive term for the benefits brought by the sovereign action of God through the Messiah.

(2) It is thought of as a future experience, identical with entry into the kingdom of God and gaining eternal life, but it is also a present experience resulting from personal encounter with Jesus.

(3) God brings salvation through Jesus for his people Israel. The implication is that, although they are God's people, they are not enjoying the fullness of life which he wishes for them. This is due both to the effects of evil in the world at large (e.g., the action of enemies) and the workings of illness and death.

(4) Individuals are not by their sinfulness cut off from the possibility of gaining the salvation intended for God's people. On the contrary, this fact establishes their need. Nor in fact is salvation in principle limited to the Jews. There are hints that it is for all peoples, although within the ministry of Jesus there are only occasional contacts with Samaritans and other non-Jews.

(5) The linking of healing with faith and the wider

use of the "your faith has saved you" formula indicate that the reception of salvation was associated with faith, understood in a broad sense as recognition of Jesus as God's sovereign and powerful agent and a commitment to him.

(6) Turning aside from evil is part of the process of salvation. Zacchaeus in fact not only abandons his former dishonest practices but pledges himself to a new way of life which involves giving to the poor.

(7) In presenting Jesus as the savior the Evangelists are assigning to him a role which Judaism reserved for Yahweh. Although the term could be applied to earthly leaders (the judges), it was used predominantly of Yahweh, and the echoes of OT passages about Yahweh's saving activity indicate that his role is now assigned to Jesus. The term *savior* was not previously applied to the Messiah in Judaism. At the same time, it is implied that Jesus stands over against other human figures (such as the Roman emperor) who were regarded as saviors.

See also FAITH; FORGIVENESS OF SINS; GENTILE; HEALING; KINGDOM OF GOD; LIFE; LUKE, GOSPEL OF.

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**SAMARIA.** See ARCHEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY; SAMARITANS.

**SAMARITAN WOMAN.** See SAMARITANS; WOMEN.

#### SAMARITANS

In NT times the Samaritans were a substantial religious group inhabiting parts of the central hill country of Samaria between Galilee\* to the north and Judea to the south, but with Diaspora communities in addition (see Archeology and Geography). Physically, they focused on Mount Gerizim, close to the ancient