

THE *Life* OF
Jesus

THE
PASSION
TRANSLATION



THE *Life* OF *Jesus*

Harmonized
Gospels



READER'S EDITION



BroadStreet
P U B L I S H I N G

BroadStreet Publishing® Group, LLC
Savage, Minnesota, USA
BroadStreetPublishing.com
ThePassionTranslation.com

The Life of Jesus: Harmonized Gospels, Reader's Edition, The Passion Translation®

Copyright © 2018 BroadStreet Publishing® Group, LLC

978-1-4245-5666-3 (faux)
978-1-4245-5667-0 (e-book)

The Passion Translation®, Copyright © 2018 Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc.
The Passion Translation® is a registered trademark of Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except as noted below, without permission in writing from the publisher.

The text from *The Life of Jesus* may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio), up to and inclusive of 200 verses or less, without written permission from the publisher, provided that the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible, nor do verses quoted account for 20 percent or more of the total text of the work in which they are quoted, and the verses are not being quoted in a commentary or other biblical reference work. When quoted, one of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page of the work:

Scripture quotations marked TPT are from The Passion Translation®, *The Life of Jesus: Harmonized Gospels, Reader's Edition*. Copyright © 2018 by Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
ThePassionTranslation.com.

All Scripture quotations are from The Passion Translation®, *The Life of Jesus: Harmonized Gospels, Reader's Edition*. Copyright © 2018 by Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
ThePassionTranslation.com.

When quotations from TPT are used in non-saleable media, such as church bulletins, sermons, newsletters, or projected in worship settings, a complete copyright notice is not required, but the initials TPT must appear at the end of each quotation.

Quotations in excess of these guidelines or other permission requests must be approved in writing by BroadStreet Publishing Group, LLC. Please send requests through the contact form at ThePassionTranslation.com/permissions.

For information about bulk sales or customized editions of The Passion Translation, please contact tpt@broadstreetpublishing.com.

The publisher and TPT team have worked diligently and prayerfully to present this version of The Passion Translation Bible with excellence and accuracy. However, all translations of the Bible are subject to human limitations and imperfections. If you find a mistake in the Bible text or footnotes, please contact the publisher at tpt@broadstreetpublishing.com.

Printed in China

18 19 20 21 22 5 4 3 2 1



CONTENTS

Introduction

What Is a Gospel Harmonization?	1
Why Harmonize the Gospel Accounts?	2
How Does <i>The Life of Jesus</i> Harmonize the Gospel Accounts?	3
Forty Days in the Gospels	4

Day 1

To the Lovers of God (Lk. 1:1–4)	5
The Living Expression (Jn. 1:1–14)	5
Angelic Prophecy of the Prophet John's Birth (Lk. 1:5–25)	6
Angelic Prophecy of Jesus' Birth (Lk. 1:26–38)	8
Elizabeth's Prophecy to Mary (Lk. 1:39–45)	9
Mary's Prophetic Song (Lk. 1:46–56)	9
An Angel Comes to Joseph (Matt. 1:18–25)	10

Day 2

The Birth of the Prophet John (Lk. 1:57–66)	11
Zechariah's Prophecy (Lk. 1:67–80)	11
From Abraham to Christ (Matt. 1:1–17)	13
The Ancestry of Jesus Christ (Lk. 3:23–38)	14
The Birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:1–7)	14
An Angelic Encounter (Lk. 2:8–20)	14
Baby Jesus Dedicated in the Temple (Lk. 2:21–38)	15

Day 3

The Wise Men Visit (Matt. 2:1–12)	18
They Escape to Egypt (Matt. 2:13–18)	19
They Return to Nazareth (Matt. 2:19–23)	19
Jesus Grows in Grace, Wisdom, and Favor (Lk. 2:39–40)	20
At Age Twelve Jesus Visits the Temple (Lk. 2:41–52)	20
The Wonderful News (Mk. 1:1–5)	21
John the Baptizer (Lk. 3:1–20)	21

Day 4

The Ministry of John the Baptizer (Jn. 1:19–28)	25
The Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29–31)	26
The Baptism of Jesus (Lk. 3:21–22)	26
Jesus Tested in the Wilderness (Lk. 4:1–13)	27
Jesus' First Followers (Jn. 1:35–42)	28
Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael (Jn. 1:43–51)	29
Jesus Comes to a Wedding (Jn. 2:1–11)	29

Day 5

Jesus at the Temple (Jn. 2:12–25)	31
Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1–13)	32
God's Love for Everyone (Jn. 3:14–21)	33
John, Friend of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:22–36)	33
Jesus Leaves Judea (Jn. 4:1–4)	34
A Thirsty Savior (Jn. 4:5–30)	35

Day 6

The Harvest Is Ready (Jn. 4:31–42)	37
Jesus Returns to Galilee (Lk. 4:14–30)	38
Jesus Moves to Capernaum (Matt. 4:13–17)	40
Jesus Calls Four Fishermen to Follow Him (Mk. 1:16–20)	40
The Miracle Catch of Fish (Lk. 5:1–11)	41

Day 7

Jesus Confronts a Demonized Man (Lk. 4:31–37)	43
Jesus Heals Many (Lk. 4:38–44)	44
Jesus, the Healer (Lk. 5:12–26)	45
Jesus Calls Matthew to Follow Him (Lk. 5:27–32)	48
A Question about Fasting (Lk. 5:33–39)	49

Day 8

The Healing at Bethesda (Jn. 5:1–16)	50
Jesus Responds to the Jewish Leaders (Jn. 5:17–24)	51
Two Resurrections (Jn. 5:25–32)	52
John the Baptizer (Jn. 5:33–47)	52
Jesus and Religious Traditions (Lk. 6:1–11)	53

Day 9

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles (Lk. 6:12–19)	56
Jesus' Sermon on the Hillside on What Matters Most (Matt. 5:1–16)	57
Fulfillment of the Law (Matt. 5:17–20)	58
Anger (Matt. 5:21–26)	59
Adultery (Matt. 5:27–32)	59
Making Oaths (Matt. 5:33–42)	60
Love Your Enemies (Matt. 5:43–48)	60

Day 10

Giving with Pure Motives (Matt. 6:1–4)	62
Prayer (Matt. 6:5–15)	62
Fasting (Matt. 6:16–18)	63
Treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19–24)	63
Don't Worry (Matt. 6:25–34)	64
Do Not Judge (Matt. 7:1–11)	65
The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12)	66
The Narrow Gate (Matt. 7:13–14)	66
False Prophets (Matt. 7:15–20)	66
Jesus Warns of Pretenders (Matt. 7:21–29)	67

Day 11

Jesus Heals (Lk. 7:1–10)	68
Jesus Raises the Dead (Lk. 7:11–17)	69
The Prophet John's Question (Lk. 7:18–35)	70
Jesus Criticizes Unrepentant Cities (Matt. 11:20–24)	72
Jesus Invites Everyone to Come (Matt. 11:25–30)	72
Extravagant Worship (Lk. 7:36–50)	73

Day 12

Jesus Ministers throughout the Land (Lk. 8:1–3)	75
Mysteries of God's Kingdom Realm (Lk. 8:4–15)	75
The Revelation Light (Lk. 8:16–18)	78
Parable of the Growing Seed (Mk. 4:26–29)	79
The Parable of the Weeds (Matt. 13:24–30)	79
The Parable of the Tiny Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31–32)	80
The Parable of the Yeast (Matt. 13:33)	80
Prophecy and Parables (Matt. 13:34–35)	80
Jesus Explains the Parables (Matt. 13:36–43)	81
Parables of Hidden Treasure and an Extraordinary Pearl (Matt. 13:44–46)	81
The Parable of the Fishing Net (Matt. 13:47–53)	81

Day 13

Jesus' True Family (Lk. 8:19–20)	83
Peace in the Storm (Lk. 8:21–25)	83
A Demonized Man Set Free (Lk. 8:26–39)	84
More Miracles of Healing (Lk. 8:40–56)	86
Jesus Opens Blind Eyes (Matt. 9:27–31)	88
Jesus Heals the Mute (Matt. 9:32–34)	88

Day 14

Jesus Rejected in Nazareth (Mk. 6:1–6)	89
Workers for the Harvest (Matt. 9:35–38)	90
Jesus Sends Out His Apostles (Lk. 9:1–6)	90

Jesus Sends Out His Twelve Apostles (Matt. 10:5–16)	90
Jesus Warns His Apostles of Persecution (Matt. 10:17–42; 11:1)	91
Death of John the Baptizer (Mk. 6:14–29)	93

Day 15

Jesus Feeds Thousands (Lk. 9:10–17)	95
Jesus Walks on Water (Mk. 6:45–52)	97
Jesus the Healer (Mk. 6:53–56)	98
Jesus, the Living Bread (Jn. 6:22–59)	98
Many Disciples Became Offended (Jn. 6:60–68)	100

Day 16

Jesus Breaks Religious Traditions (Mk. 7:1–13)	102
Jesus Explains What Truly Defiles (Mk. 7:14–23)	103
Jesus and a Foreign Woman (Mk. 7:24–30)	104
Jesus Heals a Deaf Man (Mk. 7:31–37)	105
Jesus Multiplies Food Again (Mk. 8:1–10)	106
The Pharisees Demand a Sign (Mk. 8:11–13)	107
Jesus Warns of the Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod (Mk. 8:14–21)	107

Day 17

Jesus Heals Blind Eyes (Mk. 8:22–26)	109
Who Is Jesus? (Lk. 9:18–21)	109
Jesus Prophesies His Death and Resurrection (Matt. 16:21–28)	110
What it Means to Follow Jesus (Lk. 9:23–27)	111
The True Glory of Jesus (Lk. 9:28–36)	112
The Power of Faith (Lk. 9:37–45)	113

Day 18

The Miracle of a Coin in a Fish's Mouth (Matt. 17:24–27)	116
Who Is the Greatest in the Kingdom Realm? (Matt. 18:1–10)	116
A Parable of the Lost Lamb (Matt. 18:11–14)	118
Restoring Broken Relationships (Matt. 18:15–20)	118
Unlimited Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21–35)	119
The Name of Christ (Mk. 9:38–42)	120
Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:1–11)	120

Day 19

Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (Mk. 9:51–56)	122
The Cost to Follow Jesus (Lk. 9:57–62)	122
Many Different Opinions about Jesus (Jn. 7:12–36)	123
Rivers of Living Water (Jn. 7:37–39)	125
Divided Opinions about Jesus (Jn. 7:40–44)	125
The Unbelief of Religious Leaders (Jn. 7:45–53)	125
An Adulteress Forgiven (Jn. 8:1–11)	126
Jesus, the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12–20)	127

Day 20

"I Am Not from This World" (Jn. 8:21–30)	128
The Son Gives Freedom (Jn. 8:31–59)	129
Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind (Jn. 9:1–41)	131

Day 21

The Parable of the Kind Shepherd (Jn. 10:1–21).	134
Jesus at the Feast of Renewal (Jn. 10:22–42)	135
Labor Shortage (Lk. 10:1–12).	136
Jesus Condemns the Unrepentant Cities (Lk. 10:13–16)	137
The Seventy Return (Lk. 10:17–24)	138
Loving God, Loving Others (Lk. 10:25–37)	139

Day 22

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38–42)	141
Jesus Teaches about Prayer (Lk. 11:1–13).	141
Jesus Responds to Controversy (Lk. 11:14–28).	142
Only Good Trees Bear Good Fruit (Matt. 12:33–37).	144
The Miracle Sign of Jonah the Prophet (Lk. 11:29–32).	145
Revelation Light (Lk. 11:33–36).	146

Day 23

Jesus Warns Hypocrites (Lk. 11:37–54).	147
Jesus Warns against Hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1–12)	148
Jesus Condemns Greed (Lk. 12:13–21)	150
Don't Worry (Lk. 12:22–34)	151
Be Ready (Lk. 12:35–40)	152
The Faithful Servant (Lk. 12:41–48)	152

Day 24

Jesus Brings Fire to the Earth (Lk. 12:49–53)	154
Discerning the Time (Lk. 12:54–59).	155
The Need for True Repentance (Lk. 13:1–5)	155
The Parable of the Barren Tree (Lk. 13:6–9)	155
Jesus Heals on the Sabbath Day (Lk. 13:10–17)	156
Parables of Jesus (Lk. 13:18–21)	156
The Way of the Kingdom (Lk. 13:22–30).	157
Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem (Lk. 13:31–35)	157
Jesus Heals on the Sabbath (Lk. 14:1–6)	158
Humility and Hospitality (Lk. 14:7–24)	158

Day 25

The Cost of Following Jesus (Lk. 14:25–34)	161
The Parable of the Lost Lamb (Lk. 15:1–7)	162
The Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8–10)	162
The Loving Father (Lk. 15:11–32)	163

The Dishonest Manager (Lk. 16:1–18)	165
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19–31)	166

Day 26

Faith and Forgiveness (Lk. 17:1–10)	168
Lazarus Raised from the Dead (Jn. 11:1–54)	169
Jesus Heals Ten Lepers (Lk. 17:11–19)	172
God's Kingdom Realm within You (Lk. 17:20–37)	172

Day 27

Jesus Gives a Parable about Prayer (Lk. 18:1–8)	175
Humility in Prayer (Lk. 18:9–14)	175
The Revolutionary Values of the Kingdom (Mk. 10:1–12)	176
Jesus Blesses Children (Lk. 18:15–17)	177
Jesus Speaks with a Young, Wealthy Official (Lk. 18:18–30)	178
A Parable of Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1–16)	179

Day 28

Jesus Again Prophesies His Death and Resurrection (Lk. 18:31–34)	181
Jacob (James) and John Ask a Favor of Jesus (Mk. 10:35–45)	181
Jesus Heals Blind Beggar Bar-Timai (Lk. 18:35–43)	182
Jesus and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10)	183
The Parable of a Prince and His Servants (Lk. 19:11–27)	184
Preparing for Passover (Jn. 11:55–57)	185
Mary Anoints Jesus (Jn. 12:1–11)	186

Day 29

King Jesus Comes to Jerusalem (Lk. 19:28–40)	187
Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41–44)	189
Jesus and a Fruitless Fig Tree (Mk. 11:12–14)	189
Jesus Drives Merchants Out of the Temple Courts (Mk. 11:15–19)	189
Lessons of Faith (Mk. 11:20–26)	190
True Seekers (Jn. 12:20–36)	191
The Unbelief of the Crowd (Jn. 12:37–43)	192
Jesus' Last Public Teaching (Jn. 12:44–50)	193

Day 30

A Day of Controversy (Lk. 20:1–8)	194
The Parable of Two Sons (Matt. 21:28–32)	195
The Story of the Vine Growers (Lk. 20:9–19)	195
Paying Taxes (Lk. 20:20–26)	197
A Question about the Resurrection (Lk. 20:27–40)	198
The Greatest Commandment (Mk. 12:28–34)	199

Day 31

The Messiah, Both God and Man (Lk. 20:41–44)	200
Superficial Spirituality versus Genuine Humility (Matt. 23:1–12)	200
Jesus Pronounces Seven Woes (Matt. 23:13–36)	201
Jesus Prophesies Judgment Coming to Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37–39)	203
The Widow's Offering (Lk. 21:1–4)	204
The Signs of the End of the Age (Lk. 21:5–19)	204
Persecution of Believers (Matt. 24:9–14)	206

Day 32

The Destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:20–24)	207
The Detestable Idol That Brings Misery (Matt. 24:15–28)	207
The Coming of the Son of Man (Lk. 21:25–28)	208
The Lesson of the Fig Tree (Lk. 21:29–33)	209
Live Always Ready for His Appearing (Matt. 24: 36–44)	209
The Wise and Faithful Servant (Matt. 24:45–51)	210
A Parable of a Man Who Left on a Journey (Mk. 13:34–37)	210
Guard Your Hearts (Lk. 21:34–38)	211
A Parable about Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1–13)	211
A Parable about Financial Stewardship (Matt. 25:14–30)	212

Day 33

The Judgment of the Multitudes (Matt. 25:31–46)	214
Jesus Teaches, People Come to Listen (Lk. 21:37–38)	215
Jesus Prophesies His Crucifixion (Matt. 26:1–5)	215
Jesus Is Anointed for His Death and Burial (Mk. 14:3–9)	216
Satan Enters into Judas (Lk. 22:3–6)	216
Jesus Prophesies the Location of the Last Supper (Lk. 22:7–13)	217
Jesus and His Disciples Eat the Last Supper (Lk. 22:14–23)	217
Apostles Argue over Which of Them Will Be the Greatest (Lk. 22:24–30)	219

Day 34

Jesus Washes Feet (Jn. 13:1–17)	220
Jesus Predicts His Betrayal (Jn. 13:18–30)	221
Jesus Prophesies Peter's Denial (Lk. 22:31–38)	222
Jesus Comforts His Disciples (Jn. 14:1–14)	223
Jesus Prophesies about the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15–31)	224

Day 35

Jesus the Living Vine (Jn. 15:1–17)	226
True Disciples Can Expect Persecution (Jn. 15:18–27)	227
Jesus Warns His Disciples (Jn. 16:1–33)	228

Day 36

Jesus Finished the Father's Work (Jn. 17:1–5)	231
Jesus Prays for His Disciples (Jn. 17:6–19)	231
Jesus Prays for You (Jn. 17:20–26)	233
The Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:39–46)	234
Judas Betrays Jesus (Lk. 22:47–53)	235
Jesus Is Taken before Annas and Interrogated (Jn. 18:12–14, 19–24)	237

Day 37

Jesus Condemned by the Religious Leaders (Mk. 14:53–65)	239
Peter Denies He Knew Jesus (Lk. 22:54–62)	240
Jesus Is Mocked and Severely Beaten (Lk. 22:63–65)	241
Jesus Condemned by the Jewish Council (Lk. 22:66–71)	241
Judas Commits Suicide (Matt. 27:3–10)	242
Jesus before Pilate (Lk. 23:1–5)	242
Jesus before Herod (Lk. 23:6–12)	244
Jesus Sentenced to Death (Lk. 23:13–25)	245

Day 38

Jesus Is Flogged and Condemned to Death (Jn. 19:1–16)	247
The Crucifixion of Jesus (Lk. 23:26–43)	249
The Death of the Savior (Lk. 23:44–49)	251
The Burial of Jesus (Lk. 24:50–56)	253

Day 39

The Resurrection of Jesus (Lk. 24:1–10)	255
The Guards Report What They Witnessed (Matt. 28:11–15)	256
The Empty Tomb (Jn. 20:1–18)	256
Jesus Walks to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13–35)	258

Day 40

Jesus Appears to the Disciples (Lk. 24:36–49)	260
Jesus Appears to Thomas (Jn. 20:24–31)	261
Jesus Appears at Lake Galilee (Jn. 21:1–14)	262
Jesus Restores Peter (Jn. 21:15–23)	263
The Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20)	264
John's Conclusion (Jn. 21:24–25)	264
The Ascension of Jesus (Lk. 24:50–53)	264



Introduction

This is a special book, for it contains the fullness of revelation insight into the complete life of Jesus—from his birth to his ministry to his ascension; it includes his miracle wonders and heaven's-realm teachings; his suffering, justifying death and victorious, life-giving resurrection. It is a biography of Jesus of Nazareth—the Son of God, Savior of the world, Lord of hosts.

What makes this particular biography of Jesus Christ especially unique is that it doesn't contain just one of the Gospel accounts, or even two; it is a harmony of all four Gospels. Merging the particular biographies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, *The Life of Jesus* offers one seamless chronological narrative to present to you the fullness of God's heart unveiled before humanity in the person and work of Jesus, the Messiah.

It is a Gospel harmonization, built on four separate perspectives on the life of Jesus that introduces his life and the work of his Spirit to invite seekers, encourage saints, and challenge skeptics alike.

WHAT IS A GOSPEL HARMONIZATION?

A Gospel harmony or harmonization merges together the biographical accounts of Jesus found in the four canonical Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—creating a single narrative account of his life and teachings, death and resurrection. The goal is to offer readers a single, complete biography of Jesus' life-story, helping you intimately know who Jesus is and what he has done for you, while encountering the heart of God through him and his story.

Sometimes such harmonizations arrange the various Bible passages of Jesus' life into parallel columns, highlighting places where the stories overlap or offer singular accounts of

Jesus' story. Others offer a single, merged narrative that blend the four stories into one story, expanding each account, and adding events unique to each Gospel account.

The unique portrait of the life of Jesus found in this book takes the second approach, bringing together the four perspectives of the Gospel writers into one seamless story, using the Gospel of Luke as a base text and the other three to expand and emphasize the details of Luke's account. The result is readable and reliable—an exciting and engaging narrative of Jesus' life that reads like a novel.

WHY HARMONIZE THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS?

There is a rich history of merging the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' life into one single account. The most prominent early harmony was from Tatian, the second-century Christian apologist. His *Diatessaron* offered an authentic account of the life of Jesus through the prism of all four Gospel accounts together—*dia tessaron* meaning “through [the] four” in Greek—and had lasting influence into the Middle Ages.

Augustine wrote extensively on the subject in *Harmony of the Gospels*, highlighting the variations of the Gospel narratives and revealing their different focuses: Matthew focused on Jesus' royalty as king; Mark on Jesus' humanity; Luke presented Jesus the priest; and John offered a portrait of Jesus' divinity. The great Reformer John Calvin followed this same tradition by harmonizing what are called the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in his commentary, perhaps illustrating why such harmonizations are necessary.

Many have tried to discredit the accounts of Jesus' life presented in the Bible by pointing to the seemingly diverse and divergent ways the writers tell his story, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels. Yet this so-called “synoptic problem” isn't really a problem, for just as four people who witness an event would tell the same story in different ways, resulting in four truthful retellings of the one story, the Gospel writers also retold the life of Jesus in different ways.

The differences among the Gospel narratives reflect the differences in theological emphasis for the Gospel writers. A Gospel

harmonization both highlights these differences and shows how the different points of view fit together like a puzzle to showcase the one narrative portrait of Jesus' life, centered around the same message of God's love. You will find this Gospel harmony to offer a refreshing perspective on the single story of Jesus and his love.

HOW DOES *THE LIFE OF JESUS* HARMONIZE THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS?

Following in the tradition of Tatian, Augustine, and John Calvin, we have merged the four canonical Gospel accounts of Jesus' life into a single, seamless narrative, offering readers a richly majestic, moving portrait of the Son of God. In order to tell this complete story well, we have chosen a single Gospel narrative to serve as the foundational account of Jesus' life in *The Life of Jesus*: the Gospel of Luke. We have used Luke's biography for a few reasons.

First, at the start of his narrative of Jesus' life, Luke confesses to having set out to write "an orderly account of what Jesus, the Anointed One, accomplished and fulfilled," compiling his "meticulous investigation" and "thorough research of the story of his life." Luke's style, then, is close to a true historical biography. On one hand, he includes stories of Jesus not shared in Matthew, Mark, and John. On the other hand, he shares much material across the Synoptic Gospels, so that adding the Matthew and Mark material expands what Luke wrote. Finally, Luke's chronological retelling of Jesus' story from before his birth with the announcement of his forerunner, John the Baptizer, to his ascension into the heavens to the right hand of God, offers a truly biographical narrative of Jesus' life in a way the other Gospels do not.

Using Luke's Gospel as a base text, we have expanded and amplified his telling of Jesus' story using Matthew, Mark, and John. At times, we have inserted whole portions of these others with headers indicating their reference. These passage insertions are in keeping with the chronological retelling of the life of Jesus. Elsewhere, you will notice bracketed [] sentences or an entire paragraph or passage inserted into the Luke material. These portions indicate an expansion from Matthew, Mark, or

John to Luke's original account of Jesus' life. Then, we often amplify this foundation or these expansions using brace { } indicators, which include one or a few words of descriptive content to enhance one's understanding of the story.

These expansions and amplifications have not altered the original meaning or message of God's Word in any way. The same trustworthy Passion Translation still sits at the heart of this Gospel harmony. Where we have changed or added a word from The Passion Translation original, it was to indicate the antecedent of a pronoun or add conjunctions for narrative flow.

FORTY DAYS IN THE GOSPELS

We have divided this harmonization of the Gospels into forty readings. Read at your own pace, or set aside just ten minutes each day for the next forty days to discover anew the life of Jesus. It—or rather he—will change your life, whether this is your first or fiftieth time you've read the Gospels.

We trust this unique portrait Jesus' life from The Passion Translation—complete with the four unique perspectives of four eyewitnesses to that life—will give you greater revelation insight into not merely who the person of Jesus is, but who he is *for you*. He is the heart of God standing at the door of your heart, knocking and waiting for the invitation to enter. As Jesus himself said through John the Seer's unveiling in his prophetic letter: “If your heart is open to hear my voice and you open the door *within*, I will come in to you and feast with you, and you will feast with me” (Revelation 3:20).

May this harmonized biography lead you to open your heart up in new ways to the One who sits at the center of its story. May this exciting, engaging novel-like experience help you intimately know the One who lived and bled for you. And may his life story become and transform your life story.

Day 1

TO THE LOVERS OF GOD (Lk. 1:1–4)

Dear friend,

I am writing for you, mighty lover of God, an orderly account of what Jesus, the Anointed One, accomplished and fulfilled among us. Several eyewitness biographies have already been written, using as their source material the good news preached among us by his early disciples, who became loving servants of the Living Expression. But now I am passing on to you this accurate compilation of my own meticulous investigation based on numerous eyewitness interviews and thorough research of the story of his life. It is appropriate for me to write this, for he also appeared to me so that I would reassure you beyond any shadow of a doubt the reliability of all you have been taught of him.

THE LIVING EXPRESSION (Jn. 1:1–14)

In the very beginning the Living Expression was already there.

And the Living Expression was with God, yet fully God.
They were together—*face-to-face*, in the very beginning.
And through his creative inspiration
this Living Expression made all things,
for nothing has existence apart from him!
Life came into being because of him,
for his life is light for all humanity.
And this Living Expression is the Light that bursts through
gloom—
the Light that darkness could not diminish!

Then suddenly a man appeared who was sent from God,
a messenger named John.
For he came to be a witness, to point the way to the Light
of Life,
and to help everyone believe.
John was not that Light but he came to show who is.
For he was merely a messenger to speak the truth about
the Light.
For the Light of Truth was about to come into the world
and shine upon everyone.
He entered into the very world he created,
yet the world was unaware.
He came to the very people he created—
to those who should have recognized him,
but they did not receive him.
But those who embraced him and took hold of his name
were given authority to become
the children of God!
He was not born by the joining of human parents
or from natural means, or by a man's desire,
but he was born of God.
And so the Living Expression
became a man and lived among us!
And we gazed upon the splendor of his glory,
the glory of the One and Only
who came from the Father overflowing
with tender mercy and truth!

ANGELIC PROPHECY OF THE PROPHET JOHN'S BIRTH (Lk. 1:5–25)

During the reign of King Herod the Great over Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah who served in the temple as part of the priestly order of Abijah. His wife, Elizabeth, was also from a family of priests, being a direct descendant of Aaron. They were both lovers of God, living virtuously and following the commandments of the Lord fully. But

they were childless since Elizabeth was barren, and now they both were quite old.

One day, while Zechariah's priestly order was on duty and he was serving as priest, it happened by the casting of lots (according to the custom of the priesthood) that the honor fell upon Zechariah to enter into the Holy Place and burn incense before the Lord. A large crowd of worshipers had gathered to pray outside the temple at the hour when incense was being offered. All at once an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing just to the right of the altar of incense.

Zechariah was startled and overwhelmed with fear. But the angel reassured him, saying, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! *God is showing grace to you.* For I have come to tell you that your prayer for a child has been answered. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son and you are to name him John. His birth will bring you much joy and gladness. Many will rejoice because of him. He will be one of the great ones in the sight of God. He will drink no wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even while still in his mother's womb. And he will persuade many in Israel to convert and turn back to the Lord their God. He will go before the Lord as a forerunner, with the same power and anointing as Elijah the prophet. He will be instrumental in turning the hearts of the fathers in tenderness back to their children and the hearts of the disobedient back to the wisdom of their righteous fathers. And he will prepare a *united people* who are ready for the Lord's appearing."

Zechariah asked the angel, "How do you expect me to believe this? I'm an old man and my wife is too old to give me a child. *What sign can you give me to prove this will happen?*"

Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel. I stand beside God himself. He has sent me to announce to you this good news. But now, since you did not believe my words, you will be stricken silent and unable to speak until the day my words have been fulfilled at their appointed time and a child is born to you. That will be your sign!"

Meanwhile, the crowds outside kept expecting him to come out. They were amazed over Zechariah's delay, wondering what could have happened inside the sanctuary. When he finally

did come out, he tried to talk, but he couldn't speak a word, and they realized from his gestures that he had seen a vision while in the Holy Place. He remained mute as he finished his days of priestly ministry in the temple and then went back to his own home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for the next five months. She said with joy, "See how kind it is of God to gaze upon me and take away the disgrace of my barrenness!"

ANGELIC PROPHECY OF JESUS' BIRTH (Lk. 1:26–38)

During the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent from God's presence to an unmarried girl named Mary, living in Nazareth, a village in Galilee. She was engaged to a man named Joseph, a true descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Grace to you, young woman, for the Lord is with you and so you are anointed with great favor."

Mary was deeply troubled over the words of the angel and bewildered over what this may mean for her. But the angel reassured her, saying, "Do not yield to your fear, Mary, for the Lord has found delight in you and has chosen to surprise you with a wonderful gift. You will become pregnant with a baby boy, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be supreme and will be known as the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God will enthrone him as King on his ancestor David's throne. He will reign as King of Israel forever, and his reign will have no limit."

Mary said, "But how could this happen? I am still a virgin!"

Gabriel answered, "The Spirit of Holiness will fall upon you and almighty God will spread his shadow of power over you in a cloud of glory! This is why the child born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your aged aunt, Elizabeth, has also become pregnant with a son. The 'barren one' is now in her sixth month. Not one promise from God is empty of power, for nothing is impossible with God!"

Then Mary responded, saying, "This is amazing! I will be a mother for the Lord! As his servant, I accept whatever he has for me. May everything you have told me come to pass." And the angel left her.

ELIZABETH'S PROPHECY TO MARY (Lk. 1:39–45)

Afterward, Mary arose and hurried off to the hill country of Judea, to the village where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived. Arriving at their home, Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the moment she heard Mary's voice, the baby within Elizabeth's womb jumped and kicked. And suddenly, Elizabeth was filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit! With a loud voice she *prophesied with power*:

“Mary! You are a woman given the highest favor
and privilege above all others.

For your child is destined to bring God great delight.
How did I deserve such a remarkable honor
to have the mother of my Lord come and visit me?
The moment you came in the door and greeted me,
my baby danced inside me with ecstatic joy!
Great favor is upon you, for you have believed
every word spoken to you from the Lord.”

MARY'S PROPHETIC SONG (Lk. 1:46–56)

And Mary sang this song:

“My soul is ecstatic, overflowing with praises to God!
My spirit bursts with joy over my life-giving God!
For he set his tender gaze upon me, his lowly servant girl.
And from here on, everyone will know
that I have been favored and blessed.
The Mighty One has worked a mighty miracle for me;
holy is his name!
Mercy kisses all his godly lovers,
from one generation to the next.
Mighty power flows from him
to scatter all those who walk in pride.
Powerful princes he tears from their thrones
and he lifts up the lowly *to take their place*.
Those who hunger for him will always be filled,
but the smug and self-satisfied he will send away empty.

Because he can never forget to show mercy,
he has helped his chosen servant, Israel,
Keeping his promises to Abraham
and to his descendants forever.”

Before going home, Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months.

AN ANGEL COMES TO JOSEPH (MATT. 1:18–25)

This was how Jesus, God’s Anointed One, was born.

His mother, Mary, had promised Joseph to be his wife, *but while she was still a virgin* she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Her fiancé, Joseph, was a righteous man full of integrity and he didn’t want to disgrace her, but when he learned of her pregnancy he secretly planned to break the engagement. While he was still debating with himself about what to do, he fell asleep and had a supernatural dream. An angel from the Lord appeared to him in clear light and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don’t hesitate to take Mary into your home as your wife, because the power of the Holy Spirit has conceived a child in her womb. She will give birth to a son and you are to name him ‘Savior,’ for he is destined to give his life to save his people from their sins.”

This happened so that what the Lord spoke through his prophet would come true:

Listen! A virgin will be pregnant,
she will give birth to a Son,
and he will be known as “Emmanuel,”
which means in Hebrew,
“God became one of us.”

When Joseph awoke from his dream, he did all that the angel of the Lord instructed him to do. He took Mary to be his wife, but they refrained from having sex until she gave birth to her son, whom they named “Jesus.”

Day 2

THE BIRTH OF THE PROPHET JOHN (Lk. 1:57–66)

When Elizabeth's pregnancy was full term, she gave birth to a son. All her family, friends, and neighbors heard about it, and they too were overjoyed, for they realized that the Lord had showered such wonderful mercy upon her.

When the baby was eight days old, according to their custom, all the family and friends came together for the circumcision ceremony. Everyone was convinced that the parents would name the baby Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth spoke up and said, "No, he has to be named John!"

"What?" they exclaimed. "No one in your family line has that name!"

So they gestured to the baby's father to ask what to name the child. After motioning for a writing tablet, in amazement of all, he wrote, "His name is John."

Instantly Zechariah could speak again. And his first words were praises to the Lord.

The fear of God then fell on the people of their village, and the news of this astounding event traveled throughout the hill country of Judea. Everyone was in awe over it! All who heard this news were astonished and wondered, "*If a miracle brought his birth*, what on earth will this child become? Clearly, God's presence is upon this child in a powerful way!"

ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY (Lk. 1:67–80)

Then Zechariah was filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied, saying:

“Praise be to the exalted Lord God of Israel,
for he has seen us through eyes of grace,
and he comes as our Hero-God to set us free!
He appears to us as a mighty Savior,
a trumpet of redemption from the house of David, his servant,
Just as he promised long ago
by the words of his holy prophets.
They prophesied he would come one day and save us
from every one of our enemies
and from the power of those who hate us.
Now he has shown us the mercy promised to our ancestors,
for he has remembered his holy covenant.
He has rescued us from the power of our enemies!
This fulfills the sacred oath he made with our father Abraham.
Now we can boldly worship God with holy lives,
living in purity as priests in his presence every day!
And to you I prophesy, my little son,
you will be known as the prophet of the glorious God.
For you will be a forerunner,
going before the face of the Master, Yahweh,
to prepare hearts to embrace his ways.
You will preach to his people the revelation of salvation life,
the cancellation of all our sins, *to bring us back to God.*
The splendor light of heaven’s glorious sunrise
is about to break upon us in holy visitation,
all because the merciful heart of our God is so very tender.
The word from heaven will come to us
with dazzling light to shine upon those
who live in darkness, near death’s dark shadow.
And he will illuminate the path that leads to the way of peace.”

Afterward, their son grew up and was strengthened by the Holy Spirit and he grew in his love for God. John chose to live in the lonely wilderness until the day came when he was to be displayed publicly to Israel.

FROM ABRAHAM TO CHRIST (MATT. 1:1–17)

This is the scroll of the lineage and birth of Jesus, the Anointed One, the son of David and descendant of Abraham.

Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had a son named Jacob, who had a son named Judah (*he and his brothers became the tribes of Israel*).

Judah and Tamar had twin sons, Perez and Zerah. Perez had a son named Hezron, who had a son named Ram, who had a son named Amminadab, who had a son named Nashon, who had a son named Salmon, who, along with Rahab, had a son named Boaz. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, and Jesse had a son named David, *who became the king*.

Then David and Bathsheba had a son named Solomon, who had a son named Rehoboam, who had a son named Abijah, who had a son named Asa, who had a son named Jehoshaphat, who had a son named Joram, who had a son named Uzziah, who had a son named Jotham, who had a son named Ahaz, who had a son named Hezekiah, who had a son named Manasseh, who had a son named Amos, who had a son named Josiah, who was the father of Jeconiah.

It was during the days of Jeconiah and his brothers that Israel was taken captive and deported to Babylon. About the time of their captivity in Babylon, Jeconiah had a son named Shealtiel, who had a son named Zerubbabel, who had a son named Abiud, who had a son named Eliakim, who had a son named Azor, who had a son named Zadok, who had a son named Achim, who had a son named Eliud, who had a son named Eleazar, who had a son named Matthan, who had a son named Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus, who is called “the Anointed One.”

So from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the Babylonian captivity, fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ, fourteen generations.

THE ANCESTRY OF JESUS CHRIST (Lk. 3:23–38)

Jesus, assumed to be Joseph's son, was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. Here are the names of Mary's ancestors, from her father traced all the way back to Adam:

Eli, Matthat, Levi, Melki, Jannai, Joseph, Mattathias, Amos, Nahum, Esli, Naggai, Maath, Mattathias, Semein, Josech, Joda, Joanan, Rhesa, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel, Neri, Melchi, Addi, Cosam, Elmadam, Er, Joshua, Eliezer, Jorim, Matthat, Levi, Simeon, Judah, Joseph, Jonam, Eliakim, Melea, Menna, Mattatha, Nathan, David, Jesse, Obed, Boaz, Salmon, Nahshon, Amminadab, Admin, Arni, Hezron, Perez, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Shelah, Kenan, Arphaxad, Shem, Noah, Lamech, Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahalaleel, Cainan, Enos, Seth, and Adam, who was created by God.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (Lk. 2:1–7)

During those days, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, ordered that the first census be taken throughout his empire. (Quirinius was the governor of Syria at that time.) Everyone had to travel to his or her hometown to complete the mandatory census. So Joseph and his fiancé, Mary, left Nazareth, a village in Galilee, and journeyed to their hometown in Judea, to the village of Bethlehem, King David's ancient home. They were required to register there, since they were both direct descendants of David. Mary was pregnant and nearly ready to give birth.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, Mary went into labor, and there she gave birth to her firstborn son. After wrapping the newborn baby in strips of cloth, they laid him in a feeding trough since there was no available space in any upper room in the village.

AN ANGELIC ENCOUNTER (Lk. 2:8–20)

That night, in a field near Bethlehem, there were shepherds watching over their flocks. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared in radiant splendor before them, lighting up the field with the blazing glory of God, and the shepherds were terrified! But the angel reassured them, saying, "Don't be afraid. For I have come to bring you

good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard! And it is for everyone everywhere! For today in Bethlehem a rescuer was born for you. He is the Lord Yahweh, the Messiah. You will recognize him by this miracle sign: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding trough!”

Then all at once, a vast number of glorious angels appeared, the very armies of heaven! And they all praised God, singing:

“Glory to God in the highest realms of heaven!

For there is peace and a good hope given to the sons of men.”

When the choir of angels disappeared back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go! Let’s hurry and find this Word that is born in Bethlehem and see for ourselves what the Lord has revealed to us.” So they ran into the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a feeding trough.

Upon seeing this miraculous sign, the shepherds recounted what had just happened. Everyone who heard the shepherds’ story was astonished by what they were told.

But Mary treasured all these things in her heart and often pondered what they meant.

The shepherds returned to their flock, ecstatic over what had happened. They praised God and glorified him for all they had heard and seen for themselves, just like the angel had said.

BABY JESUS DEDICATED IN THE TEMPLE (Lk. 2:21–38)

On the day of the baby’s circumcision ceremony, eight days after his birth, his parents gave him the name Jesus, the name prophesied by the angel before he was born. After Mary’s days of purification had ended, it was time for her to come to the temple with a sacrifice, according to the law of Moses after the birth of a son. So Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to Jerusalem to be dedicated before the Lord. For it is required in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be a set-apart one for God.” And, to offer a prescribed sacrifice, “either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

As they came to the temple to fulfill this requirement, an *elderly* man was there waiting—a resident of Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He was a very good man, a lover of God who kept himself pure, and the Spirit of holiness rested upon him. Simeon believed in the imminent appearing of the one called “The Refreshing of Israel.” For the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he saw the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. For this reason the Holy Spirit had moved him to be in the temple court at the very moment Jesus’ parents entered to fulfill the requirement of the sacrifice.

Simeon cradled the baby in his arms and praised God and prophesied, saying:

“Lord and Master, I am your loving servant,
and now I can die content,
for your promise to me has been fulfilled.
With my own eyes I have seen your Word,
the Savior you sent into the world.
He will be glory for your people Israel,
and the Revelation Light for all people everywhere!”

Mary and Joseph stood there, awestruck over what was being said about their baby.

Simeon then blessed them and prophesied over Mary, saying:

“A painful sword will one day pierce your inner being,
for your child will be rejected by many in Israel.
And the destiny of your child is this:
he will be laid down as a miracle sign
for the downfall and resurrection of many in Israel.
Many will oppose this sign, but it will expose to all
the innermost thoughts of their hearts before God.”

A prophetess named Anna was also in the temple court that day. She was from the Jewish tribe of Asher and the daughter of Phanuel. Anna was an aged widow who had been married only seven years before her husband passed away. After he died she

chose to worship God in the temple continually. For the past eighty-four years she had been serving God with night-and-day prayer and fasting.

While Simeon was prophesying over Mary and Joseph and the baby, Anna walked up to them and burst forth with a great chorus of praise to God for the child. And from that day forward she told everyone in Jerusalem who was waiting for their redemption that the anticipated Messiah had come!

Day 3



THE WISE MEN VISIT (MATT. 2:1-12)

Jesus was born in Bethlehem near Jerusalem during the reign of King Herod. After Jesus' birth a group of spiritual priests from the East came to Jerusalem and inquired of the people, "Where is the child who is born king of the Jewish people? We observed his star rising in the sky and we've come to bow before him in worship."

King Herod was shaken to the core when he heard this, and not only him, but all of Jerusalem was disturbed when they heard this news. So he called a meeting of the Jewish ruling priests and religious scholars, demanding that they tell him where the promised Messiah was prophesied to be born.

"He will be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah," they told him. "Because the prophecy states:

And you, little Bethlehem,
are not insignificant among the clans of Judah,
for out of you will emerge
the Shepherd-King of my people Israel!"

Then Herod secretly summoned the spiritual priests from the East to ascertain the exact time the star first appeared. And he told them, "Now go to Bethlehem and carefully look there for the child, and when you've found him, report to me so that I can go and bow down and worship him too."

And so they left, and on their way to Bethlehem, suddenly the same star they had seen in the East reappeared! Amazed, they watched as it went ahead of them and stopped directly over the

place where the child was. And when they saw the star, they were so ecstatic that they shouted and celebrated with unrestrained joy. When they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, they were overcome. Falling to the ground at his feet they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure boxes full of gifts and presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Afterward they returned to their own country by another route because God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

THEY ESCAPE TO EGYPT (MATT. 2:13–18)

After they had gone, Joseph had another dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, “Get up now and flee to Egypt. Take Mary and the little child and stay there until I tell you to leave, for Herod intends to search for the child to kill him.”

So that very night he got up and took Jesus and his mother and made their escape to Egypt and remained there until Herod died. All of this fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through his prophet:

I summon my Son out of Egypt.

When Herod realized that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated. So he sent soldiers with orders to slaughter every baby boy two years old and younger in Bethlehem and throughout the surrounding countryside, based on the time frame he was given from interrogating the wise men. This fulfilled the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

I hear the screams of anguish,
weeping, and wailing in Ramah.
Rachel is weeping uncontrollably for her children.
And she refuses to be comforted,
because they are dead and gone.

THEY RETURN TO NAZARETH (MATT. 2:19–23)

After Herod died, the angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph in a dream while he was still in Egypt, saying, “Go back to the

land of Israel and take the child and his mother with you, for those who sought to kill the child are dead.”

So he awoke and took Jesus and Mary and returned to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod’s son, had succeeded him as ruler over all of the territory of Judah, he was afraid to go back. Then he had another dream from God, warning him to avoid that region and instructing him instead to go to the province of Galilee. So he settled his family in the village of Nazareth, fulfilling the prophecy that he would be known as the “Branch.”

JESUS GROWS IN GRACE, WISDOM, AND FAVOR (LK. 2:39–40)

When Mary and Joseph had completed everything required of them by the law of Moses, they took Jesus and returned to their home in Nazareth in Galilee. The child grew more powerful in grace, for he was being filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

AT AGE TWELVE JESUS VISITS THE TEMPLE (LK. 2:41–52)

Every year Jesus’ parents went to worship at Jerusalem during the Passover festival. When Jesus turned twelve, his parents took him to Jerusalem to observe the Passover, as was their custom. A full day after they began their journey home, Joseph and Mary realized that Jesus was missing. They had assumed he was somewhere in their entourage, but he was nowhere to be found. After a frantic search among relatives and friends, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

After being separated from him for three days, they finally found him in the temple, sitting among the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard Jesus speak were astounded at his intelligent understanding of all that was being discussed and at his wise answers to their questions.

His parents were shocked to find him there, and Mary scolded him, saying, “Son, your father and I have searched for you everywhere! We have been worried sick over not finding you. Why would you do this to us?”

Jesus said to them, “Why would you need to search for me? Didn’t you know that it was necessary for me to be here in my Father’s house, consumed with him?”

Mary and Joseph didn’t fully understand what Jesus meant.

Jesus went with them back home to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured Jesus’ words deeply in her heart. As Jesus grew, so did his wisdom and maturity. The favor of men increased upon his life, for he was loved greatly by God.

THE WONDERFUL NEWS (Mk. 1:1–5)

This is the beginning of the wonderful news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

It starts with Isaiah the prophet, who wrote:

Listen! I am sending my messenger ahead of you
and he will prepare your way!

He is a thunderous voice of one
who shouts in the wilderness:

“Prepare your hearts
for the coming of the Lord Yahweh,
and clear a straight path
inside your hearts for him!”

John the Baptizer was the messenger who appeared in an uninhabited region, preaching a baptism of repentance for the complete cancellation of sins. A steady stream of people came to be dipped in the Jordan River as they publicly confessed their sins. They came from all over southern Israel, including nearly all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

JOHN THE BAPTIZER (Lk. 3:1–20)

A powerful message from God came to John, Zechariah’s son, when he was living out in the lonely wilderness. This prophetic commission came to John during the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, son of Caesar. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea at that time. Antipas, son of Herod, was governor over Galilee, Herod’s brother Philip was over the region of Ituraea

and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was over Abilene. This happened during the days of two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas.

[John taught the truth about the Living Expression
when he announced to the people,
“He’s the One! *Set your hearts on him!*
I told you he would come after me,
even though he ranks far above me,
for he existed before I was even born.”

And now out of his fullness we are fulfilled!

And from him we receive grace heaped upon more grace!
Moses gave us the Law, but Jesus, the Anointed One,
unveils truth wrapped in tender mercy.

No one has ever gazed upon the fullness of God’s splendor
except the uniquely beloved Son,
who is cherished by the Father
and held close to his heart.
Now he has unfolded to us
the full explanation of who God truly is!]¹

John went preaching and baptizing throughout the Jordan Valley. He persuaded people to turn away from their sins and turn to God for the freedom of forgiveness.

This was to fulfill what was written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

“Listen! You will hear a thunderous voice in the lonely wilderness telling you to wake up and get your heart ready for the coming of the Lord Jehovah. Every twisted thing in your lives must be made straight. Every dark way must be brought to the light. Wrongs righted. Injustices removed. Every heart of pride will be humbled low before him. Every deception will be exposed and replaced by the truth so that everyone everywhere will be ready to see the Life of God!”

¹ *Jn. 1:15–18.*

[Now, John wore {a rough garment}² made from camel's hair, tied at his waist with a leather strap, and his food consisted of dried locusts and wild honey. A steady stream of people from Jerusalem, all the surrounding countryside, and the region near the Jordan came out to the wilderness to be baptized by him. And while they were publicly confessing their sins, he would immerse them in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many coming from among the wealthy elite of Jewish society and many of the religious leaders known as Pharisees coming to witness the baptism, he began to denounce them.]³ John kept preaching to the many crowds who came out to be baptized, "You are nothing but the offspring of poisonous snakes, full of deception! Have you been warned to repent before the coming wrath of God? [Who warned you *to slither away like snakes from the fire of God's judgment?*]"⁴ Then turn away from your sins, turn to God, and prove it by a changed life. Don't think for a moment that it's enough to simply be the favored descendants of Abraham. *That's not enough to save you.* I'm telling you, God could make more sons of Abraham out of stones if he chose to!

"Even now God's axe of judgment is poised to chop down your barren tree right down to its roots! And every [rotten]⁵ tree that does not produce good fruit will be leveled and thrown into the fire.

["Those who repent I baptize with water, but there is coming a Man after me who is {greater and a lot}⁶ more powerful than I am. In fact, I'm not even worthy enough to {bend down and untie}⁷ and pick up his sandals. He will submerge you into union with the Spirit of Holiness and with a raging fire! He comes with a winnowing fork in his hands and comes to his threshing floor to sift what is worthless from what is pure. And he is ready to sweep out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his granary, but the straw he will burn up with a fire that can't be extinguished!"]⁸

2 Mk. 1:6. 3 Matt. 3:4-7. 4 Matt. 3:7. 5 Matt. 3:10. 6 Mk. 1:7.

7 Mk. 1:7. 8 Matt. 3:11-12.

The crowd kept asking him, “What then are we supposed to do?”

John told them, “Give food to the hungry, clothe the poor, and bless the needy.”

Even the despised tax collectors came to John to be baptized, and they asked him, “What are we to do to prove our hearts have changed?”

“Be honest,” he replied. “Don’t demand more taxes than what you are required to collect.”

“And us?” asked some soldiers. “What about us?”

John answered them, “Be content with what you earn. Never extort money or terrify others by threats of violence or be guilty of accusing the innocent.”

During those days, everyone was gripped with messianic expectations, believing the Messiah could come at any moment, and many began to wonder if John might be the Christ.

Day 4

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER (JN. 1:19–28)

There were some of the Jewish leaders who sent an entourage of priests and temple servants from Jerusalem to interrogate John. They asked him, “Who are you?”

John answered them directly, saying, “I am not the Messiah!”

“Then who are you?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No,” John replied.

So they pressed him further, “Are you the prophet Moses said was coming, the one we’re expecting?”

“No,” he replied.

“Then who are you?” they demanded. “We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something about yourself—anything!”

So, John answered them, “*I am fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy: ‘I am an urgent, thundering voice shouting in the desert—clear the way and prepare your hearts for the coming of the Lord Yahweh!’*”

Then some members of the religious sect known as the Pharisees questioned John, “Why do you baptize the people since you admit you’re not the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet?”

John answered them, “I baptize in this river, but the One who will take my place is to be more honored than I, but even when he stands among you, you will not recognize or embrace him! I am not worthy enough to stoop down in front of him and untie his sandals!”

[John made it clear by telling them, “There is one coming who is mightier than I. He is supreme. In fact, I’m not worthy

of even being his slave. I can only baptize you in this river, but he will baptize you into the Spirit of holiness and into his raging fire. He has in his hands a winnowing fork to clean up his threshing floor! He will separate the wheat from the chaff. The wheat he will gather into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that no one can ever put out!”

John used many similar warnings as he preached the good news and prepared the people.¹ This all took place at Bethany, where John was baptizing at the place of the crossing of the Jordan River.

THE LAMB OF GOD (JN. 1:29–31)

The very next day John saw Jesus coming to him to be baptized, and John cried out, “Look! There he is—God’s Lamb! He will take away the sins of the world! I told you that a Mighty One would come who is far greater than I am, because he existed long before I was born! My baptism was for the preparation of his appearing to Israel, even though I’ve yet to experience him.”

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (LK. 3:21–22)

One day Jesus came [from the Galilean village of Nazareth]² to be baptized along with all the others [and had John immerse him in the Jordan River].³

[But when he waded into the water, John resisted him, saying, “Why are you doing this? I’m the one who needs to be baptized by you, and yet you come to be baptized by me?”

Jesus replied, “**It is only right to do all that God requires.**” Then John baptized Jesus.]⁴

[Then, as John baptized Jesus he spoke these words: “I see the Spirit of God appear like a dove descending from the heavenly realm and landing upon him—and it rested upon him from that moment forward! And even though I’ve yet to experience him, when I was commissioned to baptize with water God spoke these words to me, ‘One day you will see the Spirit descend and remain upon a man. He will be the One I have

1 Lk. 3:16–18. 2 Mk. 1:9. 3 Mk. 1:9. 4 Matt. 3:14–15.

sent to baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ And now I have seen with discernment. I can tell you for sure that this man is the Son of God.”⁵

As Jesus was consumed with the spirit of prayer, [the moment he rose up out of the water]⁶ the heavenly realm ripped open above him and the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the visible, tangible form of a dove and landed on him. Then God’s audible voice was heard, saying, “My Son, you are my beloved [cherished]⁷ one, [and my greatest delight is in you]!⁸ Through you I am fulfilled.”

JESUS TESTED IN THE WILDERNESS (Lk. 4:1–13)

From the moment of his baptism, Jesus was overflowing with the Holy Spirit. He was taken by the Spirit from the Jordan into the lonely wilderness of Judea [in order to reveal his strength against the accuser by going through]⁹ the ordeal of testing by the accuser for forty days. He ate no food during this time and ended his forty-day fast [extremely weak and famished].¹⁰ [He encountered wild animals, but also angels who appeared and ministered to his needs.]¹¹ It was then the devil said to him, “[How can you possibly be the Son of God and go hungry?]¹² If you are really the Son of God, command this stone to turn into a loaf of bread for you.”

Jesus replied, “I will not! For it is written in the Scriptures, ‘[Bread alone will not satisfy],¹³ life does not come only from eating bread but from God. Life flows from every revelation from his mouth.’”

The devil lifted Jesus high into the sky and in a flash showed him all the kingdoms and regions of the world [and all the splendor that goes with it].¹⁴ The devil then said to Jesus, “All of this, with all its power, authority, and splendor, is mine to give to whomever I wish. Just do one thing and you will have it all. Simply bow down to worship me and it will be yours! You will possess everything!”

5 Jn. 1:32–34. 6 Mk. 1:10. 7 Mk. 1:11. 8 Mk. 1:11. 9 Matt. 4:1.

10 Matt. 4:2. 11 Mk. 1:13. 12 Matt. 4:3. 13 Matt. 4:4. 14 Matt. 4:8.

Jesus rebuked him and said, “[Go away, enemy!]”¹⁵ Satan, get behind me! For it is written in the Scriptures, ‘Only one is worthy of your adoration. You will worship before the Lord your God and love him supremely. [Kneel before the Lord your God and worship only him.]’¹⁶”

Next, the devil took Jesus to [the holy city of]¹⁷ Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the temple and tempted him there, saying, “If you really are the Son of God, jump down in front of all the people [and the angels will catch you].”¹⁸ For it is written in the Scriptures, ‘God has given his angels instructions to protect you from harm. For the hands of angels will hold you up and keep you from hurting even one foot on a stone.’”

Jesus replied, “It is also written in the Scriptures, ‘How dare you provoke the Lord your God! [You must never put the Lord your God to a test.]’”¹⁹”

That finished the devil’s harassment for the time being. So he stood off at a distance, retreating until the time came to return and tempt Jesus again [and angels suddenly gathered around Jesus to minister to his needs].²⁰

JESUS’ FIRST FOLLOWERS (JN. 1:35–42)

The very next day John was there again with two of his disciples as Jesus was walking right past them. John, gazing upon him, pointed to Jesus and said, “Look! There’s God’s Lamb!” And as soon as John’s two disciples heard this, they immediately left John and began to follow a short distance behind Jesus.

Then Jesus turned around and saw they were following him and asked, “What do you want?” They responded, “Rabbi (which means, Master Teacher), where are you staying?” Jesus answered, “Come and discover for yourselves.” So they went with him and saw where he was staying, and since it was late in the afternoon, they spent the rest of the day with Jesus.

One of the two disciples who heard John’s words and began to follow Jesus was a man named Andrew. He went and found

15 Matt. 4:10. 16 Matt. 4:10. 17 Matt. 4:5. 18 Matt. 4:6. 19 Matt. 4:7. 20 Matt. 4:11.

his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Anointed One!” (Which is translated, the Christ.) Then Andrew brought Simon to meet him. When Jesus gazed upon Andrew’s brother, he prophesied to him, “**You are Simon and your father’s name is John. But from now on you will be called Cephas**” (which means, Peter the Rock).

JESUS CALLS PHILIP AND NATHANAEL (JN. 1:43–51)

The next day Jesus decided to go to the region of Galilee. There he found Philip and said to him, “**Come and follow me.**” (Now Philip, Andrew, and Peter were all from the same village of Bethsaida.) Then Philip went to look for his friend, Nathanael, and told him, “We’ve found him! We’ve found the One we’ve been waiting for! It’s Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, the Anointed One! He’s the One that Moses and the prophets prophesied would come!”

Nathanael sneered, “Nazareth! What good thing could ever come from Nazareth?” Philip answered, “Come and let’s find out!”

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said, “**Now here comes a true son of Israel—an honest man with no hidden motive!**”

Nathanael was stunned and said, “But you’ve never met me—how do you know anything about me?”

Jesus answered, “**Nathanael, right before Philip came to you I saw you sitting under the shade of a fig tree.**”

Nathanael blurted out, “Teacher, you are truly the Son of God and the King of Israel!”

Jesus answered, “**Do you believe simply because I told you I saw you sitting under a fig tree? You will experience even more impressive things than that! I prophesy to you eternal truth: From now on you all will see an open heaven and gaze upon the Son of Man like a stairway reaching into the sky with the messengers of God climbing up and down upon him!**”

JESUS COMES TO A WEDDING (JN. 2:1–11)

Now on the third day there was a wedding feast in the Galilean village of Cana, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and

his disciples were all invited to the banquet, but with so many guests in attendance, they ran out of wine. And when Mary realized it, she came to him and asked, “They have no wine, *can’t you do something about it?*”

Jesus replied, “*My dear one, don’t you understand that if I do this, it won’t change anything for you, but it will change everything for me! My hour of unveiling my power has not yet come.*”

Mary then went to the servers and told them, “Whatever Jesus tells you, make sure that you do it!”

Now there were six stone water pots standing nearby. They were meant to be used for the Jewish washing rituals. Each one held about 20 gallons or more. Jesus came to the servers and told them, “*Fill the pots with water, right up to the very brim.*” Then he said, “*Now fill your pitchers and take them to the master of ceremonies.*”

And when they poured out their pitcher for the master of ceremonies to sample, the water became wine! When he tasted the water that became wine, the master of ceremonies was impressed. (Although he didn’t know where the wine had come from, but the servers knew.) He called the bridegroom over and said to him, “Every host serves his best wine first until everyone has had a cup or two, then he serves the wine of poor quality. But you, my friend, you’ve reserved the most exquisite wine until now!”

This miracle in Cana was the first of the many extraordinary miracles Jesus performed in Galilee. This was a sign revealing his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Day 5

JESUS AT THE TEMPLE (JN. 2:12–25)

After this, Jesus, his mother and brothers and his disciples went to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days. But the time was close for the Jewish Passover to begin, so Jesus walked to Jerusalem. As he went into the temple courtyard, he noticed it was filled with merchants selling oxen, lambs, and doves *for exorbitant prices*, while others were overcharging as they exchanged currency behind their counters. So Jesus found some rope and made it into a whip. Then he drove out every one of them and their animals from the courtyard of the temple, and he kicked over their tables filled with money, scattering it everywhere! And he shouted at the merchants, “**Get these things out of here! Don’t you dare make my Father’s house into a center for merchandise!**” That’s when his disciples remembered the Scripture: “I am consumed with a fiery passion to keep your house pure!”

But the Jewish religious leaders challenged Jesus, “What authorization do you have to do this sort of thing? If God gave you this kind of authority, what *supernatural* sign will you show us to prove it?”

Jesus answered, “**After you’ve destroyed this temple, I will raise it up again in three days.**”

Then the Jewish leaders sneered, “This temple took forty-six years to build, and you mean to tell us that you will raise it up in three days?” *But they didn’t understand that* Jesus was speaking of the “temple” of his body. But the disciples remembered his prophecy after Jesus rose from the dead, and believed both the Scripture and what Jesus had said.

While Jesus was at the Passover Feast, *the number of his followers began to grow*, and many gave their allegiance to him because of all the miraculous signs they had seen him doing! But Jesus did not yet entrust himself to them, because he knew how fickle human hearts can be. He didn't need anyone to tell him about human nature, *for he fully understood what man was capable of doing*.

NICODEMUS (JN. 3:1–13)

Now there was a prominent religious leader among the Jews named Nicodemus, who was part of the sect called the Pharisees and a member of the Jewish ruling council. One night he discreetly came to Jesus and said, “Master, we know that you are a teacher from God, for no one performs the miracle signs that you do, unless God’s power is with him.”

Jesus answered, “**Nicodemus, listen to this eternal truth: Before a person can perceive God’s kingdom realm, they must first experience a rebirth.**”

Nicodemus said, “Rebirth? How can a gray-headed man be reborn? It’s impossible for a man to go back into the womb a second time and be reborn!”

Jesus answered, “**I speak an eternal truth: Unless you are born of water and Spirit-wind, you will never enter God’s kingdom realm. For the natural realm can only give birth to things that are natural, but the spiritual realm gives birth to supernatural life!**

“You shouldn’t be amazed by my statement, ‘You all must be born from above!’ For the Spirit-wind blows as it chooses. You can hear its sound, but you don’t know where it came from or where it’s going. So it is within the hearts of those who are Spirit-born!”

Then Nicodemus replied, “But I don’t understand, what do you mean? How does this happen?”

Jesus answered, “**Nicodemus, aren’t you the respected teacher in Israel, and yet you don’t understand this revelation? I speak eternal truths about things I know, things I’ve seen and experienced—and still you don’t accept what I reveal. If you’re**

unable to understand and believe what I've told you about the natural realm, what will you do when I begin to unveil the heavenly realm? No one has risen into the heavenly realm except the Son of Man who also exists in heaven."

GOD'S LOVE FOR EVERYONE (JN. 3:14–21)

"And just as Moses in the desert lifted up the brass replica of a snake on a pole *for all the people to see and be healed*, so the Son of Man is ready to be lifted up, so that those who truly believe in him will not perish but be given eternal life. For this is how much God loved the world—he gave his one and only, unique Son *as a gift*. So now everyone who believes in him will never perish but experience everlasting life.

"God did not send his Son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but to be its Savior and rescue it! So now there is no longer any condemnation for those who believe in him, but the unbeliever already lives under condemnation because they do not believe in the name of God's beloved Son. And here is the basis for their judgment: The Light of God has now come into the world, but the hearts of people love their darkness more than the Light, because they want the darkness to conceal their evil. So the wicked hate the Light and try to hide from it, for their lives are fully exposed in the Light. But those who love the truth will come out into the Light and welcome its exposure, for the Light will reveal that their fruitful works were produced by God."

JOHN, FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM (JN. 3:22–36)

Then Jesus and his disciples went out for a length of time into the Judean countryside where they baptized the people. At this time John was still baptizing people at Aenon, near Salim, where there was plenty of water. And the people kept coming for John to baptize them. (This was before John was thrown into prison.)

[John even publicly rebuked Antipas, son of Herod, the governor of Galilee, for the many wicked things he had done. He fearlessly reprimanded him for seducing and marrying his sister-in-law, Herodias.

Adding to his many other sins, Herod had John seized and locked up in prison.¹

An argument then developed between John's disciples and a particular Jewish man about baptism. So they went to John and asked him, "Teacher, are you aware that the One you told us about at the crossing place—he's now baptizing everyone with larger crowds than yours. People are flocking to him! *What do you think about that?*"

John answered them, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless God bestows it. You heard me tell you before that I am not the Messiah, but certainly I am the messenger sent ahead of him. He is the Bridegroom, and the bride belongs to him. I am the friend of the Bridegroom who stands nearby and listens with great joy to the Bridegroom's voice. And because of his words my joy is complete and overflows! So it's necessary for him to increase and for me to be diminished.

"For the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks from the natural realm. But the One who comes from above is above everything and speaks of the highest realm of all! His message is about what he has seen and experienced, even though people don't accept it. Yet those who embrace his message know in their hearts that it's the truth.

"The One whom God has sent to represent him will speak the words of God, for God has poured out upon him the fullness of the Holy Spirit without limitation. The Father loves his Son so much that all things have been given into his hands. Those who trust in the Son possess eternal life; but those who don't obey the Son will not see life, and God's anger will rise up against them."

JESUS LEAVES JUDEA (Jn. 4:1–4)

Soon the news reached the Jewish religious leaders known as the Pharisees that Jesus was drawing greater crowds of followers coming to be baptized than John. (Although Jesus didn't baptize, but had his disciples baptize the people.) [Later on,

¹ Lk. 3:19–20.

after John the Baptizer was arrested],² Jesus heard [that John the Baptizer had been thrown into prison]³ and what was being said and abruptly left Judea and returned to the province of Galilee [and preached the wonderful gospel of God's kingdom realm],⁴ and he had to pass through Samaritan territory.

A THIRSTY SAVIOR (JN. 4:5–30)

Jesus arrived at the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son, Joseph, long ago. Worn by his long journey, he sat on the edge of Jacob's well. He sent his disciples into the village to buy food, for it was already afternoon.

Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, **"Give me a drink of water."**

Surprised, she said, "Why would a Jewish man ask a Samaritan woman for a drink of water?"

Jesus replied, **"If you only knew who I am and the gift that God wants to give you—you'd ask me for a drink, and I would give to you living water."**

The woman replied, "But sir, you don't even have a bucket and this well is very deep. So where do you find this 'living water'? Do you really think that you are greater than our ancestor Jacob who dug this well and drank from it himself, along with his children and livestock?"

Jesus answered, **"If you drink from Jacob's well you'll be thirsty again and again, but if anyone drinks the living water I give them, they will never thirst again and will be forever satisfied! For when you drink the water I give you it becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit, springing up and flooding you with endless life!"**

The woman replied, "Let me drink that water so I'll never be thirsty again and won't have to come back here to draw water."

Jesus said, **"Go get your husband and bring him back here."**

"But I'm not married," the woman answered.

² Mk. 1:14. ³ Matt. 4:12. ⁴ Mk. 1:14.

“That’s true,” Jesus said, “for you’ve been married five times and now you’re living with a man who is not your husband. You have told the truth.”

The woman said, “You must be a prophet! So tell me this: Why do our fathers worship God here on this nearby mountain, but your people teach that Jerusalem is the place where we must worship. Which is right?”

Jesus responded, “Believe me, dear woman, the time has come when you won’t worship the Father on a mountain nor in Jerusalem, *but in your heart*. Your people don’t really know the One they worship. We Jews worship out of our experience, for it’s from the Jews that salvation is made available. From here on, worshiping the Father will not be a matter of the right place but with the right heart. For God is a Spirit, and he longs to have sincere worshipers who worship and adore him in the realm of the Spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “*This is all so confusing*, but I do know that the Anointed One is coming—the true Messiah. And when he comes, he will tell us everything we need to know.”

Jesus said to her, “You don’t have to wait any longer, the Anointed One is here speaking with you—I am the One you’re looking for.”

At that moment the disciples returned and were stunned to see Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman. Yet none of them dared to ask him why or what they were discussing. All at once, the woman dropped her water jar and ran off to her village and told everyone, “Come and meet a man at the well who told me everything I’ve ever done! He could be the Anointed One we’ve been waiting for.” Hearing this, the people came streaming out of the village to go see Jesus.

Day 6



THE HARVEST IS READY (JN. 4:31–42)

Then the disciples began to insist that Jesus eat some of the food they brought back from the village, saying, “Teacher, you must eat something.” But Jesus told them, “**Don’t worry about me. I have eaten a meal you don’t know about.**”

Puzzled by this, the disciples began to discuss among themselves, “Did someone already bring him food? Where did he get this meal?”

Then Jesus spoke up and said, “**My food is to be doing the will of him who sent me and bring it to completion.**”

*As the crowds emerged from the village, Jesus said to his disciples, “**Why would you say, ‘The harvest is another four months away’? Look at all the people coming—now is harvest time! For their hearts are like vast fields of ripened grain—ready for a spiritual harvest. And everyone who reaps these souls for eternal life will receive a reward. And those who plant spiritual seeds and those who reap the harvest will celebrate together with great joy! And this confirms the saying, ‘One sows the seed and another reaps the harvest.’ I have sent you out to harvest a field that you haven’t planted, where many others have labored long and hard before you. And now you are privileged to profit from their labors and reap the harvest.**”*

So there were many from the Samaritan village who became believers in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony: “He told me everything I ever did!” Then they begged Jesus to stay with them, so he stayed there for two days, resulting in many more coming to faith in him because of his teachings.

Then the Samaritans said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you told us, but now we’ve heard him ourselves and are convinced that he really is the true Savior of the world!”

JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE (Lk. 4:14–30)

Then Jesus, armed with the Holy Spirit’s power, returned to Galilee, and his fame spread throughout the region. He taught in the synagogues and they glorified him.

[His message was this: “At last the fulfillment of the age has come! It is time for the realm of God’s kingdom to be experienced in its fullness! Turn your lives back to God and put your trust in the hope-filled gospel!”]¹

[Now Jesus knew that prophets are honored everywhere they go except in their own hometown. Even so, as Jesus arrived in the province of Galilee, he was welcomed by the people with open arms. Many of them had been in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival and had witnessed firsthand the miracles he had performed.

Jesus entered the village of Cana of Galilee where he had transformed water into wine. And there was a governmental official in Capernaum who had a son who was very sick and dying. When he heard that Jesus had left Judea and was staying in Cana of Galilee, he decided to make the journey to Cana. When he found Jesus he begged him, “You must come with me to Capernaum and heal my son!”

So Jesus said to him, “You never believe unless you see signs and wonders.”

But the man continued to plead, “You have to come with me to Capernaum before my little boy dies!”

Then Jesus looked him in the eyes and said, “Go back home now. I promise you, your son will live and not die.”

The man believed in his heart the words of Jesus and set off for home. When he was still a distance from Capernaum, his servants met him on the road and told him the good news, “Your son is healed! He’s alive!”

¹ Mk. 1:15.

Overjoyed, the father asked his servants, “When did my son begin to recover?”

“Yesterday,” they said, “at one in the afternoon. All at once his fever broke—and now he’s well!”

Then the father realized that it was at that very same hour that Jesus spoke the words to him, “**Your son will live and not die.**” So from that day forward, the man and all his family and servants believed. This was Jesus’ second extraordinary miracle in Galilee after coming from Judea.²

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been raised, he went into the synagogue, as he always did on the Sabbath day. When Jesus came to the front to read the Scriptures, they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and read where it is written, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he has anointed me to be hope for the poor, freedom for the brokenhearted, and new eyes for the blind, and to preach to prisoners, ‘You are set free!’ I have come to share the message of Jubilee, for the time of God’s great acceptance has begun.**”

After he read this he rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the *minister*, and sat down. Everyone stared at Jesus, wondering what he was about to say. Then he added, “**These Scriptures came true today in front of you.**”

Everyone was impressed by how well Jesus spoke, in awe of the beautiful words of grace that came from his lips. *But they were surprised at his presumption to speak as a prophet*, so they said among themselves, “*Who does he think he is? This is Joseph’s son, who grew up here in Nazareth.*”

Jesus said to them, “**I suppose you’ll quote me the proverb, ‘Doctor, go and heal yourself before you try to heal others.’ And you’ll say, ‘Work the miracles here in your hometown that we heard you did in Capernaum.’ But let me tell you, no prophet is welcomed or honored in his own hometown.**

“**Isn’t it true that there were many widows in the land of Israel during the days of the prophet Elijah when he locked up the heavens for three and a half years and brought a**

2 Jn. 4:43–54.

devastating famine over all the land? But he wasn't sent to any of the widows living in that region. Instead, he was sent to a foreign place, to a widow in Zarephath of Sidon. Or have you not considered that the prophet Elisha healed only Naaman, the Syrian, rather than one of the many Jewish lepers living in the land?"

When everyone present heard those words, they erupted with furious rage. They mobbed Jesus and threw him out of the city, dragging him to the edge of the cliff on the hill on which the city had been built, ready to hurl him off. But he walked right through the crowd, leaving them all stunned.

JESUS MOVES TO CAPERNAUM (MATT. 4:13–17)

Jesus moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum, which is by Lake Galilee in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. He did this to make the prophecy of Isaiah come true:

Listen, you who live in the land of Zebulun
and the land of Naphtali,
along the road to the sea
and on the other side of the Jordan,
and Galilee—the land of non-Jewish peoples!
You who spend your days shrouded in darkness
can now say, "We have seen a brilliant Light."
And those who live in the dark shadow land of death
can now say, "The Dawning Light arises on us."

From that time on Jesus began to proclaim his message with these words: "Keep turning away from your sins and come back to God, for heaven's kingdom realm is now accessible."

JESUS CALLS FOUR FISHERMEN TO FOLLOW HIM (MK. 1:16–20)

As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he noticed two brothers fishing: [One was nicknamed Keefa (later called Peter), and the other was Andrew, his brother].³ He watched them as

³ Matt. 4:18.

they were casting their nets into the sea and said to them, “Come follow me and I will transform you into men who catch people [for God]⁴ instead of fish!” Immediately they dropped their nets and left everything behind to follow Jesus. Walking a little farther, Jesus found two other brothers sitting in a boat, along with their father, mending their nets. Their names were Jacob and John, and their father Zebedee. Jesus immediately walked up to them, [called Jacob and John to his side],⁵ and invited the two brothers to become his followers, [saying “Come and follow me.”]⁶ At once, Jacob and John dropped their nets, stood up, left their father in the boat with the hired men, and followed Jesus.

THE MIRACLE CATCH OF FISH (Lk. 5:1–11)

On one occasion, Jesus was preaching to the crowds on the shore of Lake Galilee. There was a vast multitude of people pushing to get close to Jesus to hear the word of God. He noticed two fishing boats at the water’s edge, with the fishermen nearby, rinsing their nets. Jesus climbed into the boat belonging to Simon Peter and asked him, “Let me use your boat. Push it off a short distance away from the shore so I can speak to the crowds.”

Jesus sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished, he said to Peter, “Now row out to deep water to cast your nets and you will have a great catch.”

“Master,” Peter replied, “we’ve just come back from fishing all night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you insist, we’ll go out again and let down our nets because of your word.”

When they pulled up their nets, they were shocked to see a huge catch of fish, so much that their nets were ready to burst! They waved to their business partners in the other boat for help. They ended up completely filling both boats with fish until their boats began to sink!

When Simon Peter saw this *astounding miracle*, he knelt at Jesus’ feet and begged him, “Go away from me, Master, for I am a sinful man!”

4 Matt. 4:19. 5 Matt. 4:21. 6 Matt. 4:21.

Simon Peter and the other fishermen—including his fishing partners, Jacob and John, the sons of Zebedee—were awe-struck over the miracle catch of fish.

Jesus answered, “Do not yield to your fear, Simon Peter. From now on you will catch men for salvation!”

After pulling their boats to the shore, they left everything behind and followed Jesus.

Day 7



JESUS CONFRONTS A DEMONIZED MAN (LK. 4:31–37)

Jesus went to Capernaum in Galilee and taught the people on the Sabbath day [in the synagogue].¹ His teachings stunned and dazed them, for he spoke with penetrating words that manifested great authority, [he taught in a way that demonstrated God's authority, which was quite unlike the religious scholars].²

In the congregation there was a demonized man, who screamed out with a loud voice, “Hey, you! Go away and leave us alone. [Jesus the victorious]³ I know who you are. You’re Jesus of Nazareth, God’s holy one. Why are you coming to meddle with us? You have come to destroy us already!”

Just then the demon hurled the man down on the floor in front of them all. But Jesus rebuked the demon, “[**Silence! You are bound!**]⁴ **Be quiet and come out of him!**” [The man’s body shook violently in spasms],⁵ and the demon came out of him [with a deafening shriek]⁶ without causing him any harm.

Great astonishment swept over the people, and they said among themselves, “[What is this new teaching that comes with such authority?]”⁷ What kind of man is this who has such power and authority? With a mere word he commands demons to come out and they obey him!” The reports about Jesus spread like wildfire throughout every community in the surrounding region [of Galilee].⁸

1 Mk. 1:21. 2 Mk. 1:22. 3 Mk. 1:24. 4 Mk. 1:25. 5 Mk. 1:26.
6 Mk. 1:26. 7 Mk. 1:27. 8 Mk. 1:28.

JESUS HEALS MANY (Lk. 4:38–44)

After leaving the meeting that day, Jesus went into Simon's house, [along with Jacob and John],⁹ where Simon's mother-in-law was [bedridden, severely ill]¹⁰ with a high fever, [so the first thing they did was to tell Jesus about her].¹¹ The disciples begged Jesus to help her. Jesus stood over her and rebuked the fever, and [the moment Jesus touched her hand]¹² she was healed instantly. Then she got up and began to serve them.

[Later in the day, *just after the Sabbath ended at sunset*],¹³ the people brought all those who were sick [and many who were demonized]¹⁴ to Jesus to be healed, [until the whole village was crowded around the house].¹⁵ Jesus laid his hands on them one by one, and they were all healed of different ailments and sicknesses. [By Jesus only speaking a word of healing over them, they were totally set free from their torment, and everyone who was sick received their healing! In doing this, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

He put upon himself our weaknesses,
and he carried away our diseases and made us well.]¹⁶

Demons also came out of many of them. The demons knew that Jesus was the Anointed One, so they shouted while coming out, “You are the Messiah, the Son of El Shaddai!” But Jesus rebuked them and commanded them to be silent, [he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who he really was].¹⁷

[Jesus ministered from place to place throughout all of the province of Galilee. He taught in the synagogues, preaching the hope of the kingdom realm and healing every kind of sickness and disease among the people. His fame spread everywhere! Many people who were in pain and suffering with every kind of illness were brought to Jesus for their healing—epileptics, paralytics, and those tormented by demonic powers were all set free. Everyone who was brought to Jesus was healed!

9 Mk. 1:29. 10 Matt. 8:14. 11 Mk. 1:30. 12 Matt. 8:15. 13 Mk. 1:32.
14 Matt. 8:16. 15 Mk. 1:33. 16 Matt. 8:16–17. 17 Mk. 1:34.

This resulted in massive crowds of people following him, including people from Galilee, Jerusalem, the land of Judah, the region of the Ten Cities known as the Decapolis, and beyond the Jordan River.]¹⁸

[The next morning, Jesus got up long before daylight, left the house while it was dark, and made his way to a secluded place to give himself to prayer.]¹⁹ At daybreak, the crowds came and searched everywhere for him, but Jesus had already left to go to a secluded place. [Later, Simon and his friends searched for him, and when they finally tracked him down, they told him, “Everyone is looking for you—they want you!”

Jesus replied, “We have to go on to the surrounding villages so that I can give my message to the people there, for that is my mission.”]²⁰

When the crowds finally found him, they held him tightly, begging him to stay with them in Capernaum. But Jesus said, “Don’t you know there are other places I must go to and offer them the hope found in God’s kingdom realm? This is what I have been sent to do.”

Jesus continued to travel [throughout the region of Galilee]²¹ and preach in the [Jewish]²² synagogues throughout the land [and cast out demons].²³

JESUS, THE HEALER (LK. 5:12–26)

One day, while Jesus was ministering in a certain city, he came upon a man covered with leprosy sores. When the man recognized Jesus, he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet [and threw himself down before him in worship]²⁴ and begged to be healed, saying, “[Lord, you have the power to heal me . . . if you really want to.]²⁵ If you are only willing, you could completely heal me.”

[Being deeply moved with tender compassion],²⁶ Jesus reached out and touched him and said, “Of course I am willing to heal you, and now you will be healed—[so now, be

18 Matt. 4:23–25. 19 Mk. 1:35. 20 Mk. 1:36–38. 21 Mk. 1:39.

22 Mk. 1:39. 23 Mk. 1:39. 24 Matt. 8:2. 25 Matt. 8:2. 26 Mk. 1:41.

cleansed!]²⁷ Instantly the leprous sores [completely disappeared]²⁸ and were healed and his skin became smooth.

Jesus [sent him away with a very stern warning]²⁹ and said, “Tell no one what has happened, but go to the priest and show him you’ve been healed. And to show that you are purified, make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded [so they can certify your healing].³⁰ You will become a living testimony to them!”

[But no sooner did the man leave than he began to proclaim his healing publicly and spread the story everywhere *of his healing*.]³¹

After this miracle the news about Jesus spread even farther. Massive crowds continually gathered to hear him speak and to be healed from their illnesses. [Jesus’ growing fame prevented him from entering the villages openly, which forced him to remain in isolated places.]³² But Jesus often slipped away from them and went into the wilderness to pray. [Even so, a steady stream of people flocked to him from everywhere.]³³

One day many Jewish religious leaders, known as Pharisees along with many religious scholars came from every village of Galilee, throughout Judea, and even from Jerusalem to hear Jesus teach. And the power of the Lord God surged through him to instantly heal.

[{Several days later},³⁴ Jesus got into the boat and returned to what was considered his hometown, *Capernaum*, {and the news quickly spread that he was back in town}³⁵].³⁶ [While Jesus was preaching the word of God],³⁷ some men came to Jesus, carrying a paraplegic man on a stretcher. They attempted to bring him in past the crowd to set him down in front of Jesus. But because there were so many people crowding the door, they had no way to bring him inside. So they crawled onto the roof [above Jesus’ head],³⁸ dug their way through the roof tiles,

27 Mk. 1:41. 28 Mk. 1:42. 29 Mk. 1:43. 30 Matt. 8:4.

31 Mk. 1:45. 32 Mk. 1:45. 33 Mk. 1:45. 34 Mk. 2:1.

35 Mk. 2:1. 36 Matt. 9:1. 37 Mk. 2:3. 38 Mk. 2:4.

and lowered the man, stretcher and all, into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

[When Jesus perceived the strong faith within their hearts],³⁹ and seeing the demonstration of their faith, Jesus said to the paraplegic man, “My friend, [be encouraged]⁴⁰ your sins are forgiven!”

[This offended some of them who were present, and they reasoned among themselves.]⁴¹ The Jewish religious leaders and the religious scholars whispered objections among themselves, “Who does this man think he is to speak such blasphemy? Only God can forgive sins. *Does he think he is God?*”

Jesus [supernaturally perceived their thoughts],⁴² and knowing their thoughts said to them, “[Why do you carry such evil in your hearts?]⁴³ Why do you argue in your hearts over what I do and think that it is blasphemy for me to say his sins are forgiven? [Why are you being so skeptical?]⁴⁴ Let me ask you, which is easier to prove: when I say [to this paralyzed man],⁴⁵ ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or when I say, ‘Stand up, carry your stretcher, and walk?’”

Jesus turned to the paraplegic man and said, “To prove to you all that I, the Son of Man, have [been given]⁴⁶ the lawful authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to you now, stand up, [pick up your mat!]⁴⁷ Carry your stretcher and go on home, for you are healed.”

In an instant, the man [sprang to his feet]⁴⁸ right before their eyes. He stood, picked up his stretcher, and went home, giving God all the glory with every step he took.

[When the crowds witnessed this miracle],⁴⁹ the people were seized with astonishment and dumbfounded over what they had just witnessed. And they all praised God, remarking over and over, “Incredible! What an unbelievable miracle we’ve seen today! [We’ve never seen anything like this before!]⁵⁰”

39 Matt. 9:2. 40 Matt. 9:2. 41 Mk. 2:6. 42 Matt. 9:4.

43 Matt. 9:4. 44 Mk. 2:8. 45 Mk. 2:9. 46 Mk. 2:10. 47 Matt. 9:6.

48 Mk. 2:12. 49 Matt. 9:8. 50 Mk. 2:12.

JESUS CALLS MATTHEW TO FOLLOW HIM (Lk. 5:27–32)

Afterward, [as he left Capernaum]⁵¹ Jesus went out [to walk near Lake Galilee, and a massive crowd gathered, so he taught them. As he walked along]⁵² he looked for a man named Matthew, [the son of Alphaeus].⁵³ He found him sitting at his tax booth, for he was [a traitorous Jew who was busy at his work],⁵⁴ a tax collector [collecting taxes for the Romans].⁵⁵ Jesus said to him, “Be my disciple and follow me.” That very moment, Matthew [jumped]⁵⁶ up, left everything behind, and followed him.

Matthew wanted to throw a banquet to honor Jesus. So he invited Jesus to his home for dinner, along with many tax collectors and other notable sinners [and outcasts of society were invited to eat with Jesus and his disciples, {for there were many kinds of people who followed him}⁵⁷].⁵⁸ [But when the religious scholars and the Pharisees found out that Jesus was keeping company and dining with sinners and tax collectors, they were indignant.]⁵⁹ While they were all sitting together at the table, the Jewish religious leaders and experts of the law complained to Jesus’ disciples, “Why would you defile yourselves by eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners, [with such low-lives]?⁶⁰ *Doesn’t Jesus know it’s wrong to do that?*”

Jesus overheard their complaining and said, “Who goes to the doctor for a cure? Those who are well or those who are sick? [Healthy people don’t need to see a doctor, but the sick will go for treatment.]⁶¹ I have not come to call the ‘righteous,’ but to call those who fail to measure up, [those who are sinners],⁶² and bring them to repentance.” [Then he added, “Now you should go and study the meaning of the verse:

I want you to show mercy, not just offer me a sacrifice.

For I have come to invite the outcasts of society and sinners, not those who think they are already on the right path.”]⁶³

51 Matt. 9:9. 52 Mk. 2:13. 53 Mk. 2:14. 54 Matt. 9:9.

55 Matt. 9:9. 56 Matt. 9:9. 57 Mk. 2:15. 58 Matt. 9:10. 59 Mk. 2:16.

60 Matt. 9:11. 61 Matt. 9:12. 62 Mk. 2:17. 63 Matt. 9:13.

A QUESTION ABOUT FASTING (Lk. 5:33–39)

[One time, the disciples of John the Baptizer and the Pharisees were fasting.]⁶⁴ Jesus' critics questioned him. [The disciples of John the Baptizer approached Jesus with this question]:⁶⁵ "John the prophet is known for leading his disciples to frequently fast and pray. As the religious leaders of the land, we do the same. Why do you and your disciples spend most of your time feasting at banquets?"

Jesus replied, "[How can the sons of the bridal chamber grieve when the Bridegroom is next to them?]⁶⁶ Should you make the sons of the bridal chamber fast while celebrating with the Bridegroom? [As long as the bridegroom is with them they won't],⁶⁷ but when the Bridegroom is taken away from them, then you will see them fasting."

And he gave them this illustration: "[And who would mend worn-out clothing with new fabric?]⁶⁸ No one rips up a new garment to make patches for an old, worn-out one. If you tear up the new to make a patch for the old, it will not match the old garment. [When the new cloth shrinks, it will rip, making the tear worse than before.]⁶⁹ And who pours new wine into an old wineskin? If someone did, [eventually the wine will ferment and make]⁷⁰ the old wineskin burst and the new wine would be lost—[the wine will be spilled and the wine-skin ruined].⁷¹ New wine must always be poured into new wineskins [so that both are preserved].⁷² Yet you say, 'The old ways are better,' and you refuse to even taste the new that I bring."

64 Mk. 2:18. 65 Matt. 9:14. 66 Matt. 9:15. 67 Mk. 2:19.

68 Matt. 9:16. 69 Mk. 2:21. 70 Matt. 9:17. 71 Mk. 2:22.

72 Matt. 9:17.

Day 8



THE HEALING AT BETHESDA (JN. 5:1–16)

Then Jesus returned to Jerusalem to observe one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city near the Sheep Gate there is a pool called in Aramaic, The House of Loving Kindness. And this pool is surrounded by five covered porches. Hundreds of sick people were lying there on the porches—the paralyzed, the blind, and the crippled, all of them waiting for their healing. For an angel of God would periodically descend into the pool to stir the waters, and the first one who stepped into the pool after the waters swirled would instantly be healed.

Now there was a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years lying among the multitude of the sick. When Jesus saw him lying there, he knew that the man had been crippled for a long time. So Jesus said to him, “**Do you truly long to be healed?**”

The sick man answered him, “Sir, there’s no way I can get healed, for I have no one who will lower me into the water when the angel comes. As soon as I try to crawl to the edge of the pool, someone else jumps in ahead of me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “**Stand up! Pick up your sleeping mat and you will walk!**” Immediately he stood up—he was healed! So he rolled up his mat and walked again! Now this miracle took place on the Jewish Sabbath.

When the Jewish leaders saw the man walking along carrying his sleeping mat, they objected and said, “What are you doing carrying that? Don’t you know it’s the Sabbath? It’s not lawful for you to carry things on the Sabbath!”

He answered them, “The man who healed me told me to pick it up and walk.”

“What man?” they asked him. “Who was this man who ordered you to carry something on a Sabbath?” But the healed man couldn’t give them an answer, for he didn’t yet know who it was since Jesus had already slipped away into the crowd.

A short time later, Jesus found the man at the temple and said to him, “**Look at you now! You’re healed! Walk away from your sin so that nothing worse will happen to you.**”

Then the man went to the Jewish leaders to inform them, “It was Jesus who healed me!” So from that day forward the Jewish leaders began to persecute Jesus because of the things he did on the Sabbath.

JESUS RESPONDS TO THE JEWISH LEADERS (JN. 5:17–24)

Jesus answered his critics by saying, “**Every day my Father is at work, and I will be too!**” This infuriated them and made them all the more eager to devise a plan to kill him. For not only did he break their Sabbath rules, but he called God “**my Father,**” which made him equal to God.

So Jesus said, “**I speak to you timeless truth. The Son is not able to do anything from himself or through my own initiative. I only do the works that I see the Father doing, for the Son does the same works as his Father.**”

“**Because the Father loves his Son so much, he always reveals to me everything that he is about to do. And you will all be amazed when he shows me even greater works than what you’ve seen so far! For just like the Father has power to raise the dead, the Son will raise the dead and give life to whomever he wants.**”

“**The Father now judges no one, for he has given all the authority to judge to the Son, so that the honor that belongs to the Father will now be shared with his Son. So if you refuse to honor the Son, you are refusing to honor the Father who sent him.**”

“**I speak to you an eternal truth: if you embrace my message and believe in the One who sent me, you will never face condemnation, for in me, you have already passed from the realm of death into the realm of eternal life!**”

TWO RESURRECTIONS (JN. 5:25–32)

“I speak to you eternal truth: Soon the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will arise with life! For the Father has given the Son the power to impart life, even as the Father imparts life. The Father has transferred to the Son the authority to judge, because he is the Son of Man.

“So don’t be amazed when I tell you these things, for there is a day coming when all who have ever died will hear my voice *calling them back to life*, and they will come out of their graves! Those who have done what is good will experience a resurrection to eternal life. And those who have practiced evil will taste the resurrection that brings them to condemnation!

“Nothing I do is from my own initiative, for as I hear the judgment passed by my Father, I execute judgment. And my judgments will be perfect, because I can do nothing on my own, except to fulfill the desires of my Father who sent me. For if I were to make claims about myself, you would have reasons to doubt. But there is another who bears witness on my behalf, and I know that what he testifies of me is true.”

JOHN THE BAPTIZER (JN. 5:33–47)

“You have sent messengers to John, and what he testified *about me* is true. I have no need to be validated by men, but I’m saying these things so that you will *believe* and be rescued.

“John was a blazing, burning torch, and for a short time you basked in his light with great joy. But I can provide a more substantial proof of who I am that exceeds John’s testimony—my miracles! These works which the Father destined for me to complete—they prove that the Father has sent me! And my Father himself, who gave me this mission, has also testified that I am his Son. But you have never heard his voice nor seen his face, nor does his Word truly live inside of you, for you refuse to believe in me or to embrace me as God’s messenger.

“You are busy analyzing the Scriptures, frantically poring over them in hopes of gaining eternal life. Everything you read points to me, yet you still refuse to come to me so I can give you the life you’re looking for—eternal life!

"I do not accept the honor that comes from men, for I know what kind of people you really are, and I can see that the love of God has found no home in you. I have come to represent my Father, yet you refuse to embrace me in faith. But when someone comes in their own name and with their own agenda, you readily accept him. Of course you're unable to believe in me. For you live for the praises of others and not for the praise that comes from the only true God.

"I won't be the one who accuses you before the Father. The one who will incriminate you is Moses, the very one you claim to obey, the one in whom you trust! If you really believed what Moses has written, then you would embrace me, for Moses wrote about me! But since you do not believe what he wrote, no wonder you don't believe what I say."

JESUS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (LK. 6:1–11)

One Sabbath day, [on the day of rest],¹ Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of ripe wheat. His disciples [were hungry, so they]² plucked some heads of grain and rubbed the husks off with their hands and ate it. This infuriated some of the Jewish religious leaders. They said to Jesus, "[Look! Your disciples shouldn't be harvesting grain on the Sabbath!]³ Why are you allowing your disciples to harvest grain on the Sabbath day? Don't you know it's not permissible according to the law?"

Jesus replied, "Haven't you read the Scriptures? Haven't you read what King David did when he was hungry? He entered the sanctuary of God [when Abiathar was high priest],⁴ took the bread of God's presence right off the sacred table, and shared it with his men, [violating the law].⁵ It was only lawful for the priests to eat the bread of God's presence. [But there is one here who is even greater than the temple.]⁶ You need to know that the Son of Man is no slave to the Sabbath day, for I am master over the Sabbath.

["And haven't you read in the Torah that the priests violated the rules of the Sabbath by carrying out their duties in the temple on a Saturday, and yet they are without blame? But I say to

1 Matt. 12:1. 2 Mk. 2:23. 3 Matt. 12:2. 4 Mk. 2:26. 5 Matt. 12:4.
6 Mk. 2:26.

you, there is one here who is even greater than the temple. If only you could learn the meaning of the words ‘I want compassion more than a sacrifice,’ you wouldn’t be condemning my innocent disciples. {The Sabbath was made for the sake of people, and not people for the Sabbath.}⁷ For the Son of Man exercises his lordship over the Sabbath.”⁸

On another Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. In the room with him was a man with [an atrophied, paralyzed],⁹ deformed right hand. Everyone watched Jesus closely, especially the Jewish religious leaders and the religious scholars, to see if Jesus would heal on a Sabbath day, for they were eager to find a reason to accuse him of breaking the Jewish laws.

[The fault-finding Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it permissible to perform a work of healing on the Sabbath, *when no one is supposed to work?*” They only asked him this question because they hoped to accuse him of breaking the Jewish laws.

He answered them, “If any of you had a lamb that fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you reach out your hand and lift it out? Isn’t a man much more valuable than a lamb? So of course, it’s always proper to do miracles, even on the Sabbath.”¹⁰

Jesus, knowing their every thought, said to the man with the deformed hand, “Come and stand here in the middle of the room.” So he got up and came forward.

Jesus said to all who were there, “Let me ask you a question. Which is better: to heal or to do harm on the Sabbath day? I have come to save a life, but you have come to find a life to destroy.” [But no one answered him a word.]¹¹

One by one Jesus looked into the eyes of each person in the room. [He was moved with indignation and grieved by the hardness of their hearts.]¹² Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your arm and open your hand!”

With everyone watching intently, he stretched out his arm, and his hand was [instantly],¹³ completely healed!

7 Mk. 2:27. 8 Matt. 12:5–8. 9 Matt. 12:10. 10 Matt. 12:10–12.

11 Mk. 3:4. 12 Mk. 3:5. 13 Mk. 3:5.

The room erupted with bitter rage because of this Sabbath-day healing. [After this happened, the Pharisees left abruptly]¹⁴ and from that moment on, the religious leaders plotted among themselves [with the friends and supporters of Herod Antipas]¹⁵ about how they might harm Jesus. [Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he left by another way. Massive crowds followed him from there, and he healed all who were sick {from all around the provinces of Galilee and southern Israel. Vast crowds came from Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and from Lebanon. Large numbers of people swarmed in from everywhere when they heard of him and his wonderful works.

The crowd pressed so closely to Jesus that he instructed his disciples to bring him a small boat to get into and keep from being crushed by the crowd. For he had healed so many that the sick kept pushing forward just so they could touch Jesus.}¹⁶ However, he sternly warned them not to tell others or disclose his real identity, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah:

Take a careful look at my servant, my chosen one.

I love him dearly

and I find all my delight in him.

I will breathe my Spirit upon him

and he will decree justice to the nations.

He will not quarrel or be found yelling in public.

He won't brush aside the bruised and broken.

He will be gentle with the weak and feeble,

until his victory releases justice.

And the fame of his name

will birth hope among the people.]¹⁷

[And whenever a demon saw him, it would throw the person down at Jesus' feet, screaming out, "You are the Son of God!" But Jesus would silence the demons and sternly order them not to reveal who he was.]¹⁸

14 Mk. 3:6. 15 Mk. 3:6. 16 Mk. 3:7–10. 17 Matt. 12:15–21.

18 Mk. 3:11–12.

Day 9



JESUS CHOOSES TWELVE APOSTLES (Lk. 6:12–19)

After this, Jesus went up into the high hills to spend the whole night in prayer to God. At daybreak he called together all of his followers and selected twelve from among them, and he appointed them to be his apostles. [He wanted them to be continually at his side as his friends, and so that he could send them out to preach and have authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons.]¹

Here are their names: Simon, [who is nicknamed Peter];² Andrew, Peter's brother; Jacob and John, [the sons of Zebedee, the nickname *Benay-Regah*, which means “passionate sons”];³ Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew [the tax collector];⁴ Thomas; Jacob the son of Alpheus; Simon [the Nationalist],⁵ known as a fiery political zealot; Judah the son of Jacob; and Judas [Iscariot]⁶ the locksmith, who later betrayed Jesus.

Jesus and his apostles came down from the hillside to a level field, where a large number of his disciples waited, along with a massive crowd of people who had gathered from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal district of Tyre and Sidon. They had all come to listen to the Manifestation so that they could be healed of their diseases and be set free from the demonic powers that tormented them. The entire crowd eagerly tried to come near Jesus so they could touch him and be healed, because a tangible supernatural power emanated from him, healing all who came close to him.

1 Mk. 3:14–15. 2 Matt. 10:2. 3 Mk. 3:17. 4 Matt. 10:3. 5 Mk. 3:18.
6 Mk. 3:19.

JESUS' SERMON ON THE HILLSIDE ON WHAT MATTERS MOST (MATT. 5:1-16)

One day Jesus saw a vast crowd of people gathering to hear him, so he went up the slope of a hill and sat down. With his followers and disciples spread over the hillside, [looking intently at his followers]⁷ Jesus began to teach them:

“[How enriched you become when you become poor],⁸ what happiness comes to you when you feel your spiritual poverty! For [you will experience the reality of God's kingdom realm],⁹ theirs is the realm of heaven's kingdom.

“[How content you become when you weep *with complete brokenness*],¹⁰ what delight comes to you when you wait upon the Lord! For [you will laugh with unrestrained joy],¹¹ you will find what you long for.

“What blessing comes to you when gentleness lives in you! For you will inherit the earth.

“[How filled you become when you are consumed with hunger and desire],¹² how enriched you are when you crave righteousness! For [you will be completely satisfied],¹³ you will be surrounded with fruitfulness.

“How satisfied you are when you demonstrate tender mercy! For tender mercy will be demonstrated to you.

“What bliss you experience when your heart is pure! For then your eyes will open to see more and more of God.

“How joyful you are when you make peace! For then you will be recognized as a true child of God.

“How enriched you are when you bear the wounds of being persecuted for doing what is right! For that is when you experience the realm of heaven's kingdom.

“[How favored you become when you are hated, excommunicated, or slandered],¹⁴ how ecstatic you can be when people insult and persecute you and speak all kinds of cruel lies about you or [when your name is spoken of as evil]¹⁵ because of your love for me, [the Son of Man]!¹⁶ [I promise you that as you

7 Lk. 6:20. 8 Lk. 6:20. 9 Lk. 6:20. 10 Lk. 6:21. 11 Lk. 6:21.

12 Lk. 6:21. 13 Lk. 6:21. 14 Lk. 6:22. 15 Lk. 6:22. 16 Lk. 6:22.

experience these things, you will celebrate and dance]¹⁷ so leap for joy—since the heavenly reward [of your faith]¹⁸ is great. For you are being rejected the same way [as your forefathers]¹⁹ the prophets were before you.

["But what sorrows await those of you who are rich in this life only. For you have already received all the comfort you'll ever get.

"What sorrows await those of you who are complete and content with yourselves. For hunger and emptiness will come to you.

"What sorrows await those of you who laugh now, having received all your joy in this life only. For grief and wailing will come to you.

"What sorrows await those of you who are always honored and lauded by others. For that's how your forefathers treated every other false prophet.]"²⁰

"Your lives are like salt among the people. But if you, like salt, become bland, how can your 'saltiness' be restored? Flavorless salt is good for nothing and will be thrown out and trampled on by others.

"Your lives light up the world. Let others see your light from a distance, for how can you hide a city that stands on a hill-top? And who would light a lamp and then hide it in an obscure place? Instead, it's placed where everyone in the house can benefit from its light. So don't hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven."

FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW (MATT. 5:17–20)

"If you think I've come to set aside the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets, you're mistaken. I have come to fulfill and bring to perfection all that has been written. Indeed, I assure you, as long as heaven and earth endure, not even the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with until its purpose is complete. So whoever violates even the least important of the commandments,

17 Lk. 6:23. 18 Lk. 6:23. 19 Lk. 6:23. 20 Lk. 6:24–26.

and teaches others to do so, will be the least esteemed in the realm of heaven's kingdom. But whoever obeys them and teaches their truths to others will be greatly esteemed in the realm of heaven's kingdom. For I tell you, unless your lives are more pure and full of integrity than the religious scholars and the Pharisees you will never experience the realm of heaven's kingdom."

ANGER (MATT. 5:21–26)

"You're familiar with the commandment that the older generation was taught, 'Do not murder or you will be judged.' But I'm telling you, if you hold anger in your heart toward a fellow believer, you are subject to judgment. And whoever demeans and insults a fellow believer is answerable to the congregation. And whoever calls down curses upon a fellow believer is in danger of being sent to a fiery hell.

"So then, if you are presenting a gift before the altar in the temple and suddenly you remember a quarrel you have with a fellow believer, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go at once to apologize with the one who is offended. Then, after you have reconciled, come to the altar and present your gift. It is always better to come to terms with the one who wants to sue you before you go to trial, or you may be found guilty by the judge, and he will hand you over to the officers, who will throw you into prison. Believe me, you won't get out of prison until you have paid the full amount!"

ADULTERY (MATT. 5:27–32)

"Your ancestors have been taught, 'Never commit adultery.' However, I say to you, if you look with lust in your eyes at the body of a woman who is not your wife, you've already committed adultery in your heart. If your right eye seduces you to fall into sin, then go blind in your right eye! For you're better off losing sight in one eye than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand entices you to sin, let it go limp and useless! For you're better off losing a part of your body than to have it all thrown into hell.

“It has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her legal divorce papers.’ However, I say to you, if anyone divorces his wife for any reason, except for infidelity, he causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

MAKING OATHS (MATT. 5:33–42)

“Again, your ancestors were taught, ‘Never swear an oath that you don’t intend to keep, but keep your vows to the Lord God.’ However, I say to you, don’t bind yourself by taking an oath at all. Don’t swear by heaven, for heaven is where God’s throne is placed. Don’t swear an oath by the earth, because it is the rug under God’s feet, and not by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the Great King. And why would you swear by your own head, because it’s not in your power to turn a single hair white or black? *But just let your words ring true.* A simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ will suffice. Anything beyond this springs from a deceiver.

“Your ancestors have also been taught, ‘Take an eye in exchange for an eye and a tooth in exchange for a tooth.’ However, I say to you, don’t repay an evil act with another evil act. But whoever insults you by slapping you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well. If someone is determined to sue you for your coat, give him the shirt off your back as a gift in return. And should people in authority take advantage of you, do more than what they demand. Learn to generously share what you have with those who ask for help, and don’t close your heart to the one who comes to borrow from you.”

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES (MATT. 5:43–48)

“Your ancestors have also been taught ‘Love your neighbors and hate the one who hates you.’ However, [if you will listen,]²¹ I say to you, love your enemy, bless the one who curses you, do something wonderful [in return]²² for the one who hates you; and [when you are mistreated and harassed by others, accept it as your mission to]²³ respond to the very ones who persecute

21 Lk. 6:27. 22 Lk. 6:28. 23 Lk. 6:28.

you by praying for them. [To those who despise you, continue to serve them and minister to them. If someone takes away your coat, give him as a gift your shirt as well. When someone comes to beg from you, give to that person what you have. When things are wrongly taken from you, do not demand they be given back. However you wish to be treated by others is how you should treat everyone else.]²⁴ For that will reveal your identity as children of your heavenly Father. He is kind to all by bringing the sunrise to warm and rainfall to refresh whether a person does what is good or evil.

["Are you really showing true love by only loving those who love you back? Even those who don't know God will do that. Are you really showing compassion when you do good deeds only to those who do good deeds to you? Even those who don't know God will do that.]"²⁵ What reward do you deserve if you only love the loveable? Don't even the tax collectors do that? How are you any different from others if you limit your kindness only to your friends? Don't even the ungodly do that? Since you are children of a perfect Father in heaven, you are to be perfect like him.

["If you lend money only to those you know will repay you, what credit is that to your character? Even those who don't know God do that. But love your enemies and continue to treat them well. When you lend money, don't despair if you are never paid back, for it is not lost. You will receive a rich reward and you will be known as true children of the Most High God, having his same nature. For your Father is famous for his kindness to heal even the thankless and cruel. Show mercy and compassion for others, just as your heavenly Father overflows with mercy and compassion for all.]"²⁶

24 Lk. 6:29–31. 25 Lk. 6:32–33. 26 Lk. 6:34–36.

Day 10



GIVING WITH PURE MOTIVES (MATT. 6:1–4)

“Examine your motives to make sure you’re not showing off when you do your good deeds, only to be admired by others; otherwise, you will lose the reward of your heavenly Father. So when you give to the poor, don’t announce it and make a show of it just to be seen by people, like the hypocrites in the streets and in the marketplace. They’ve already received their reward! But when you demonstrate generosity, do it with pure motives and without drawing attention to yourself. Give secretly and your Father, who sees all you do, will reward you openly.”

PRAYER (MATT. 6:5–15)

“Whenever you pray, be sincere and not like the pretenders who love the attention they receive while praying before others in the meetings and on street corners. Believe me, they’ve already received in full their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your innermost chamber and be alone with Father God, praying to him in secret. And your Father, who sees all you do, will reward you openly. When you pray, there is no need to repeat empty phrases, praying like those who don’t know God, for they expect God to hear them because of their many words. There is no need to imitate them, since your Father already knows what you need before you ask him. Pray like this:

‘Our Father, dwelling in the heavenly realms,
may the glory of your name
be the center on which our lives turn.

Manifest your kingdom realm,
 and cause your every purpose to be fulfilled on earth,
 just as it is fulfilled in heaven.
 We acknowledge you as our Provider
 of all we need each day.
 Forgive us the wrongs we have done as we ourselves
 release forgiveness to those who have wronged us.
 Rescue us every time we face tribulation
 and set us free from evil.
 For you are the King who rules
 with power and glory forever. Amen.'

"And when you pray, make sure you forgive the faults of others so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you withhold forgiveness from others, your Father withholds forgiveness from you."

FASTING (MATT. 6:16–18)

"When you fast, don't look like those who pretend to be spiritual. They want everyone to know they're fasting, so they appear in public looking miserable, gloomy, and disheveled. Believe me, they've already received their reward in full. When you fast, don't let it be obvious, but instead, wash your face and groom yourself and realize that your Father in the secret place is the one who is watching all that you do in secret and will continue to reward you openly."

TREASURES IN HEAVEN (MATT. 6:19–24)

"Don't keep hoarding for yourselves earthly treasures that can be stolen by thieves. Material wealth eventually rusts, decays, and loses its value. Instead, stockpile heavenly treasures for yourselves that cannot be stolen and will never rust, decay, or lose their value. For your heart will always pursue what you value as your treasure.

"The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light to enter into your being. If your heart is unclouded, the light floods in! *But if your eyes are focused on money*, the light cannot penetrate and

darkness takes its place. How profound will be the darkness within you if the light of truth cannot enter!

“How could you worship two gods at the same time? You will have to hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You can’t worship the true God while enslaved to the god of money!”

DON'T WORRY (MATT. 6:25–34)

“This is why I tell you to never be worried about your life, for all that you need will be provided, such as food, water, clothing—everything your body needs. Isn’t there more to your life than a meal? Isn’t your body more than clothing?”

“Look at all the birds—do you think they worry about their existence? They don’t plant or reap or store up food, yet your heavenly Father provides them each with food. Aren’t you much more valuable to your Father than they? So, which one of you by worrying could add anything to your life?”

“And why would you worry about your clothing? Look at all the beautiful flowers of the field. They don’t work or toil, and yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was robed in beauty more than one of these! So if God has clothed the meadow with hay, which is here for such a short time and then dried up and burned, won’t he provide for you the clothes you need—even though you live with such little faith?”

“So then, forsake your worries! Why would you say, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For that is what the unbelievers chase after. Doesn’t your heavenly Father already know the things your bodies require?”

“So above all, constantly chase after the realm of God’s kingdom and the righteousness that proceeds from him. Then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly. Refuse to worry about tomorrow, but deal with each challenge that comes your way, one day at a time. Tomorrow will take care of itself.”

DO NOT JUDGE (MATT. 7:1–11)

“Refuse to be a critic full of bias toward others, and judgment will not be passed on you. For you’ll be judged by the same standard that you’ve used to judge others. [Don’t look at others and pronounce them guilty, and you will not experience guilty accusations yourself. Forgive over and over and you will be forgiven over and over. Give generously and generous gifts will be given back to you, shaken down to make room for more. Abundant gifts will pour out upon you with such an overflowing measure that it will run over the top! Your measurement of generosity becomes the measurement of your return.]¹ The measurement you use on them will be used on you. Why would you focus on the flaw in someone else’s life and yet fail to notice the glaring flaws of your own?

[Jesus also quoted these proverbs: “What happens when a blind man pretends to guide another blind man? They both stumble into a ditch! And how could the apprentice know more than his master, for only after he is fully qualified will he be at that level. Why do you focus on the flaw in someone else’s life and fail to notice the glaring flaws of your own life?”]² How could you say to your friend, ‘Let me show you where you’re wrong,’ when you’re guilty of even more? You’re being hypercritical and a hypocrite! First acknowledge your own ‘blind spots’ and deal with them, and then you’ll be capable of dealing with the ‘blind spot’ of your friend.

“Who would hang earrings on a dog’s ear or throw pearls in front of wild pigs? They’ll only trample them under their feet and then turn around and tear you to pieces!

“Ask, and the gift is yours. Seek, and you’ll discover. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. For every persistent one will get what he asks for. Every persistent seeker will discover what he longs for. And everyone who knocks persistently will one day find an open door.

“Do you know of any parent who would give his hungry child, who asked for food, a plate of rocks instead? Or when

¹ Lk. 6:37–38. ² Lk. 6:39–41.

asked for a piece of fish, what parent would offer his child a snake instead? If you, imperfect as you are, know how to lovingly take care of your children and give them what's best, how much more ready is your heavenly Father to give wonderful gifts to those who ask him?"

THE GOLDEN RULE (MATT. 7:12)

"In everything you do, be careful to treat others in the same way you'd want them to treat you, for that is the essence of all the teachings of the Law and the Prophets."

THE NARROW GATE (MATT. 7:13–14)

"Come to God through the narrow gate, because the wide gate and broad path is the way that leads to destruction—nearly everyone chooses that crowded road! The narrow gate and the difficult way leads to eternal life—so few even find it!"

FALSE PROPHETS (MATT. 7:15–20)

"Constantly be on your guard against phony prophets. They come disguised as lambs, appearing to be genuine, but on the inside they are like wild, ravenous wolves! You can spot them by their actions, for the fruits of their character will be obvious. [You'll never find choice fruit hanging on a bad, unhealthy tree. And rotten fruit doesn't hang on a good, healthy tree. Every tree will be revealed by the quality of fruit that it produces.]³ You won't find sweet [figs or]⁴ grapes hanging on a thorn bush, and you'll never pick good fruit from a tumbleweed. So if the tree is good, it will produce good fruit; but if the tree is bad, it will bear only rotten fruit and it deserves to be cut down and burned. [People are known in this same way. Out of the virtue stored in their hearts, good and upright people will produce good fruit. But out of the evil hidden in their hearts, evil ones will produce what is evil. For the overflow of what has been stored in your heart will be seen by your fruit and will be heard in your words.]⁵ Look at the obvious fruit of their lives and ministries, *and then you'll know whether they are true or false.*"

3 Lk. 6:43–44. 4 Lk. 6:44. 5 Lk. 6:45.

JESUS WARNS OF PRETENDERS (MATT. 7:21–29)

“[What good does it do for you to say I am your Lord and Master if what I teach you is not put into practice?]⁶ Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the realm of heaven’s kingdom. It is only those who persist in doing the will of my heavenly Father. On the day of judgment many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, don’t you remember us? Didn’t we prophesy in your name? Didn’t we cast out demons and do many miracles for the sake of your name?’ But I will have to say to them, ‘Go away from me, you lawless rebels! I’ve never been joined to you!’

“[Let me describe the one who truly follows me and does what I say.]⁷ Everyone who hears my teaching and applies it to his life can be compared to a wise man who [chose the right place to build a house and then]⁸ built his house on an unshakable foundation. When the rains fell and the flood came, with fierce winds beating upon his house, it stood firm, [strong and unshaken through the tempest]⁹ because of its strong foundation, [for it had been wisely built on the right foundation].¹⁰

“But everyone who hears my teaching and does not apply it to his life can be compared to a foolish man who built his house on sand [without laying any foundation whatsoever].¹¹ When it rained and rained and the flood came, with wind and waves beating upon his house, it [immediately]¹² collapsed and was swept away [and became a total loss. *Which of these two builders will you be?*]¹³”

By the time Jesus finished speaking, the crowds were dazed and overwhelmed by his teaching, because his words carried such great authority, quite unlike their religious scholars.

6 Lk. 6:46. 7 Lk. 6:47. 8 Lk. 6:48. 9 Lk. 6:48.

10 Lk. 6:48. 11 Lk. 6:49. 12 Lk. 6:49. 13 Lk. 6:49.

Day 11

JESUS HEALS (LK. 7:1–10)

After Jesus finished giving revelation to the people on the hillside, he went on to [the village of]¹ Capernaum. There he found a Roman military captain who had a beloved servant he valued highly, and the servant was sick to the point of death. When the captain heard that Jesus was in the city, he sent some respected Jewish elders to plead with him to come and heal his dying servant, [asking for a miracle].² So they came to Jesus and told him, “The Roman captain is a wonderful man. If anyone deserves to have a visit from you, it is him. Won’t you please come to his home and heal his servant, [who is lying in his home, paralyzed and suffering terribly]?³ For he loves the Jewish people, and he even built our meeting hall for us.”

[Jesus responded, “**I will go with you and heal him.**”]⁴

Jesus started off with them, but on his way there, he was stopped by friends of the captain, who gave this message: “[Lord, who am I to have you come into my house?]⁵ Master, don’t bother to come to me in person, for I am not good enough for you to enter my home. I’m not worthy enough to even come out to meet one like you. But if you would just release the manifestation of healing right where you are, I know that my young servant will be [instantly]⁶ healed.

“Unlike you, I am just an ordinary man. Yet I understand the power of authority, *and I see that authority operating through*

1 Matt. 8:5. 2 Matt. 8:5. 3 Matt. 8:6. 4 Matt. 8:7. 5 Matt. 8:8.

6 Matt. 8:8.

you, [for I too am a man who walks under authority and have authority over soldiers who serve under me].⁷ I have soldiers under me who obey my every command. [I can tell one to go and he'll go, and another to come and he'll come. I order my servants and they'll do whatever I ask.]⁸ I also have authorities over me whom I likewise obey. So Master, just speak the word and healing will flow."

Jesus marveled at this. He turned around and said to the crowd who had followed him, "Listen, everyone! Never have I found even one among the people of God a man like this who believes so strongly in me. [He has greater faith than anyone I've encountered in Israel! Listen to what I am about to tell you. Multitudes of non-Jewish people will stream from the east and the west, to enter into the banqueting feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the heavenly kingdom. But many Israelites, born to be heirs of the kingdom, will be turned away and banished into the darkness where there will be bitter weeping and unbearable anguish.]"⁹ Jesus then spoke the healing word from a distance. When the man's friends returned to the home, they found the servant completely healed and doing fine.

JESUS RAISES THE DEAD (LK. 7:11–17)

Shortly afterward, Jesus left on a journey for the village of Nain, with a massive crowd of people following him, along with his disciples. As he approached the village, he met a multitude of people in a funeral procession, who were mourning as they carried the body of a young man to the cemetery. The boy was his mother's only son and she was a widow. When the Lord saw the grieving mother, his heart broke for her. With great tenderness he said to her, "Please don't cry." Then he stepped up to the coffin and touched it. When the pallbearers came to a halt, Jesus said to the corpse, "Young man, I say to you, arise and live!"

Immediately, the young man moved, sat up, and spoke to those nearby. Jesus presented the son to his mother, alive! A

7 Matt. 8:9. 8 Matt. 8:9. 9 Matt. 8:10–12.

tremendous sense of holy mystery swept over the crowd *as they witnessed this miracle of resurrection*. They shouted praises to God, saying, “God himself has visited us to bless his people! A great prophet has appeared among us!”

The news of Jesus and this miracle raced throughout Judea and the entire surrounding region.

THE PROPHET JOHN'S QUESTION (LK. 7:18–35)

[Now, while John the Baptizer was in prison],¹⁰ his disciples reported to him [what Christ was doing among the people],¹¹ about all the wonderful miracles and the works Jesus was doing. So John dispatched two of his disciples to go and inquire of Jesus. When they came before the Master, they asked him, “Are you [really the one prophesied would come],¹² the coming Messiah we’ve been expecting, or are we to continue to look for someone else? John the prophet has sent us to you to seek your answer.”

Without answering, Jesus turned to the crowd and healed many of their incurable diseases. His miracle power freed many from their suffering. He restored the gift of sight to the blind, and he drove out demonic spirits from those who were tormented.

Only then did Jesus answer the question posed by John’s disciples. “Now go back and tell John what you have just seen and heard here today. [Give him this report].¹³ ‘The blind are now seeing [again].¹⁴ The crippled are now walking. Those who were lepers are now cured. Those who were deaf are now hearing. Those who were dead are now raised back to life. The poor and broken are given the hope of salvation. And tell John these words: ‘The blessing of heaven comes upon those who never lose their faith in me no matter what happens.’”

After John’s messengers departed, Jesus spoke about John to the audience crowded around him, saying, “What kind of man did you expect to see [when you went]¹⁵ out in the wilderness? Did

10 Matt. 11:2. 11 Matt. 11:2. 12 Matt. 11:3. 13 Matt. 11:4.

14 Matt. 11:5. 15 Matt. 11:7.

you expect to see a man who would be easily influenced and shaken by the shifting opinions of others? [Who was he?]¹⁶ Who did you really go there to see? Did you expect to see a man decked out in the splendid fashion of the day? [Those who wear fancy clothes live like kings in palaces.]¹⁷ They are the ones who live in the lap of luxury, embracing the values of this world. Or did you discover a true prophet out in the lonely wilderness? Yes, John was a legitimate prophet [like those of the past].¹⁸ Even more than that, he was the fulfillment of this Scripture:

‘See, I am sending my prophetic messenger
who will go ahead of me
and prepare hearts to receive me.’

“[For I tell you the truth],¹⁹ throughout history there was never found a man as great as John the Baptizer. Yet [the least of]²⁰ those who now walk in God’s kingdom realm, though they appear to be insignificant, will become even greater than he. [From the moment John stepped onto the scene until now, the realm of heaven’s kingdom is bursting forth, and passionate people have taken hold of its power. For all the prophets and the Torah prophesied until John appeared. If you can receive this truth, John is the Elijah who was destined to come. So listen and understand what I’m telling you.”]²¹

When the common and disreputable people among the audience heard Jesus say this, they acknowledged that it was the truth, for they had already experienced John’s baptism. But the hearts of the Jewish religious leaders and experts of the law had rejected the clear purpose of God by refusing to be baptized by John.

Jesus continued, saying, “[Don’t you understand?]²² How could I describe the people of this generation? Can’t you see? You’re like children playing games on the playground, [yelling at their playmates],²³ complaining to friends, ‘You don’t like it

16 Matt. 11:8. 17 Matt. 11:8. 18 Matt. 11:9. 19 Matt. 11:11.

20 Matt. 11:11. 21 Matt. 11:12–15. 22 Matt. 11:16. 23 Matt. 11:16.

when we want to play Wedding. And you don't like it when we want to play Funeral. Why will you neither dance nor mourn?"

"When the prophet John came fasting and refused to drink wine, you said, 'He's crazy! There's a demon in him.' Yet when the Son of Man came and went to feasts and drank wine, you said, 'Look at this man! He is nothing but a glutton and a drunkard. He spends all his time with tax collectors and other notorious [affluent]²⁴ sinners.'

"Nevertheless, I say to you, the wisdom of God will be proven true by the expressions of godliness in everyone who follows me; [God's wisdom will be visibly seen living in those who embrace it].²⁵"

JESUS CRITICIZES UNREPENTANT CITIES (MATT. 11:20–24)

Then Jesus began to openly denounce the cities where he had done most of his mighty miracles, because the people failed to turn away from sin and return to God. He said, "How tragic it will be for the city of Korazin! And how horrible for the city of Bethsaida! For if the powerful miracles that I performed in Korazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have humbled themselves and repented, and turned from their sins. Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you! And Capernaum—do you really think you'll be exalted because of the great miracles I have done there? No! You'll be brought down to the depths of hell because of your rejection of me. For if the miracles I worked in your streets were done in Sodom, it would still be standing today! But I tell you, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom in the day of judgment than it will be for you."

JESUS INVITES EVERYONE TO COME (MATT. 11:25–30)

Then Jesus exclaimed, "Father, thank you, for you are Lord, the Supreme Ruler over heaven and earth! And you have hidden the great revelation of your authority from those who are proud

24 Matt. 11:19. 25 Matt. 11:19.

and wise in their own eyes. Instead, you have shared it with these who humble themselves. Yes, Father, your plan delights your heart, as you've chosen this way to extend your kingdom—*by giving it to those who have become like trusting children*. You have entrusted me with all that you are and all that you have. No one fully and intimately knows the Son except the Father. And no one fully and intimately knows the Father except the Son. But the Son is able to unveil the Father to anyone he chooses.

“Are you weary, carrying a heavy burden? Then come to me. I will refresh your life, for I am your oasis. Simply join your life with mine. Learn my ways and you'll discover that I'm gentle, humble, easy to please. You will find refreshment and rest in me. For all that I require of you will be pleasant and easy to bear.”

EXTRAVAGANT WORSHIP (LK. 7:36–50)

Afterward, a Jewish religious leader named Simon asked Jesus to his home for dinner. Jesus accepted the invitation. When he went to Simon's home, he took his place at the table.

In the neighborhood there was an immoral woman of the streets, known to all to be a prostitute. When she heard about Jesus being in Simon's house, she took an exquisite flask made from alabaster, filled it with the most expensive perfume, went right into the home of the Jewish religious leader, and knelt at the feet of Jesus in front of all the guests. Broken and weeping, she covered his feet with the tears that fell from her face. She kept crying and drying his feet with her long hair. Over and over she kissed Jesus' feet. Then she opened her flask and anointed his feet with her costly perfume as an act of worship.

When Simon saw what was happening, he thought, “This man can't be a true prophet. If he were really a prophet, he would know what kind of sinful woman is touching him.”

Jesus said, “*Simon, I have a word for you.*”

“Go ahead, Teacher. I want to hear it,” he answered.

“It's a story about two men who were deeply in debt. One owed the bank one hundred thousand dollars, and the other only owed ten thousand dollars. When it was obvious that neither of them would be able to repay their debts, the kind banker

graciously wrote off the debts and forgave them all that they owed. Tell me, Simon, which of the two debtors would be the most thankful? Which one would love the banker most?"

Simon answered, "I suppose it would be the one with the greatest debt forgiven."

"You're right," Jesus agreed. Then he spoke to Simon about the woman still weeping at his feet.

"Don't you see this woman kneeling here? She is doing for me what you didn't bother to do. When I entered your home as your guest, you didn't think about offering me water to wash the dust off my feet. Yet she came into your home and washed my feet with her many tears and then dried my feet with her hair. You didn't even welcome me into your home with the customary kiss of greeting, but from the moment I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You didn't take the time to anoint my head with fragrant oil, but she anointed my head and feet with the finest perfume. She has been forgiven of all her many sins. This is why she has shown me such extravagant love. But those who assume they have very little to be forgiven will love me very little."

Then Jesus said to the woman at his feet, "All your sins are forgiven."

All the dinner guests said among themselves, "Who is the one who can even forgive sins?"

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith in me has given you life. Now you may leave and walk in the ways of peace."

Day 12

JESUS MINISTERS THROUGHOUT THE LAND (Lk. 8:1–3)

Soon afterward, Jesus began a ministry tour throughout the country, visiting cities and villages to announce the wonderful news of God's kingdom realm. His twelve disciples traveled with him and also a number of women who had been healed of many illnesses under his ministry and set free from demonic power. Jesus had cast out seven demons from one woman. Her name was Mary Magdalene, *for she was from the village of Magdala*. Among the women were Susanna and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, who managed King Herod's household. Many other women who supported Jesus' ministry from their own personal finances also traveled with him.

MYSTERIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM REALM (Lk. 8:4–15)

[Once again Jesus {left the house and sat by the lakeshore}¹ to teach the people on the shore of Lake Galilee.]² Massive crowds gathered from many towns to hear Jesus. [The crowd was so huge that he had to get into a boat and teach the people from there {while the large crowd stood on the shore.}]³⁴ He taught them [many things]⁵ using metaphors and parables [that would illustrate spiritual truths],⁶ such as this:

“[Consider this:]⁷ A farmer went out to sow seeds for a harvest. As he scattered his seed, some of it fell on the hard [beaten]⁸ pathway and was quickly trampled down and unable

1 Matt. 13:1. 2 Mk. 4:1. 3 Matt. 13:2. 4 Mk. 4:1. 5 Mk. 4:2.

6 Matt. 13:3. 7 Mk. 4:3. 8 Mk. 4:4.

to grow and became nothing but bird seed. Some fell on the gravel [that had no topsoil],⁹ and though it [quickly]¹⁰ sprouted it couldn't take root [since the soil had no depth];¹¹ [when the days grew hot, the sprouts were scorched and withered because they had insufficient roots],¹² it withered for lack of moisture. Other seed fell where there was nothing but [thorns and]¹³ weeds. It too was unable to grow to full maturity, for it was choked out by the weeds [so that they could produce no grain].¹⁴ Yet some of the seed fell into good, [rich],¹⁵ fertile soil, and it grew and flourished until it produced more than a hundredfold harvest, a bumper crop. [Some yielded thirty, some sixty, and some even one hundred times as much as he planted!]¹⁶ Then Jesus added, shouting out to all who would hear, "Listen with your heart and you will understand! [If you understand this, then you need to respond.]"¹⁷

[Then his disciples {and those close to him}¹⁸ approached Jesus and asked, "Why do you always speak to people in these hard-to-understand parables?"]¹⁹ They also asked him privately what deeper meaning was found in this parable. He said, "You have been given a teachable heart to perceive the secret, hidden mysteries of God's kingdom realm. But to those who don't have a listening heart, my words are merely stories. Even though they have eyes, they are blind to the true meaning of what I say, and even though they listen, they won't receive full revelation. [For everyone who listens with an open heart will receive progressively more revelation until he has more than enough. But those who don't listen with an open, teachable heart, even the understanding that they think they have will be taken from them. That's why I teach the people using parables, because they think they're looking for truth, yet because their hearts are unteachable, they never discover it. Although they will listen to me, they never fully perceive

9 Matt. 13:5. 10 Mk. 4:5. 11 Mk. 4:5. 12 Matt. 13:6.

13 Matt. 13:7. 14 Mk. 4:7. 15 Matt. 13:8. 16 Matt. 13:8.

17 Mk. 4:9. 18 Mk. 4:10. 19 Matt. 13:10.

the message I speak. The prophecy of Isaiah describes them perfectly:

Although they listen carefully to everything I speak,
 they don't understand a thing I say.
 They look and pretend to see,
 but the eyes of their hearts are closed.
 Their minds are dull and slow to perceive,
 their ears are plugged and are hard of hearing,
 and they have deliberately shut their eyes to the truth.
 Otherwise they would open their eyes to see,
 and open their ears to hear,
 and open their minds to understand.
 Then they would turn to me
 and let me instantly heal them.

“But your eyes are privileged, for they see. Delighted are your ears, for they are open to hear all these things. Many prophets and godly people in times past yearned to see these days of miracles that you've been favored to see. They would have given everything to hear the revelation you've been favored to hear. Yet they didn't get to see as much as a glimpse or hear even a whisper.”²⁰

[Then he said to them, “If you don't understand this parable, how will you understand any parable?”]²¹ Here, then, is the deeper meaning to my parable. [Now you are ready to listen to the revelation of the parable of the sower and his seeds:]²² The word of God is the seed that is sown into hearts. [What falls on the beaten]²³ hard pathway represents the hard hearts of men who hear the word of God, [the message of the kingdom realm but doesn't understand it.]²⁴ The slanderer quickly snatches away what was sown in their hearts to keep them from believing and experiencing salvation. The seed falling on the gravel represents those who initially respond to the

20 Matt. 13:12–17. 21 Mk. 4:13. 22 Matt. 13:18. 23 Mk. 4:15.

24 Matt. 13:19.

word with joy, [who gladly hears the kingdom message, but his experience remains shallow].²⁵ Soon afterward, when a season of harassment of the enemy and difficulty come to them [because of the kingdom message he received],²⁶ they wither and fall away, for they have no root in the truth and their faith is temporary, [their hearts fail to sink a deep root into the Word, they don't endure for long. For when trouble or persecution comes on account of the Word, they immediately wilt and fall away.]²⁷ The seed that falls into the weeds represents the hearts of those who hear the word of God but their growth is quickly choked off by their own anxious cares, the riches of this world, and the fleeting pleasures of this life—[all of life's busy distractions, his divided heart, and his ambition for wealth result in suffocating the kingdom message and prevent him from bearing spiritual fruit, {the Word produces nothing.}]²⁸²⁹ This is why they never become mature and fruitful. The seed that fell into good, fertile soil represents those lovers of truth [who open their hearts to receive the Word],³⁰ who hear it deep within their hearts. They respond by clinging to the word, keeping it dear as they endure all things in faith. This is the seed that will one day bear much fruit in their lives—[some yield a harvest of thirty, sixty, even one hundred times as much as was sown.]³¹

THE REVELATION LIGHT (Lk. 8:16–18)

[He also gave them this parable:]³² “No one lights a lamp and then hides it [under a basket or under the bed],³³ covering it over or putting it where its light won't be seen. No, the lamp is placed on a lampstand so others are able to benefit from its brightness. Because this revelation lamp now shines within you, nothing will be hidden from you—it will all be revealed. Every secret of *the kingdom* will be unveiled and out in the open, made known by the revelation-light. [For there is nothing that is hidden that won't be disclosed, and there is no secret that won't be brought

25 Matt. 13:20. 26 Matt. 13:21. 27 Mk. 4:17. 28 Mk. 4:19. 29 Matt. 13:25. 30 Mk. 4:20. 31 Matt. 13:23. 32 Mk. 4:21. 33 Mk. 4:21.

out into the light! If you understand what I'm saying, you need to respond!]³⁴ So pay careful attention to your hearts as you hear my teaching, [be diligent to understand the meaning behind everything you hear],³⁵ for to those who have open hearts, even more revelation will be given to them until it overflows. [And according to the depth of your longing to understand, much more will be added to you.]³⁶ And for those who do not listen with open hearts, what little light they imagine to have will be taken away."

PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED (MK. 4:26–29)

Jesus also told them this parable: "God's kingdom realm is like someone spreading seed on the ground. He goes to bed and gets up, day after day, and the seed sprouts and grows tall, though he knows not how. All by itself it sprouts, and the soil produces a crop; first the green stem, then the head on the stalk, and then the fully developed grain in the head. Then, when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts the sickle to the grain, because harvest time has come."

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS (MATT. 13:24–30)

Then Jesus taught them another parable:

"Heaven's kingdom realm can be compared to a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But at night, when everyone was asleep, an enemy came and planted poisonous weeds among the wheat and ran away. When the wheat sprouted and bore grain, the weeds also appeared. So the farmer's hired hands came to him and said, 'Sir, wasn't that good seed that you sowed in the field? Where did all these weeds come from?'

"He answered, 'This has to be the work of an enemy!'

"They replied, 'Do you want us to go and gather up all the weeds?'

"'No,' he said. 'If you pull out the weeds you might uproot the wheat at the same time. You must allow them both to grow

34 Mk. 4:22–23. 35 Mk. 4:24. 36 Mk. 4:24.

together until the time of harvest. At that time, I'll tell my harvesters to make sure they gather the weeds first and tie them all in bundles to be burned. Then they will harvest the wheat and put it into my barn.'"

THE PARABLE OF THE TINY MUSTARD SEED (MATT. 13:31–32)

Then Jesus taught them another parable:

"[How can I describe God's kingdom realm? Let me illustrate it with this parable.]³⁷ Heaven's kingdom realm can be compared to the tiny mustard seed, [the tiniest of all the seeds],³⁸ that a man takes and plants in his field. Although the smallest of all the seeds, it eventually [springs up and]³⁹ grows into the [largest],⁴⁰ greatest of garden plants, [and with so many enormous spreading branches],⁴¹ becoming a tree for birds to come and build their nests in its branches."

THE PARABLE OF THE YEAST (MATT. 13:33)

Then he taught them another parable:

"Heaven's kingdom realm can be compared to yeast that a woman takes and blends into three measures of flour and then waits until all the dough rises."

PROPHECY AND PARABLES (MATT. 13:34–35)

[Jesus used many parables such as these as he taught the people, and they learned according to their ability to understand.]⁴² Whenever Jesus addressed the crowds, he always spoke in allegories. He never spoke without using parables, [but would wait until they were alone before he explained their meanings to his disciples].⁴³ He did this in order to fulfill the prophecy:

I will speak to you in allegories.

I will reveal secrets that have been concealed
since before the foundation of the world.

37 Mk. 4:30. 38 Mk. 4:31. 39 Mk. 4:32. 40 Mk. 4:32.

41 Mk. 4:32. 42 Mk. 4:33. 43 Mk. 4:34.

JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLES (MATT. 13:36–43)

Jesus left the crowds and went inside the house *where he was staying*. Then his disciples approached him and asked, “Please explain the deeper meaning of the parable of the weeds growing in the field of wheat.”

He answered, “The man who sowed his field with good seed represents me, the Son of Man. And the field is the world. The good seeds I sow are the children of the kingdom realm. The weeds are the children of the Evil One, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest points to the end of this age, and the harvesters are God’s messengers. As the weeds are bundled up and thrown into the fire, so it will be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his messengers, and they will uproot everything out of his kingdom. All the lawless ones and everything that causes sin will be removed. And they will throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will experience great sorrow, pain, and anguish. Then the godly ones will shine like the brightness of the sun in their Father’s kingdom realm. If you’re able to understand this, then you’d better respond!”

PARABLES OF HIDDEN TREASURE AND AN EXTRAORDINARY PEARL (MATT. 13:44–46)

“Heaven’s kingdom realm can be illustrated like this:

“A person discovered that there was hidden treasure in a field. Upon finding it, he hid it again. Because of uncovering such treasure, he was overjoyed and sold all that he possessed to buy the entire field *just so he could have the treasure*.

“Heaven’s kingdom realm is also like a jewel merchant in search of rare pearls. When he discovered one very precious and exquisite pearl, he immediately gave up all he had in exchange for it.”

THE PARABLE OF THE FISHING NET (MATT. 13:47–53)

“Again, heaven’s kingdom realm is like a fisherman who casts his large net into the lake, catching an assortment of different kinds of fish. When the net was filled, the fishermen hauled it up on the shore, and they all sat down to sort out their catch. They collected the good fish in baskets and threw the bad away. And so it will be at the close of the age. The messengers will

come and separate the evil from among the godly and throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will experience great sorrow, pain, and anguish. Now do you understand all this?”

“Yes,” they replied.

He responded, “Every scholar of the Scriptures, who is instructed in the ways of heaven’s kingdom realm, is like a wealthy home owner with his house filled with treasures both new and old. *And he knows how and when to bring them out to show others.*”

Right after Jesus taught this series of parables, he left from there.

Day 13

JESUS' TRUE FAMILY (LK. 8:19–20)

Mary, Jesus' mother, and her other sons came to where Jesus was teaching [and stood outside, asking for him to come out and speak with them],¹ but they couldn't get through the crowd that had gathered around him. So he was told, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak with you."

[But Jesus just looked at him and said, {"Who is my true mother and my true brothers?" Then looking in the eyes of those who were sitting in a circle around him, he said,}² "Let me introduce you to my true mother and brothers." Gesturing to the disciples gathered around him,]³ Jesus told them, "These who come to listen to me are like my mothers and my brothers. They're the ones who long to hear and to put God's word into practice. [Look closely, for this is my true family. When you obey my heavenly Father, that makes you a part of my true family.]"⁴

PEACE IN THE STORM (LK. 8:21–25)

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's get in a boat and go across to the other side of the lake." So [after they had sent the crowd away],⁵ they set sail [from shore with him, as he had been teaching from the boat, and there were other boats that sailed with them.]⁶ Soon Jesus fell asleep. [Suddenly, as they were crossing the lake],⁷ the wind rose, and the fierce wind became a violent squall that threatened to swamp their boat. [Yet Jesus continued to sleep

1 Matt. 12:46. 2 Mk. 3:33–34. 3 Matt. 12:48–49. 4 Matt. 12:49–50.
5 Mk. 4:36. 6 Mk. 4:36. 7 Mk. 4:37.

soundly.]⁸ So the disciples woke Jesus up and said, “Master, Master, we’re sinking! [Teacher, don’t you even care that we are all about to die!]⁹ [Save us, Lord!]¹⁰ Don’t you care that we’re going to drown?”

[Fully awake],¹¹ with great authority Jesus [stood up and]¹² rebuked the howling wind and surging waves [and shouted to the sea, “**Hush! Calm down! {Be still!}¹³”],¹⁴ and instantly they stopped and became as smooth as glass. [But Jesus reprimanded them. “**Why are you gripped with fear? Where is your faith?**”]¹⁵ Then he said to them, “**Why are you fearful? [Haven’t you learned to trust yet?]**¹⁶ **Have you lost your faith in me?**”**

Shocked and shaken, [overwhelmed with fear and awe],¹⁷ [the disciples were astonished by this miracle and]¹⁸ they said with amazement to one another, “Who is this man who has authority over winds and waves that they obey him?”

A DEMONIZED MAN SET FREE (Lk. 8:26–39)

As soon as they stepped ashore on the eastern side of the lake in the land of the Gerasenes, the disciples were confronted by a demon-possessed madman [out of the graveyard]¹⁹ from a nearby town. [The man had been living there among the tombs of the dead, and no one was able to restrain him.]²⁰ Many times he had been put under guard and bound with chains, but repeatedly the many demons inside him had thrown him into convulsions, breaking his shackles [into pieces]²¹ and driving him out of the town into the countryside. He had been demonized for a long time and was living naked in a cemetery among the tombs, [shrieking and mangling himself with stones!]²² When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and screamed out, “What are you doing here? You are Jesus, the Son of the Most High God!” [The demons screamed at Jesus, shouting, “Son of God, what do you want with us? Leave us alone! Have you come to torment us before the appointed time?”]²³

8 Matt. 8:24. 9 Mk. 4:39. 10 Matt. 8:25. 11 Mk. 4:39.

12 Matt. 8:26. 13 Matt. 8:26. 14 Mk. 4:39. 15 Matt. 8:26.

16 Mk. 4:40. 17 Mk. 4:41. 18 Matt. 8:27. 19 Mk. 5:2.

20 Mk. 5:3. 21 Mk. 5:4. 22 Mk. 5:5. 23 Matt. 8:29.

Jesus commanded the demons to come out of him, and they shouted, “We beg you, don’t torture us!”

Jesus asked the man, “**What is your name?**”

“Mob,” the demons answered. “We are a mob, for there are many of us here in this man. We beg you, don’t banish us to the bottomless pit of the Abyss!”

On the hillside nearby, there was a large herd of pigs, and the demons pled with Jesus, “Let us enter into the pigs.” So Jesus ordered all the “mob” of demons to come out of the man and enter the pigs. [Jesus commanded, “**Then go!**” And at once the demons came out of the men and went into the pigs.]²⁴ The crazed herd of swine stampeded over the cliff into the lake and all [two thousand]²⁵ of them drowned.

When the herders tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off in fear and reported [all that had happened to the demonized man]²⁶ to the nearby town and throughout the countryside. Then the people of the region came out to see for themselves what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they discovered the *notorious* madman totally set free. He was clothed, speaking intelligently, and sitting at the feet of Jesus. They were shocked! Then eyewitnesses to the miracle reported all that they had seen and how the demonized man was completely delivered from his torment.

After hearing about such amazing power, the townspeople became frightened, [then everyone from the town went out to confront Jesus].²⁷ Soon all the people of the region of the Gerasenes and the surrounding country begged Jesus to leave them, for they were gripped with fear. So Jesus got into the boat, intending to return to Galilee. But the man who had been set free [from demons]²⁸ begged Jesus over and over not to leave, saying, “Let me be with you!”

[Jesus answered, “**No**”].²⁹ He sent him away with these instructions: “**Return to your home and your family, and tell them all the wonderful things God has done for you. [Tell them**

24 Matt. 8:32. 25 Mk. 6:13. 26 Matt. 8:33. 27 Matt. 8:34.

28 Mk. 5:18. 29 Mk. 5:19.

how he had mercy on you].³⁰ So the man went away [into the region of Jordan and parts of Syria]³¹ and preached to everyone who would listen about the amazing miracle Jesus had worked in his life, [and all the people marveled!]³²

MORE MIRACLES OF HEALING (Lk. 8:40–56)

When Jesus returned to Galilee, the crowds were overjoyed, for they had been waiting for him to arrive. Just then, a man named Jairus, the [influential]³³ leader of the local Jewish congregation, fell before Jesus' feet. He desperately begged him to come and heal his twelve-year-old daughter, his only child, because she was at the point of death. [He pleaded with Jesus, saying over and over, "Please come with me! My little daughter is at the point of death, *and she's only twelve years old!* Come and lay your hands on her and heal her and she will live!"]³⁴

Jesus started to go with him to his home to see her, but a large crowd surrounded him [pressing in on him from all sides].³⁵ In the crowd that day was a woman who had suffered greatly for twelve years from slow bleeding. Even though she had spent all that she had on healers, she was still suffering. Pressing in through the crowd, she came up behind Jesus and touched the tassel of his prayer shawl. [For she kept saying to herself, "If I could only touch his prayer shawl I would be healed."]³⁶ [As soon as her hand touched him,]³⁷ instantly her bleeding stopped and she was healed.

Jesus suddenly stopped and said to his disciples, **"Someone touched me. Who is it?"**

While they all denied it, Peter pointed out, "Master, everyone is touching you, trying to get close to you. The crowds are so thick we can't walk through all these people without being jostled." [But Jesus' eyes swept across the crowd, looking for the one who had touched him for healing.]³⁸

Jesus replied, **"Yes, but I felt power surge through me. Someone touched me to be healed, and they received their healing."**

30 Mk. 5:19. 31 Mk. 5:20. 32 Mk. 5:20. 33 Matt. 9:18.

34 Mk. 5:23. 35 Mk. 5:24. 36 Matt. 9:21. 37 Mk. 5:29. 38 Mk. 5:32.

When the woman realized she couldn't hide any longer, she came and fell trembling at Jesus' feet. [And she told him her story of what had just happened.]³⁹ Before the entire crowd she declared, "I was desperate to touch you, Jesus, for I knew if I could just touch even the fringe of your robe I would be healed."

Jesus responded, "Beloved daughter, [be encouraged],⁴⁰ [because you dared to believe],⁴¹ your faith in me has released your healing. You may go with my peace, [and be free from your suffering!]⁴²"

While Jesus was still speaking to the woman, someone came from Jairus' house and told him, "There's no need to bother the Master any further. Your daughter has passed away. She's gone."

When Jesus heard this, he [refused to listen to what they were told and said to the Jewish official],⁴³ "Jairus, don't yield to your fear. [All you need to do is to]⁴⁴ have faith in me and she will live again."

When they arrived at the house, [he saw a noisy crowd of mourners, wailing and playing a funeral dirge on their flutes.]⁴⁵ Jesus allowed only Peter, John, and Jacob—along with the child's parents—to go inside. Jesus told those left outside, who were sobbing and wailing with grief, "[Why all this grief and weeping?]⁴⁶ Stop crying. [You must leave, for]⁴⁷ she is not dead; she's just asleep and must be awakened."

They laughed at him, knowing for certain that she had died. [But he threw them all outside.]⁴⁸

[Then he took the child's father and mother and his three disciples and went into the room where the girl was lying.]⁴⁹ Jesus approached the body, took the girl by her hand, and called out with a loud voice [in Aramaic, "Talitha koum," which means],⁵⁰ "My sleeping child, awake! Rise up!"

Instantly her spirit returned to her body and she stood up [and started walking around the room! Everyone was overcome

39 Mk. 5:33. 40 Matt. 9:22. 41 Mk. 5:34. 42 Mk. 5:34.

43 Mk. 5:36. 44 Mk. 5:36. 45 Matt. 9:23. 46 Mk. 5:39.

47 Matt. 9:24. 48 Mk. 5:40. 49 Mk. 5:40. 50 Mk. 5:41.

with astonishment in seeing this miracle!]⁵¹ [And the news of this incredible miracle spread everywhere.]⁵²

Jesus directed her stunned parents to give her something to eat and ordered them not to tell anyone what just happened.

JESUS OPENS BLIND EYES (MATT. 9:27–31)

As Jesus left the house, two blind men began following him, shouting out over and over, “Son of David, show us mercy and heal us!” And they followed him right into the house where Jesus was staying. So Jesus asked them, “**Do you believe that I have the power to restore sight to your eyes?**”

They replied, “Yes Lord, we believe!”

Then Jesus put his hands over their eyes and said, “**You will have what your faith expects!**” And instantly their eyes opened—they could see! Then Jesus warned them sternly, “**Make sure that you tell no one what just happened!**” But unable to contain themselves, they went out and spread the news everywhere!

JESUS HEALS THE MUTE (MATT. 9:32–34)

While they were leaving, some people brought before Jesus a man with a demon spirit who couldn’t speak. Jesus cast the demon out of him, and immediately the man began to speak *plainly*. The crowds marveled in astonishment, saying, “We’ve never seen miracles like this in Israel!” But the Pharisees kept saying, “The chief of demons is helping him drive out demons.”

51 Mk. 5:42. 52 Matt. 9:26.

Day 14

JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH (Mk. 6:1–6)

Afterward, Jesus left Capernaum and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. On the Sabbath, he went to teach in the synagogue. Everyone who heard his teaching was [dazed],¹ overwhelmed with astonishment [over the depth of revelation they were hearing].² They said among themselves, “What incredible wisdom has been given to him! Where did he receive such profound insights? And what mighty miracles flow through his hands! [Where did this man get such great wisdom and miraculous powers? Isn’t he just the wood-worker’s son?]”³ Isn’t this Mary’s son, the carpenter, the brother of Jacob, Joseph, Judah, and Simon? And don’t his sisters all live here in Nazareth? [How did he get all this revelation and power?]”⁴ And they took offense at him [and began to turn against him].⁵

Jesus said to them, “A prophet is treated with honor everywhere except in his own hometown, among his relatives, and in his own house.” He was unable to do any great miracle in Nazareth, except to heal a few sick people by laying his hands upon them. He was amazed at the depth of their unbelief!

Then Jesus went out into the different villages and taught the people.

1 Matt. 13:54. 2 Matt. 13:54. 3 Matt. 13:54–55. 4 Matt. 13:56.

5 Matt. 13:57.

WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST (MATT. 9:35–38)

Jesus walked throughout the region with the joyful message of God's kingdom realm. He taught in their meeting houses, and wherever he went he demonstrated God's power by healing every kind of disease and illness.

When he saw the vast crowds of people, Jesus' heart was deeply moved with compassion, because they seemed weary and helpless, like wandering sheep without a shepherd. He turned to his disciples and said, **"The harvest is huge and ripe! But there are not enough harvesters to bring it all in. As you go, plead with the Owner of the Harvest to thrust out many more reapers to harvest his grain!"**

JESUS SENDS OUT HIS APOSTLES (LK. 9:1–6)

Jesus summoned together his twelve apostles and imparted to them authority over every demon and the power to heal every disease. Then he commissioned them to preach God's kingdom realm and to heal the sick to demonstrate that the kingdom had arrived. As he sent them out [in pairs],⁶ he gave them these instructions: **"Take nothing extra on your journey. Just go as you are. Don't carry a staff, a backpack, food, money, not even a change of clothes. Whatever home welcomes you as a guest, remain there and make it your base of ministry [until you leave the area].⁷ And wherever your ministry is rejected and not welcomed, you are to leave that town and shake the dust off your shoes as a testimony before them."**

The apostles departed and went into the villages [and preached publicly]⁸ with the wonderful news of God's kingdom realm, and they instantly healed diseases wherever they went. [They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.]⁹

JESUS SENDS OUT HIS TWELVE APOSTLES (MATT. 10:5–16)

Jesus commissioned the twelve to go out *into the ripened harvest fields* with these instructions: **"Don't go into any non-Jewish or**

6 Mk. 6:7. 7 Mk. 6:10. 8 Mk. 6:12. 9 Mk. 6:13.

Samaritan territory. Go instead and find the lost sheep among the people of Israel. And as you go, preach this message: ‘Heaven’s kingdom realm is accessible, close enough to touch.’ You must continually bring healing to lepers and to those who are sick, and make it your habit to break off the demonic presence from people, and raise the dead back to life. Freely you have received *the power of the kingdom*, so freely release it to others. You won’t need a lot of money. Travel light, and don’t even pack an extra change of clothes in your backpack. Trust God for everything, because the one who works for him deserves to be provided for.

“Whatever village or town you enter, search for a godly man who will let you into his home until you leave for the next town. Once you enter a house, speak to the family there and say, ‘God’s blessing of peace be upon this house!’ And if those living there welcome you, let your peace come upon the house. But if you are rejected, that blessing of peace will come back upon you. And if anyone doesn’t listen to you and rejects your message, when you leave that house or town, shake the dust off your feet *as a prophetic act that you will not take their defilement with you*. Mark my words, on the day of judgment the wicked people who lived in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah will have a lesser degree of judgment than the city that rejects you, *for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did not have the opportunity that was given to them!* Now, remember, it is I who sends you out, even though you feel vulnerable as lambs going into a pack of wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes yet as harmless as doves.”

JESUS WARNS HIS APOSTLES OF PERSECUTION (MATT. 10:17–42; 11:1)

“Be on your guard! For there will be those who will betray you before their religious councils and brutally beat you with whips in their public gatherings. And because you follow me, they will take you to stand trial in front of rulers and even kings as an opportunity to testify of me before them and the unbelievers. So when they arrest you, don’t worry about how to speak or what you are to say, for the Holy Spirit will give you at that very

moment the words to speak. It won't be you speaking but the Spirit of your Father repeatedly speaking through you.

"A brother will betray his brother unto death—even a father his child! Children will rise up against their parents and have them put to death. Expect to be hated by all because of my name, but be faithful to the end and you will experience life and deliverance. And when they persecute you in one town, flee to another. But I promise you this: you will not deliver all the cities and towns of Israel until the Son of Man will have made his appearance.

"A student is not superior to his teacher any more than a servant would be greater than his master. The student must be satisfied to share his teacher's fate and the servant his master's. If they have called the head of the family 'lord of flies,' no wonder they malign the members of his family.

"Don't be afraid or intimidated by others, for God will bring everything out into the open and every secret will be told. What I say to you in the dark, repeat in broad daylight, and what you hear in a whisper, announce it publicly. Don't be in fear of those who can kill only the body but not your soul. Fear only God, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. You can buy two sparrows for only a copper coin, yet not even one sparrow falls from its nest without the knowledge of your Father. Aren't you worth much more to God than many sparrows? So don't worry. For your Father cares deeply about even the smallest detail of your life.

"If you openly and publicly acknowledge me, I will freely and openly acknowledge you before my heavenly Father. But if you publicly deny that you know me, I will also deny you before my heavenly Father.

"Perhaps you think I've come to spread peace and calm over the earth—but my coming will bring conflict and division, not peace. Because of me,

A son will turn against his father,
a daughter her mother
and against her mother-in-law.

Within your own families you will find enemies.

“Whoever loves father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not fit to be my disciple. And whoever comes to me must follow in my steps and be willing to share my cross and experience it as his own, or he cannot be considered to be my disciple. All who seek to live apart from me will lose it all. But those who let go of their lives for my sake and surrender it all to me will discover true life!

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is God’s messenger will share a prophet’s reward. And whoever welcomes a good and godly man because he follows me will also share in his reward. And whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of my humble disciples, I promise you, he will not go unrewarded.”

After Jesus finished giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he went on to minister in different villages throughout the region.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER (Mk. 6:14–29)

King Herod soon heard about Jesus, for the name of Jesus was on everyone’s lips. [He was confused and perplexed when he heard the reports of all the miracles of Jesus and his apostles.]¹⁰ Some were even saying about him, “John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead, and that’s why miraculous powers flow from him!” Others said, “No, he’s Elijah [who has reappeared or one of the prophets of old who has risen from the dead!]¹¹” While others said, “He’s a prophet, like one of the prophets of old!”

[Herod exclaimed, “Who is this Man? I keep hearing about him over and over. It can’t be the prophet John; I had him beheaded!” Herod was very eager to meet Jesus.]¹²

When Herod heard what the people were saying, he concluded, “I beheaded John, and now he’s raised from the dead!” For Herod had John arrested and thrown into prison [and placed in chains]¹³ for repeatedly rebuking him in public and [confronting him over taking the wife of his brother Philip],¹⁴ saying, “You

10 Lk. 9:7. 11 Lk. 9:8. 12 Lk. 9:8–9. 13 Matt. 14:3. 14 Matt. 14:3.

have no right to marry Herodias, the wife of your brother Philip! You are violating the law of God!”

This infuriated Herodias, and she held a bitter grudge against him and wanted John executed. But Herod both feared and stood in awe of John and kept him safely in custody, because he was convinced that he was a righteous and holy man. Every time Herod heard John speak, it disturbed his soul, but he was drawn to him and enjoyed listening to his words.

But Herodias found her opportunity to have John killed—it was on the king’s birthday! Herod prepared a great banquet and invited all his officials, military commanders, and the leaders of the province of Galilee to celebrate with him on his birthday. On the day of the feast, his stepdaughter, the daughter of Herodias, came to honor the king with a beautiful dance, and she flattered him. Her dancing greatly pleased the king and his guests, so he said to the girl, “You can ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you!” And he repeated it in front of everyone, with a vow to complete his promise to her: “[I give you my oath],¹⁵ anything you desire and it will be yours! I’ll even share my kingdom with you!”

She immediately left the room and said to her mother, “What should I ask for?” Her mother answered, “The head of John the Baptizer on a platter!” So she hurried back to the king and made her request: “I want you to bring me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter—and I want it right now!”

Deeply grieved, the king regretted his promise to her, but since he had made his vow in front of all his honored guests, he couldn’t deny her request. So without delay the king ordered an executioner to bring John’s head, and he went and beheaded John in prison. He brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl brought it to her mother. When John’s followers heard what had happened, they came and removed his body and laid it in a tomb. [Then they left to find Jesus and tell him what had happened.

On hearing this, Jesus slipped away privately by boat to be alone.]¹⁶

¹⁵ *Matt. 14:7.* ¹⁶ *Matt. 14:12–13.*

Day 15

JESUS FEEDS THOUSANDS (Lk. 9:10–17)

Months later, the apostles returned from their ministry tour and told Jesus all the wonders and miracles they had witnessed. [There was such a swirl of activity around Jesus, with so many people coming and going, that they were unable to even eat a meal. So Jesus said to his disciples, “Come, let’s take a break and find a secluded place where you can rest a while.”]¹ Jesus, wanting to be alone with the Twelve, quietly slipped away with them toward Bethsaida. But the crowds soon found out about it and took off after him. [They were attracted by his miracles and the healings they watched him perform.]² When they caught up with Jesus, [seeing so many people, his heart was deeply moved with compassion toward them]³ and he graciously welcomed them all, [because they seemed like wandering sheep who had no shepherd. So he]⁴ taught them more about God’s kingdom realm, and healed all who were sick. [Now it was approaching the time of the Jewish celebration of Passover, *and there were many pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem in the crowd.*]⁵

As the day wore on, the Twelve came to Jesus and told him, “It’s getting late [the people are hungry].”⁶ You should send the crowds away to the surrounding villages and farms to get something to eat and find shelter for the night. There’s nothing to eat here in the middle of nowhere.”

1 Mk. 6:31. 2 Jn. 6:2. 3 Matt. 14:14. 4 Mk. 6:34. 5 Jn. 6:4.

6 Matt. 14:15.

“They don’t need to leave,”⁷ Jesus responded. **“You have the food to feed them.”**

“Are you sure?” they replied. “You really want us to go buy them supper? It would cost a small fortune to feed all these thousands of hungry people.”

“How many loaves of bread do you have?” he asked. **“Go and see.”** After they had looked around,⁸ they replied, “All we have are these five small loaves of bread and two dried fish. Do you really expect us to go buy food for all these people? There are nearly five thousand men here, *with women and children besides!*”

“Let me have them,” Jesus replied. Then he had everyone sit down on the grass as he took the five loaves and two fish.⁹ He told his disciples, **“Have them all sit down in groups of fifty each.”**

After everyone was seated, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, and gazing into the heavenly realm he gave thanks [to God]¹⁰ for the food. Then, in the presence of his disciples, he broke off pieces of bread and fish [to serve to the people],¹¹ and kept giving more to each disciple to give to the crowd. *It was multiplying before their eyes!* So everyone ate until they were filled.

[When everyone was satisfied, Jesus told his disciples, **“Now go back and gather up the pieces left over so that nothing will be wasted.”**]¹² The disciples gathered up the leftovers—it came to exactly twelve baskets full! [There were about five thousand men who were fed, in addition to many women and children!]¹³

[All the people were astounded as they saw with their own eyes the incredible miracle Jesus had performed! They began to say among themselves, “He really is the One—the true prophet we’ve been expecting!”

So Jesus, knowing that they were about to take him and make him their king by force, quickly left and went up the mountain-side alone.]¹⁴

7 Matt. 14:16. 8 Mk. 6:37–38. 9 Matt. 14:18. 10 Mk. 6:41.
11 Mk. 6:41. 12 Jn. 6:12. 13 Matt. 14:21. 14 Jn. 6:14–15.

JESUS WALKS ON WATER (Mk. 6:45–52)

After everyone had their meal, Jesus instructed his disciples to get back into the boat and go on ahead of him and sail to the other side to Bethsaida. So he dispersed the crowd, said good-bye to his disciples, then slipped away to pray on the mountain.

As night fell, the boat was in the middle of the lake [and headed across the lake to Capernaum],¹⁵ and Jesus was alone on land. The wind was against the disciples and he could see that they were straining at the oars, trying to make headway, [for their boat was tossed about by the high winds and heavy seas].¹⁶

When it was almost morning, [about four o'clock],¹⁷ Jesus came to them, walking on the surface of the water, and he started to pass by them. When they all saw him walking on the waves [the disciples panicked],¹⁸ they thought he was a ghost and screamed out in terror. But he said to them at once, “**Don’t yield to fear. Have courage. It’s really me—I Am!**”

[Then Jesus said, “**Be brave and don’t be afraid. I am here!**”

Peter shouted out, “Lord, if it’s really you, then have me join you on the water!”

“**Come and join me,**” Jesus replied.

So Peter stepped out onto the water and began to walk toward Jesus. But when he realized how high the waves were, he became frightened and started to sink. “Save me, Lord!” he cried out.

Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and lifted him up and said, “**What little faith you have! Why would you let doubt win?**”¹⁹

Then he came closer and climbed into the boat with them, [and the very moment they both stepped into the boat],²⁰ immediately the stormy wind became still. They were completely and utterly overwhelmed with astonishment because they failed to learn the lesson of the *miracle of the loaves*, and their hearts were unwilling to learn the lesson.

[Then all the disciples crouched down before him and worshiped Jesus. They said in adoration, “You are truly the Son of God!”]²¹

15 Jn. 6:17. 16 Matt. 14:24. 17 Matt. 14:25. 18 Jn. 6:19.
19 Matt. 14:27–31. 20 Matt. 14:32. 21 Matt. 14:33.

JESUS THE HEALER (Mk. 6:53–56)

They made landfall at Gennesaret and anchored there. The moment they got out of the boat, everyone recognized that it was Jesus, *the healer*! [They were quick to spread the news throughout the surrounding region that Jesus had come to them],²² telling the people, “Bring all the sick—even those too sick to walk and bring them on mats!” Wherever he went, in the countryside, villages, or towns, they placed the sick on mats in the streets or in public places and begged him, saying, “Just let us touch the tassel of your prayer shawl!” And all who touched him were instantly healed!

JESUS, THE LIVING BREAD (Jn. 6:22–59)

The next morning, the crowds were still on the opposite shore of the lake, near the place where they had eaten the bread he had multiplied after he had given thanks to God. Yet Jesus was nowhere to be found. They realized that only one boat had been there and that Jesus’ hadn’t boarded, and they concluded that his disciples had left him behind. So when the people saw on the shoreline a number of small boats from Tiberias and realized Jesus and the disciples weren’t there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum to search for him.

When they finally found him, they asked him, “Teacher, how did you get here?”

Jesus replied, “Let me make this very clear, you came looking for me because I fed you by a miracle, not because you believe in me. Why would you strive for food that is perishable and not be passionate to seek the food of eternal life, which never spoils? I, the Son of Man, am ready to give you what matters most, for God the Father has destined me for this purpose.”

They replied, “So what should we do if we want to do God’s work?”

Jesus answered, “The work you can do for God starts with believing in the One he has sent.”

²² Matt. 14:35.

They replied, “Show us a miracle so we can see it, and then we’ll believe in you. *Moses took care of our ancestors* who were fed by the miracle of manna every day in the desert, just like the Scripture says, ‘He fed them with bread from heaven.’ What sign will you perform for us?”

“The truth is,” Jesus said, “Moses didn’t give you the bread of heaven. It’s my Father who offers bread that comes as a dramatic sign from heaven. The bread of God is the One who came out of heaven to give his life to feed the world.”

“Then please, sir, give us this bread every day,” they replied.

Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life. Come every day to me and you will never be hungry. Believe in me and you will never be thirsty. Yet I’ve told you that even though you’ve seen me, you still don’t believe in me. But everyone my Father has given to me, they will come. And all who come to me, I will embrace and will never turn them away. And I have come out of heaven not for my own desires, but for the satisfaction of my Father who sent me. My Father who sent me has determined that I will not lose even one of those he has given to me, and I will raise them up in the last day. For the longing of my Father is that everyone who embraces the Son and believes in him will experience eternal life and I will raise them up in the last day!”

When the Jews who were hostile to Jesus heard him say, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” they immediately began to complain, “How can he say these things about himself? We know him, and we know his parents. How dare he say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

Jesus responded, “Stop your grumbling! The only way people come to me is by the Father who sent me—he pulls on their hearts to embrace me. And those who are drawn to me, I will certainly raise them up in the last day.”

Jesus continued, “It has been written by the prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God himself.’ If you are really listening to the Father and learning directly from him, you will come to me. For I am the only One who has come from the Father’s side, and I have seen the Father!

“I speak to you living truth: Unite your heart to me and believe—and you will experience eternal life! I am the true Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert and died. But standing here before you is the true Bread that comes out of heaven, and when you eat this Bread you will never die. I alone am this living Bread that has come to you from heaven. Eat this Bread and you will live forever. The living Bread I give you is my body, which I will offer as a sacrifice so that all may live.”

These words of Jesus sparked an angry outburst among the Jews. They protested, saying, “Does this man expect us to eat his body?”

Jesus replied to them, “Listen to this eternal truth: Unless you eat the body of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have eternal life. Eternal life comes to the one who eats my body and drinks my blood, and I will raise him up in the last day. For my body is real food for your spirit and my blood is real drink. The one who eats my body and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. The Father of life sent me, and he is my life. In the same way, the one who feeds upon me, I will become his life. I am not like the bread your ancestors ate and later died. I am the living Bread that comes from heaven. Eat this Bread and you will live forever!”

Jesus preached this sermon in the synagogue in Capernaum.

MANY DISCIPLES BECAME OFFENDED (JN. 6:60–68)

And when many of Jesus’ followers heard these things, it caused a stir. “That’s disgusting!” they said. “How could anybody accept it?”

Without anyone telling him, Jesus knew they were outraged and told them, “Are you offended over my teaching? What will you do when you see the Son of Man ascending *into the realm* from where he came?

“The Holy Spirit is the one who gives life, that which is of the natural realm is of no help. The words I speak to you are Spirit and life. But there are still some of you who won’t believe.” In

fact, Jesus already knew from the beginning who the skeptics were and who his traitor would be.

He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one embraces me unless the Father has given you to me.”

And so from that time on many of the disciples turned their backs on Jesus and refused to be associated with him. So Jesus said to his twelve, “And you—do you also want to leave?” Peter spoke up and said, “But Lord, where would we go? No one but you gives us the revelation of eternal life.”

Day 16

JESUS BREAKS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (Mk. 7:1–13)

One day, those known as the Pharisees and certain religious scholars came from Jerusalem and gathered around Jesus [and approached him with this question: “Why do your disciples ignore the traditions of our elders?”]¹ They were shocked to find that some of Jesus’ disciples ate bread without first observing the prescribed Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating their meal. (For the Pharisees, like all other Jews, will not eat without first performing a ritual of pouring water over their cupped hands to keep the tradition of the elders. Similarly, when returning from the marketplace, they ceremonially wash themselves before eating. They also observed many other traditions, such as ceremonially washing cups, pitchers, and kettles.)

So the Pharisees and religious scholars asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the age-old traditions passed down by our elders? They should first ceremonially wash their hands before eating.”

Jesus replied, [**“And why do you ignore the commandment of God because of your traditions? For didn’t God say, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Whoever abuses or insults his father or mother must be put to death?’**”

“But you teach that it’s permissible to say to your parents when they are in financial need, ‘Whatever gift you would have received from me I can keep for myself, since I dedicated it as an offering to God.’ This doesn’t honor your father or mother.

¹ Matt. 15:1–2.

And you have elevated your tradition above the words of God.]² You are frauds and hypocrites! How accurately did Isaiah prophesy about you phonies when he said:

‘These people honor me with their words
while their hearts run far away from me!
Their worship is nothing more than a charade!
For they continue to insist
that their man-made traditions
are equal to the instructions of God.’

“You abandon God’s commandments just to keep men’s rituals, such as ceremonially washing utensils, cups, and other things.”

Then he added, “How skillful you’ve become in rejecting God’s law in order to maintain your man-made set of rules. For example, Moses taught us:

‘Honor your father and your mother,’
and,
‘Whoever insults or mistreats his father or mother must be
put to death.’

“But your made-up rules allow a person to say to his parents, ‘I’ve decided to take the support you were counting on from me and make it my holy offering to God, and that will be your blessing instead.’ How convenient! The rules you teach exempt him from providing for his aged parents. Do you really think God will honor your traditions passed down to others, making up these rules that nullify God’s Word? And you’re doing many other things like that.”

JESUS EXPLAINS WHAT TRULY DEFILES (Mk. 7:14–23)

Then Jesus called the crowd together again, saying, “[Come, listen and open your heart to understand.]³ Hear my words, all of you, and take them to heart. What truly contaminates a person

² Matt. 15:3–6. ³ Matt. 15:10.

is not what he puts into his body, but what comes out [of his mouth].⁴ That's what makes a person defiled."

[Then his disciples approached him and said, "Don't you know that what you just said offended the Pharisees?"

Jesus replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father didn't plant is destined to be uprooted. Stay away from them, for they're nothing more than blind guides. Do you know what happens when a blind man pretends to guide another blind man? They both stumble into a ditch!"]⁵

When Jesus went back home and away from the crowd, his disciples *acknowledged that they didn't understand the meaning of the parable* and asked him to explain it. He answered them, "[Even after all that I've taught you, you still remain clueless?]⁶ Are you as dull as the rest? Don't you understand that you are not defiled by what you eat? For the food you swallow doesn't enter your heart, but goes into your stomach, only to pass out into the sewer." (This means all foods are clean.) He added, "[But what comes out of your mouth reveals the core of your heart.]"⁷ Words and deeds pollute a person, not food. Evil originates from inside a person. Coming out of a human heart are evil schemes, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, treachery, debauchery, jealousy, slander, arrogance, and recklessness. All these corrupt things emerge from within and constantly pollute a person. [Eating with unwashed hands doesn't defile anyone.]"⁸

JESUS AND A FOREIGN WOMAN (Mk. 7:24–30)

Jesus set out from there to go into the non-Jewish region of Tyre, [Lebanon].⁹ He intended to slip into a house unnoticed, but people found out that he was there. But when a woman whose daughter had a demon spirit heard he was there, she came and threw herself down at his feet. She was not Jewish, but a foreigner, born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia. She begged him repeatedly to cast the demon out of her daughter,

4 Matt. 15:11. 5 Matt. 15:12–14. 6 Matt. 15:16. 7 Matt. 15:18.

8 Matt. 15:20. 9 Matt. 15:21.

[screaming out to him, “Lord, Son of David, show mercy to me! My daughter is horribly afflicted by a demon that torments her.” But Jesus never answered her. So his disciples said to him, “Why do you ignore this woman who is crying out to us?”]¹⁰ Finally he said to her, **“First let my children be fed and satisfied, for it isn’t fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”**

She answered, “How true that is, Lord. But even puppies under the family table are allowed to eat the little children’s crumbs.”

Then Jesus said to her, **“[Dear woman, your faith is strong!]¹¹ That’s a good reply! Now, because you said this, you may go. [What you desire will be done for you.]¹² The demon has permanently left your daughter.”** [And at that very moment, her daughter was instantly set free from demonic torment.]¹³ When she returned home, she found her daughter resting quietly on the couch, completely set free from the demon!

JESUS HEALS A DEAF MAN (MK. 7:31–37)

After this, Jesus left the coastland of Tyre and came through Sidon on his way to Lake Galilee and over into regions of Syria [and climbed a hill nearby and sat down. Then huge crowds of people streamed up the hill, bringing with them the lame, blind, deformed, mute, and many others in need of healing. They laid them at Jesus’ feet and he healed them all.

And the crowds marveled with rapture and amazement, astounded over the things they were witnessing with their own eyes! The lame were walking, the mute were speaking, the crippled were made well, and the blind could see. *For three days* everyone celebrated the miracles as they exalted and praised the God of Israel!]¹⁴ Some people brought to him a deaf man with a severe speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hands on him and heal him.

So Jesus led him away from the crowd to a private spot. Then he stuck his fingers into the man’s ears and placed some of his saliva on the man’s tongue. Then he gazed into heaven, sighed

10 Matt. 15:22–23. 11 Matt. 15:28. 12 Matt. 15:28.

13 Matt. 15:28. 14 Matt. 15:29–31.

deeply, and spoke to the man's ears and tongue, "Ethpathakh," which is Aramaic for "Open up, now!"

At once the man's ears opened and he could hear perfectly, and his tongue was untied and he began to speak normally. Jesus ordered everyone to keep this miracle a secret, but the more he told them not to, the more the news spread! The people were absolutely beside themselves and astonished beyond measure. And they began to declare, "Everything he does is wonderful! He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

JESUS MULTIPLIES FOOD AGAIN (Mk. 8:1–10)

During those days, another massive crowd gathered to hear Jesus, and again, there was no food and the people were hungry. So Jesus called his disciples to come near him and said to them, "[I care deeply about all these people],¹⁵ my heart goes out to this crowd, for they've already been here with me for three days with nothing to eat. I'm concerned that if I send them home hungry, they'll be exhausted along the way and [they may be overcome by weakness on their journey home],¹⁶ for some of them have come a long, long way just to be with me."

His disciples replied, "But could anyone possibly get enough food to satisfy a crowd this size out here in this isolated place?"

He asked them, "How many loaves of flatbread have you got?"

"Seven," they replied, ["and a few small fish."] ¹⁷

Jesus instructed the crowd to sit down on the grass. After he took the seven loaves, he gave thanks to God, broke them, and started handing them to his disciples. They kept distributing the bread until they had served the entire crowd.

They also had a few small fish, and after giving thanks for these, Jesus had his disciples serve them to the crowd. Everyone ate until they were satisfied. Then the disciples gathered up the broken pieces and filled seven large baskets with the leftovers. About four thousand people ate the food that had been multiplied, [and even more including the women and children]! ¹⁸ Then he dismissed the crowd.

15 Matt. 15:32. 16 Matt. 15:32. 17 Matt. 15:34. 18 Matt. 15:38.

Afterward, Jesus got into a boat and sailed to the vicinity of Dalmanutha.

THE PHARISEES DEMAND A SIGN (MK. 8:11–13)

As soon as Jesus landed, he was confronted by the Pharisees [and those of the Jewish sect known as the Sadducees],¹⁹ who argued with Jesus and tested him, [insisting that he prove to them that he was the Messiah].²⁰ They demanded that he give them a miraculous sign from heaven.

And with a deep sigh from his spirit, he said, “[You can read the signs of the weather, for you say, ‘Red sky at night, sailors delight.’ And, ‘Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning.’ You’re so adept at forecasting the weather by looking at the sky, but you’re absolutely clueless in reading the obvious signs of the times.]²¹ What drives this generation to clamor for a sign? Listen to the truth: there will absolutely be no sign given to this generation! [A wicked and wayward generation always asks for signs, but the only sign I provide for you will be the sign of Jonah the prophet.]²²” Then he turned and left them, got back into the boat, and crossed over to the opposite shore.

JESUS WARNS OF THE YEAST OF THE PHARISEES AND OF HEROD (MK. 8:14–21)

[Later, as Jesus and his disciples crossed over to the other side of Lake Galilee],²³ the disciples had forgotten to take bread with them, except for one loaf of flatbread. *And as they were sailing across the lake*, Jesus repeatedly warned them, “[Watch out],²⁴ be on your guard against the yeast inside of the Pharisees [and the Sadducees],²⁵ and the yeast inside of Herod!” But the disciples had no clue what Jesus was talking about, so they began to discuss it among themselves, saying, “Is he saying this because we forgot to bring bread?”

[Thinking Jesus was scolding them over not bringing bread, they whispered among themselves.]²⁶ Knowing what they were

19 Matt. 16:1. 20 Matt. 16:1. 21 Matt. 16:2–3. 22 Matt. 16:4.
23 Matt. 16:5. 24 Matt. 16:6. 25 Matt. 16:6. 26 Matt. 16:7.

thinking, Jesus said to them, “[You have such little faith!]²⁷ Why all this fussing over forgetting to bring bread? Do you still not see or understand what I say to you? Are your hearts still hard? [Are you so slow to understand? Have you forgotten the miracle of feeding the five thousand families and how each of you ended up with a basket full of fragments? And how seven loaves of bread fed four thousand families with baskets left over? Don’t you understand? I’m not talking about bread, but I’m warning you to avoid the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.]²⁸ You have good eyes, yet you still don’t see, and you have good ears, yet you still don’t hear, neither do you remember. When I multiplied the bread to feed more than five thousand people, how many baskets full of leftovers did you gather afterward?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

“And when I multiplied food to feed over four thousand, how many large baskets full of leftovers did you gather afterwards?”

“Seven,” they replied.

“Then how is it that you still don’t get it?”

[Then finally they realized he wasn’t talking about yeast found in bread, but the error of the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.]²⁹

Day 17

JESUS HEALS BLIND EYES (Mk. 8:22–26)

When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, begging him to touch him and heal him. So Jesus led him, as his sighted guide, outside the village. He placed his saliva on the man's eyes and covered them with his hands. Then he asked him, **“Now do you see anything?”**

“Yes,” he said. “My sight is coming back! I’m beginning to see people, but they look like trees—walking trees.”

Jesus put his hands over the man's eyes a second time and made him look up. The man opened his eyes wide and he could see everything perfectly. His eyesight was completely restored! Then Jesus sent him home with these instructions: **“Go home, but don’t tell anyone what happened, not even the people of your own village.”**

WHO IS JESUS? (Lk. 9:18–21)

One time, when Jesus was praying in a quiet place with his disciples nearby, he came over to them and asked, **“[What are the people saying about me, the Son of Man?]”**¹ Who do people think I am?”

They answered, “Some are convinced you’re the prophet John [the Baptizer]² who has returned. Others say you are Elijah [reincarnated, or Jeremiah],³ or perhaps one of the Jewish prophets brought back from the dead.”

Jesus asked them, **“But who do you believe that I am?”**

¹ Matt. 16:13. ² Mk. 8:28. ³ Matt. 16:14.

Peter said, “[We’re fully convinced that you are the Anointed One, the Son of the Living God, and we believe in you!”]⁴ You are the Anointed One, God’s Messiah!”

[Jesus replied, “You are favored and privileged Simeon, son of Jonah! For you didn’t discover this on your own, but my Father in heaven has supernaturally revealed it to you. I give you the name Peter, a stone. And this truth of who I am will be the bedrock foundation on which I will build my church—my legislative assembly, and the power of death will not be able to overpower it! I will give you the keys of heaven’s kingdom realm to forbid on earth that which is forbidden in heaven, and to release on earth that which is released in heaven.”]⁵

[Then Jesus *shocked them* with these words: “I have hand-picked you to be my twelve, knowing that one of you is the devil.” Jesus was referring to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, for he knew that Judas, one of his chosen disciples, was getting ready to betray him.]⁶

JESUS PROPHECIES HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (MATT. 16:21–28)

From then on Jesus began to clearly reveal to his disciples that he, [the Son of Man],⁷ was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer injustice from the elders, leading priests, and religious scholars. He also explained that he would be killed and three days later be raised to life again, [saying, “The Son of Man is destined to experience great suffering and face complete rejection by the Jewish leaders and religious hierarchy. He will be killed and raised back to life on the third day.”]⁸ [Jesus opened his heart and spoke freely with his disciples, explaining all these things to them.]⁹

Peter took him aside to correct him privately. He reprimanded Jesus over and over, saying to him, “God forbid, Master! Spare yourself. You must never let this happen to you!”

Jesus turned to Peter, [took him aside and rebuked him],¹⁰ and said, “Get out of my way, you Satan! You are an offense

4 Jn. 6:69. 5 Matt. 16:17–19. 6 Jn. 6:70–71. 7 Mk. 8:31.

8 Lk. 9:21–22. 9 Mk. 8:32. 10 Mk. 8:32.

to me, because your thoughts are only filled with man's viewpoints and not with the ways of God. [Your heart is not set on God's plan but man's!]¹¹

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If you truly want to follow me, you should at once completely reject and disown your own life. And you must be willing to share my cross and experience it as your own, as you continually surrender to my ways. For if you choose self-sacrifice and lose your lives for my glory, you will continually discover true life. But if you choose to keep your lives for yourselves, you will forfeit what you try to keep. For even if you were to gain all the wealth and power of this world with everything it could offer you—at the cost of your own life—what good would that be? And what could be more valuable to you than your own soul? It has been decreed that I, the Son of Man, will one day return with my messengers and in the splendor and majesty of my Father. And then I will reward each person according to what they have done. But I promise you, there are some standing here now who won't experience death until they have witnessed the coming of the Son of Man in the presence and the power of the kingdom realm of God!"

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW JESUS (Lk. 9:23–27)

[Jesus summoned the crowd, along with his disciples, and had them gather around.]¹² Jesus said to all of his followers, "If you truly desire to be my disciple, you must [at once]¹³ disown your life completely, embrace my 'cross' as your own, *and surrender to my ways*. [For if you let your life go for my sake and for the sake of the gospel],¹⁴ if you choose self-sacrifice, giving up your lives for my glory, you will embark on a discovery of more and more of true life. But if you choose to keep your lives for yourselves, you will lose what you try to keep. Even if you gained all the wealth and power of this world, everything it could offer you, yet lost your soul in the process, what good is that? [What could be more valuable to you than your own soul?]¹⁵ So why

11 Mk. 8:33. 12 Mk. 8:34. 13 Matt. 16:24. 14 Mk. 8:35.

15 Matt. 16:26.

then are you ashamed of being my disciple? Are you ashamed of the revelation-truth I give to you?

“[It has been decreed that]¹⁶ I, the Son of Man, will one day return in my radiant brightness, with the holy angels and in the splendor and majesty of my Father, and I will be ashamed of all who are ashamed of me. [And then I will reward each person according to what they have done.]¹⁷ But I promise you this: there are some of you standing here right now who will not die until you have witnessed [the coming of the Son of Man in]¹⁸ the presence and the power of God’s kingdom realm.”

THE TRUE GLORY OF JESUS (LK. 9:28–36)

Eight days later, Jesus took Peter, Jacob, and John and climbed a high mountain [to be alone]¹⁹ to pray. As he prayed, [Jesus’ appearance was dramatically altered],²⁰ [he was transfigured before their very eyes!]²¹ His face began to glow until it was a blinding glory streaming from him. [And his clothing became luminescent—dazzling like lightning.]²² His entire body was illuminated with a radiant glory. *His brightness* became so intense that it made his clothing blinding white, like multiple flashes of lightning.

All at once, two men appeared in glorious splendor: Moses and Elijah. They spoke with Jesus about his soon departure from this world and the things he was destined to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions had become very drowsy, but they became fully awake when they saw the glory and splendor of Jesus standing there and the two men with him.

As Moses and Elijah were about to return to heaven, Peter impetuously blurted out, “Master, this is amazing to see the three of you together! Why don’t we stay here and set up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?” [(For all of the disciples were in total fear, and Peter didn’t have a clue what to say.)]²³

16 Matt. 16:27. 17 Matt. 16:27. 18 Matt. 16:28. 19 Matt. 17:1.
20 Matt. 17:2. 21 Mk. 9:2. 22 Matt. 17:2. 23 Mk. 9:6.

While Peter was still speaking, a radiant cloud of glory [composed of light]²⁴ formed above them and overshadowed them. As the glory cloud enveloped them, they were struck with fear. Then the voice of God thundered from within the cloud, “This is my [most dearly loved]²⁵ Son, my Beloved One, [the constant focus of my delight].²⁶ Listen carefully to all he has to say.”

[The three disciples were dazed and terrified by this phenomenon, and they fell facedown to the ground. But Jesus walked over and touched them, saying, “**Get up and stop being afraid.**”]²⁷

When the thunderous voice faded away and the cloud disappeared, Jesus was standing there alone. Peter, Jacob, and John were speechless and awestruck. But they didn’t say a word to anyone about what they had seen.

[As they all hiked down the mountain together, Jesus ordered them, “**Don’t tell anyone of the divine appearance you just witnessed. Wait until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.**”]²⁸ [So they kept it to themselves, puzzled over what Jesus meant about rising from the dead.]²⁹

[Then they asked him, “Why do the religious scholars insist that Elijah must come before {the Anointed One comes},³⁰ the Messiah?”

He answered them, “**They’re right. Elijah must come first to put everything in order {and restore all things}.³¹ And what about all that is written about the Son of Man? It is true that he must endure many sufferings and be rejected. So Elijah has already appeared, just as it was prophesied, {yet they didn’t recognize him}³²and they did to him whatever they pleased. {And the Son of Man is destined to suffer the same abuse as what they did to him.}^{33”]}³⁴**

THE POWER OF FAITH (Lk. 9:37–45)

The next day, when they came down from the mountain [to the other nine disciples],³⁵ a massive crowd was waiting there to

24 Matt. 17:5. 25 Mk. 9:7. 26 Matt. 17:5. 27 Matt. 17:6–7.

28 Matt. 17:9. 29 Mk. 9:10. 30 Matt. 17:10. 31 Matt. 17:11.

32 Matt. 17:12. 33 Matt. 17:12. 34 Mk. 9:11–13. 35 Mk. 9:14.

meet them. [The crowd was astonished to see Jesus himself walking toward them, so they immediately ran to welcome him.

“What are you arguing about with the religious scholars?” he asked them.]³⁶

A man in the crowd [came and knelt before him and]³⁷ shouted desperately, “Please, Teacher, I beg of you, do something about my boy. [Lord, please show your tender mercy toward my son.]³⁸ [I brought him here to you, Jesus.]³⁹ He’s my only child. [He has epilepsy, and he suffers horribly from seizures. He often falls into the cooking fire or into the river.]⁴⁰ He’s possessed by an evil spirit that makes him scream out in torment and hardly ever leaves him alone. It throws him into convulsions and he foams at the mouth. And when it finally does leave him, he’s left with horrible bruises. I begged your disciples to drive it out of him, [hoping they could deliver him,]⁴¹ but they didn’t have enough power to do it.”

Jesus responded, **“You are an unbelieving people with no faith! [Can’t you see how wayward and wrong this generation is?]⁴² Your lives are twisted with lies that have turned you away from doing what is right. How much longer should I remain here, [and put up with your unbelief],⁴³ offering you hope?”** Then he said to the man, **“Bring your son to me.”**

[So they brought him to Jesus.]⁴⁴ As the boy approached, [he fell to the ground, rolling around and foaming at the mouth.]⁴⁵ The demon slammed him to the ground, throwing him into violent convulsions. [Jesus turned to the father and asked, **“How long has your son been tormented like this?”**

“Since childhood,” he replied. “It tries over and over to kill him by throwing him into fire or water. But please, if you’re able to do something, anything—have compassion on us and help us!”

Jesus said to him, **“What do you mean ‘if’? If you are able to believe, all things are possible to the believer.”**

36 Mk. 9:15–16. 37 Matt. 17:14. 38 Matt. 17:15. 39 Mk. 9:17.

40 Matt. 17:15. 41 Mk. 9:18. 42 Matt. 17:17. 43 Mk. 9:19.

44 Mk. 9:20. 45 Mk. 9:20. 26 Matt. 17:5.

When he heard this, the boy's father cried out with tears, saying, "I do believe, Lord; help my little faith!"

Now when Jesus saw that the crowd was quickly growing larger, he commanded the demon, saying, "**Deaf and mute spirit, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!**"⁴⁶ Jesus sternly commanded the demon to come out of the boy, and [the demon shrieked and threw the boy into terrible seizures and]⁴⁷ immediately it left. [As the boy lay there, looking like a corpse, everyone thought he was dead. But Jesus stooped down, gently took his hand, and raised him up to his feet, and he stood there completely set free!]⁴⁸ Jesus healed the boy of his injuries and returned him to his father, saying, "**Here is your son.**"

Everyone was awestruck. They were stunned seeing the power and majesty of God flow through Jesus.

While everyone marveled, trying to process what they had just witnessed, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, "**This is very important, so listen carefully and remember my words. The Son of Man is [destined]⁴⁹ to be betrayed and given over to the authority of men, [his enemies. They will kill him and in three days he will be resurrected.**" When the disciples heard these words they were devastated.]⁵⁰

But the disciples were unable to perceive what he was saying, for it was a veiled mystery to them, and they were too embarrassed to ask him to explain it.

[Later, {when Jesus arrived at the house},⁵¹ the disciples came to him privately and asked, "Why couldn't we cast out the demon?"

He told them, "**It was because of your lack of faith. I promise you, if you have faith inside of you no bigger than the size of a small mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move away from here and go over there,' and you will see it move! There is nothing you couldn't do! But this kind of {powerful}⁵² demon is cast out only through prayer and fasting.**"⁵³

46 Mk. 9:21–25. 47 Mk. 9:26. 48 Mk. 9:26–27. 49 Mk. 9:31.

50 Matt. 17:22–23. 51 Mk. 9:28. 52 Mk. 9:29. 53 Matt. 17:19–21.

Day 18

THE MIRACLE OF A COIN IN A FISH'S MOUTH (MATT. 17:24–27)

After they arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and asked, “Does your teacher pay the tax for the upkeep of the temple, like the rest of us?”

“Of course he does,” Peter answered.

When Peter walked into the house, and before he had a chance to speak, Jesus spoke up and said, “Peter, I have a question for you. Who pays tolls or taxes to a king? Is tax collected from the king's own children, or from his subjects?”

“From his subjects,” Peter answered.

Jesus replied, “That's right. The children get off free without paying taxes. But so that we don't offend them, go to the lake and throw out your hook, and the first fish that rises up will have a coin in its mouth. It will be the exact amount you need to pay the temple tax for both of us.”

WHO IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM REALM? (MATT. 18:1–10)

[Then they came to Capernaum.]¹ At that time [the disciples began to argue and became preoccupied over who would be the greatest one among them.]² The disciples came to ask Jesus, “Who is considered to be the greatest in heaven's kingdom realm?”

¹ Mk. 9:33. ² Lk. 9:46.

[Jesus sat down, called the twelve disciples to come around him, and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be content to be last and become a servant to all.”]³ Jesus called a little one to his side and said to them, “Learn this well: [If you tenderly care for this little child on my behalf, you are tenderly caring for me. And if you care for me, you are honoring my Father who sent me. For the one who is least important in your eyes is actually the most important one of all.]⁴ Unless you dramatically change your way of thinking and become teachable, and learn about heaven’s kingdom realm with the wide-eyed wonder of a child, you will never be able to enter in. Whoever continually humbles himself to become like this gentle child is the greatest one in heaven’s kingdom realm. And if you tenderly care for this little one on my behalf, you are tenderly caring for me. But if anyone abuses one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to have a heavy boulder tied around his neck and be hurled into the deepest sea *than to face the punishment he deserves!*

“Misery will come to the one who lures people away into sin. Troubles and obstacles to your faith are inevitable, but great devastation will come to the one guilty of causing others to leave the path of righteousness! [If your hand entices you to sin, let it go limp and useless!]⁵ If your hand clings to sin, cut it off and throw it away. If your foot continually steps onto sin’s path, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better for you to enter into heaven crippled and maimed than to have both hands and both feet and be thrown [into hell],⁶ into eternal fire. [This is where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out.]⁷ And if your eye is always focusing on sin, pluck it out and throw it away. For it is better for you to enter into heaven with one eye than to be thrown into hell fire with two. [This is where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out!]

“Everyone will pass through the fire and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is excellent for seasoning. But if salt becomes tasteless, how can its flavor ever be restored? Your

3 Mk. 9:35. 4 Lk. 9:48. 5 Mk. 9:43. 6 Mk. 9:43. 7 Mk. 9:46.

lives, like salt, are to season and preserve. *So don't lose your flavor, and preserve the peace in your union with one another.*⁸

“Be careful that you not corrupt one of these little ones. For I can assure you that in heaven each of their angelic guardians have instant access to my heavenly Father.”

A PARABLE OF THE LOST LAMB (MATT. 18:11–14)

“The Son of Man has come to give life to anyone who is lost. Think of it this way: If a man owns a hundred sheep and one lamb wanders away and is lost, won't he leave the ninety-nine grazing on the hillside and go out and thoroughly search for the one lost lamb? And if he finds his lost lamb, he rejoices over it, more than over the ninety-nine who are safe. Now you should understand that it is never the desire of your heavenly Father that a single one of these *humble believers* should be lost.”

RESTORING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS (MATT. 18:15–20)

“If your fellow believer sins against you, you must go to that one privately and attempt to resolve the matter. If he responds, your relationship is restored. But if his heart is closed to you, then go to him again, taking one or two others with you. You'll be fulfilling what the Scripture teaches when it says, ‘Every word may be verified by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ And if he refuses to listen, then share the issue with the entire church *in hopes of restoration*. If he still refuses to respond, disregarding the fellowship of his church family, you must disregard him as though he were an outsider, on the same level as an unrepentant sinner.

“Receive this truth: Whatever you forbid on earth will be considered to be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be considered to be released in heaven. Again, I give you an eternal truth: If two of you agree to ask God for something in a symphony of prayer, my heavenly Father will do it for you. For wherever two or three come together in honor of my name, I am right there with them!”

⁸ Mk. 9:48–50.

UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS (MATT. 18:21–35)

Later Peter approached Jesus and said, “How many times do I have to forgive my fellow believer who keeps offending me? Seven times?”

Jesus answered, “Not seven times, Peter, but seventy times seven times! The lessons of forgiveness in heaven’s kingdom realm can be illustrated like this:

“There once was a king who had servants who had borrowed money from the royal treasury. He decided to settle accounts with each of them. As he began the process, it came to his attention that one of his servants owed him one billion dollars. So he summoned the servant before him and said to him, ‘Pay me what you owe me.’ When his servant was unable to repay his debt, the king ordered that he be sold as a slave along with his wife and children and every possession they owned as payment toward his debt. The servant threw himself facedown at his master’s feet and begged for mercy. ‘Please be patient with me. Just give me more time and I will repay you all that I owe.’ Upon hearing his pleas, the king had compassion on his servant, and released him, and forgave his entire debt.

“No sooner had the servant left when he met one of his fellow servants, who owed him twenty thousand dollars. He seized him by the throat and began to choke him, saying, ‘You’d better pay me right now everything you owe me!’ His fellow servant threw himself facedown at his feet and begged, ‘Please be patient with me. If you’ll just give me time, I will repay you all that is owed.’ But the one who had his debt forgiven stubbornly refused to forgive what was owed him. He had his fellow servant thrown into prison and demanded he remain there until he repaid the debt in full.

“When his associates saw what was going on, they were outraged and went to the king and told him the whole story. The king said to him, ‘You scoundrel! Is this the way you respond to my mercy? Because you begged me, I forgave you the massive debt that you owed me. Why didn’t you show the same mercy to your fellow servant that I showed to you?’ In a fury of anger, the king turned him over to the prison guards to be tortured until all

his debt was repaid. In this same way, my heavenly Father will deal with any of you if you do not release forgiveness from your heart toward your fellow believer.”

THE NAME OF CHRIST (Mk. 9:38–42)

John spoke up and said, “Teacher, we noticed someone was using your name to cast out demons, so we tried to stop him because he wasn’t one of our group, [he doesn’t follow you like we do].”⁹

“Don’t stop him!” Jesus replied. “[You shouldn’t have hindered him, for anyone who is not against you is your friend.]”¹⁰ For the one who does miracles in the power of my name proves he is not my enemy. And whoever is not against us is for us. Listen to the truth that I speak: [Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is God’s messenger will share a prophet’s reward. And whoever welcomes a good and godly man because he follows me will also share in his reward.]¹¹ Whoever gives you a cup of water, [one of my humble disciples],¹² because you carry the name of Christ will never lose his reward, [I promise you, he will not go unrewarded].¹³ But if anyone abuses one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to have a heavy boulder tied around his neck and be hurled into the deepest sea *than to face the punishment he deserves!*”

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (Jn. 7:1–11)

After this Jesus traveled extensively throughout the province of Galilee, but he avoided the province of Judea, for he knew the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were plotting to have him killed. Now the annual Feast of Tabernacles was approaching. So Jesus’ brothers came to advise him, saying, “Why don’t you leave the countryside villages and go to Judea where the crowds are, so that your followers can see your miracles? No one can

9 Lk. 9:49. 10 Lk. 9:50. 11 Matt. 10:40–41. 12 Matt. 10:42.

13 Matt. 10:42.

see what you're doing here in the backwoods of Galilee. How do you expect to be successful and famous if you do all these things in secret? Now is your time—go to Jerusalem, come out of hiding, and show the world who you are!” His brothers were pushing him, even though they didn't yet believe in him as the Savior.

Jesus responded, “My time of being unveiled hasn't yet come, but any time is a suitable opportunity for you *to gain man's approval*. The world can't hate you, but it does me, for I am exposing their evil deeds. You can go ahead and celebrate the feast without me—my appointed time has not yet come.”

Jesus lingered in Galilee until his brothers had left for the feast in Jerusalem. Then later, Jesus took a back road and went into Jerusalem in secret. During the feast, the Jewish leaders kept looking for Jesus and asking around, “Where is he? Have you seen him?”

Day 19



JESUS' JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (Mk. 9:51–56)

Jesus passionately determined to leave for Jerusalem *and let nothing distract him from fulfilling his mission there*, for the time for him to be lifted up was drawing near. So he sent messengers ahead of him as envoys to a village of the Samaritans. But as they approached the village, they were turned away. They would not allow Jesus to enter, for he was on his way *to worship in Jerusalem*.

When the disciples Jacob and John realized what was happening, they came to Jesus and said, “Lord, if you wanted to, you could command fire to fall down from heaven just like Elijah did and destroy all these wicked people.”

Jesus rebuked them sharply, saying, “**Don’t you realize what comes from your hearts when you say that? For the Son of Man did not come to destroy life, but to bring life to the earth.**”

So they went to another village instead.

THE COST TO FOLLOW JESUS (Lk. 9:57–62)

[At the sight of large crowds gathering around him, Jesus gave orders to his disciples to get ready to sail back over to the other side of the lake.]¹ On their way, someone came up to Jesus and said, “I want to follow you wherever you go.”

Jesus replied, “**Yes, but remember this: even animals in the field have holes in the ground to sleep in, [foxes have dens],² and birds have their nests, but the Son of Man has [no true home in this world],³ no place here to lay down his head.**”

¹ Matt. 8:18. ² Matt. 8:20. ³ Matt. 8:20.

Jesus then turned to another and said, “Come be my disciple.”

He replied, “Someday I will, Lord, [but first I must take care of my aged father]⁴ to fulfill my duty as a good son and wait until he passes away [and bury him when he dies].⁵”

Jesus told him, “Don’t wait for your father’s burial. [Now is the time to follow me],⁶ let those who are already dead wait for death. But as for you, go and proclaim everywhere that God’s kingdom has arrived.”

Still another said to him, “Lord, I want to follow you too. But first let me go home and say good-bye to my entire family.”

Jesus responded, “Why do you keep looking backward to your past and have second thoughts about following me? When you turn back you are useless to God’s kingdom realm.”

MANY DIFFERENT OPINIONS ABOUT JESUS (JN. 7:12–36)

A controversy was brewing among the people, with so many differing opinions about Jesus. Some were saying, “He’s a good man!” While others weren’t convinced and insisted, saying, “He’s just a demagogue.” Yet no one was bold enough to speak out publicly on Jesus’ behalf for fear of the Jewish leaders.

Not until the feast was half over did Jesus finally appear in the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jewish leaders were astonished by what he taught and said, “How did this man acquire such knowledge? He wasn’t trained in our schools—who taught him?”

So Jesus responded, “I don’t teach my own ideas, but the truth revealed to me by the One who sent me. If you want to test my teachings and discover where I received them, first be passionate to do God’s will, and then you will be able to discern if my teachings are from the heart of God or from my own opinions. Charlatans praise themselves and seek honor from men, but my Father sent me to speak truth on his behalf. And I have no false motive, because I seek only the glory of God. Moses has given you the law, but not one of you is faithful to keep it. So if you are all law-breakers, why then would you seek to kill me?”

4 Matt. 8:21. 5 Matt. 8:21. 6 Matt. 8:22.

Then some in the crowd shouted out, “You must be out of your mind! Who’s trying to kill you?”

Jesus replied, “I only had to do one miracle, and all of you marvel! Yet isn’t it true that Moses and your forefathers ordered you to circumcise your sons even if the eighth day fell on a Sabbath? So if you cut away part of a man on the Sabbath and that doesn’t break the Jewish law, why then would you be indignant with me for making a man completely healed on the Sabbath? Stop judging based on the superficial. First you must *embrace the standards of mercy and truth.*”

Then some of the residents of Jerusalem spoke up and said, “Isn’t this the one they’re trying to kill? So why is he here speaking publicly and not one of the Jewish leaders is doing anything about it? Are they starting to think that he’s the Anointed One? But how could he be, since we know this man is from Galilee, but no one will know where the true Messiah comes from, he’ll just appear out of nowhere.”

Knowing all of this, Jesus one day preached *boldly* in the temple courts, “So, you think you know me and where I come from? But you don’t know the One who sent me—the Father who is always faithful. I have not come simply on my own initiative. The Father has sent me here, and I know all about him, for I have come from his presence.”

His words caused many to want to arrest him, but no man was able to lay a hand on him, for it wasn’t yet his appointed time. And there were many people who thought he might be the Messiah. They said, “After all, when the Anointed One appears, could he possibly do more signs and wonders than this man has done?”

So when the Pharisees heard these rumors circulating about Jesus, they went with the leading priests and the temple guards to arrest him.

Then Jesus said, “My days to be with you are numbered. Then I will return to the One who sent me. And you will search for me and not be able to find me. For where I am, you cannot come.”

When the Jewish leaders heard this, they discussed among themselves, “Where could he possibly go that we won’t be able to find him? Is he going to minister in a different land where our people live scattered among the nations? Is he going to teach those who are not Jews? What did he really mean by his statement, ‘You will search for me and won’t be able to find me. And where I am you can’t come’?”

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER (JN. 7:37–39)

Then on the most important day of the feast, the last day, Jesus stood and shouted out to the crowds—“**All you thirsty ones, come to me! Come to me and drink! Believe in me so that rivers of living water will burst out from within you, flowing from your innermost being, just like the Scripture says!**”

Jesus was prophesying about the Holy Spirit that believers were being prepared to receive. But the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, because Jesus had not yet been unveiled in his full splendor.

DIVIDED OPINIONS ABOUT JESUS (JN. 7:40–44)

When the crowd heard Jesus’ words, some said, “This man really is a prophet!” Others said, “He’s the Messiah!” But others said, “How could he be the Anointed One since he’s from Galilee? Don’t the Scriptures say that he will be one of David’s descendants and be born in Bethlehem, the city of David?” So the crowd was divided over Jesus, some wanted him arrested but no one dared to lay a hand on him.

THE UNBELIEF OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS (JN. 7:45–53)

So when the temple guards returned to the Pharisees and the leading priests without Jesus, they were questioned, “Where is he? Why didn’t you bring that man back with you?”

They answered, “You don’t understand—he speaks amazing things like no one else has ever spoken!”

The religious leaders mocked, “Oh, so now you also have been led astray by him? Do you see even one of us, your

leaders, following him? This ignorant rabble swarms around him because none of them know anything about the Law! They're all cursed!"

Just then, Nicodemus, who had secretly spent time with Jesus, spoke up, for he was a respected voice among them. He cautioned them, saying, "Does our law decide a man's guilt before we first hear him and allow him to defend himself?"

They argued, "Oh, so now you're an advocate for this Galilean! Search the Scriptures, Nicodemus, and you'll see that there's no mention of a prophet coming out of Galilee!" *So with that their debate ended*, and they each went their own way.

AN ADULTERESS FORGIVEN (JN. 8:1–11)

Jesus walked up the Mount of Olives near the city *where he spent the night*. Then at dawn Jesus appeared in the temple courts again, and soon all the people gathered around to listen to his words, so he sat down and taught them. Then in the middle of his teaching, the religious scholars and the Pharisees broke through the crowd and brought a woman who had been caught in the act of committing adultery and made her stand *in the middle* of everyone.

Then they said to Jesus, "Teacher, we caught this woman in the very act of adultery. Doesn't Moses' law command us to stone to death a woman like this? Tell us, what do you say we should do with her?" They were only testing Jesus because they hoped to trap him with his own words and accuse him of *breaking the laws of Moses*.

But Jesus didn't answer them. Instead he simply bent down and wrote in the dust with his finger. Angry, they kept insisting that he answer their question, so Jesus stood up and looked at them and said, "**Let's have the man who has never had a sinful desire throw the first stone at her.**" And then he bent over again and wrote some more words in the dust.

Upon hearing that, her accusers slowly left the crowd one at a time, beginning with the oldest to the youngest, with a convicted conscience. Until finally, Jesus was left alone with the woman still standing there in front of him. So he stood back up

and said to her, “Dear woman, where are your accusers? Is there no one here to condemn you?”

Looking around, she replied, “I see no one, Lord.”

Jesus said, “Then I certainly don’t condemn you either. Go, and from now on, be free from a life of sin.”

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (JN. 8:12–20)

Then Jesus said, “I am light to the world and those who embrace me will experience life-giving light, and they will never walk in darkness.”

The Pharisees were immediately offended and said, “You’re just boasting about yourself! Since we only have your word on this, it makes your testimony invalid!”

Jesus responded, “Just because I am the one making these claims doesn’t mean they’re invalid. *For I absolutely know who I am*, where I’ve come from, and where I’m going. But you Pharisees have no idea about what I’m saying. For you’ve set yourselves up as judges of others based on outward appearances, but I certainly never judge others in that way. For I discern the truth. And I am not alone in my judgments, for my Father and I have the same understanding in all things, and he has sent me to you.

“Isn’t it written in the law of Moses that the testimony of two men is trustworthy? Then what I say about who I am is true, for I am not alone in my testimony—my Father is the other witness, and we testify together of the truth.”

Then they asked, “Just who is this ‘Father’ of yours? Where is he?”

Jesus answered, “You wouldn’t ask that question if you knew who I am, or my Father. For if you knew me, you would recognize my Father too.” (Jesus taught all these things while standing in the treasure room of the temple. And no one dared to arrest him, for it wasn’t yet his time to surrender to men.)

Day 20

“I AM NOT FROM THIS WORLD” (JN. 8:21–30)

One day Jesus said again, “I am about to leave you. You will want to find me, but you will still die in your sins. You won’t be able to come where I am going.”

This so confused the Jewish leaders that they began to say, “Is he planning to commit suicide? What’s he talking about—‘You won’t be able to come where I am going’?”

Jesus spoke up and said, “You are all from the earth; I am from above. I am not from this world like you are. That’s why I’ve told you that you will all die in your sins if you fail to believe that I AM who I AM.”

So they asked him plainly, “Who are you?”

“I am the One I’ve always claimed to be.” Jesus replied. “And I still have many more things to pronounce in judgment about you. For I will testify to the world of the truths that I have heard from my Father, and the Father who sent me is trustworthy.” (Even after all of this, they still didn’t realize that he was speaking about his heavenly Father.)

“You will know me as ‘I AM’ after you have lifted me up from the earth as the Son of Man. Then you will realize that I do nothing on my own initiative, but I only speak the truth that the Father has revealed to me. I am his messenger and he is always with me, for I only do that which delights his heart.” These words caused many *respected Jews* to believe in him.

THE SON GIVES FREEDOM (JN. 8:31–59)

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, “When you continue to embrace all that I teach, you prove that you are my true followers. For if you embrace the truth, it will release true freedom into your lives.”

Surprised by this, they said, “But we’re the descendants of Abraham and we’re already free. We’ve never been in bondage to anyone. How could you say that we will be released into more freedom?”

“I speak eternal truth,” Jesus said. “When you sin you are not free. You’ve become a slave in bondage to your sin. And slaves have no permanent standing in a family, like a son does, for a son is a part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free from sin, then become a true son and be unquestionably free! Even though you are descendants of Abraham, you desire to kill me because the message I bring has not found a home in your hearts. Yet the truths I speak I’ve seen and received in my Father’s presence. But you are doing what you’ve learned from your father!”

“What do mean?” they replied. “Abraham is our father!”

Jesus said, “If you are really Abraham’s sons, then you would follow in the steps of Abraham. I’ve only told you the truth that I’ve heard in my Father’s presence, but now you are wanting me dead—is that how Abraham acted? No, you people are doing what your father has taught you!”

Indignant, they responded, “What are you talking about? We only have one Father, God himself! We’re not illegitimate!”

Jesus said, “Then if God were really your father, you would love me, for I’ve come from his presence. I didn’t come here on my own, but God sent me to you. Why don’t you understand what I say? You don’t understand because your hearts are closed to my message!

“You are the offspring of your father, the devil, and you serve your father very well, passionately carrying out his desires. He’s been a murderer right from the start! He never stood with the truth, for he’s full of nothing but lies—lying is his native tongue. He is a master of deception and the father of lies! But I am the

true Prince who speaks nothing but the truth, yet you refuse to believe and you want nothing to do with me. Can you name one sin that I've committed? Then if I am telling you only the truth, why don't you believe me? If you really knew God, you would listen, receive, and respond with faith to his words. But since you don't listen and respond to what he says, it proves you don't belong to him and you have no room for him in your hearts."

"See! We were right all along!" some of the Jewish leaders shouted. "You're nothing but a demon-possessed Samaritan!"

Jesus replied, "It is not a demon that would cause me to honor my Father. I live my life for his honor, even though you insult me for it. I never have a need to seek my own glory, for the Father will do that for me, and he will judge those who do not. I speak to you this eternal truth: whoever cherishes my words and keeps them will never experience death."

This prompted the Jewish leaders to say, "Now we know for sure that you're demon possessed! You just said that those who keep watch over your words will never experience death, but Abraham and all the prophets have died! Do you think you're greater than our father Abraham and all the prophets? You are so delusional about yourself that you make yourself greater than you are!"

Jesus answered them, "If I were to tell you how great I am, it would mean nothing. But my Father is the One who will prove it and will glorify me. Isn't he the One you claim is your God? But in reality, you've never embraced him as your own. I know him, and I would be a liar, like yourselves, if I told you anything less than that. I have fully embraced him, and I treasure his every word. And not only that, Abraham, your ancestor, was overjoyed when he received the revelation of my coming to earth. Yes, he foresaw me coming and was filled with delight!"

But many of the Jewish leaders doubted him and said, "What are you talking about? You're not even fifty years old yet. You talk like you've seen Abraham!"

Jesus said to them, "I give you this eternal truth: I have existed long before Abraham was born, for I AM!"

When they heard this, they picked up rocks to stone him, but Jesus concealed himself as he passed through the crowd and went away from there.

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND (JN. 9:1–41)

Afterward, as Jesus walked down the street, he noticed a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused this guy’s blindness, his own, or the sin of his parents?”

Jesus answered, “Neither. It happened to him so that you could watch him experience God’s miracle. While I am with you, it is daytime and we must do the works of God who sent me while the light shines. For there is coming a dark night when no one will be able to work. As long as I am with you my life is the light that pierces the world’s darkness.”

Then Jesus spat on the ground and made some clay with his saliva. Then he anointed the blind man’s eyes with the clay. And he said to the blind man, “Now go and wash the clay from your eyes in the ritual pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed his face and as he came back, he could see for the first time in his life!

This caused quite a stir among the people of the neighborhood, for they noticed the blind beggar was now seeing! They began to say to one another, “Isn’t this the blind man who once sat and begged?” Some said, “No, it can’t be him!” Others said, “But it looks just like him—it has to be him!” All the while the man kept insisting, “I’m the man who was blind!”

Finally, they asked him, “What has happened to you?”

He replied, “I met the man named Jesus! He rubbed clay on my eyes and said, ‘Go to the pool named Siloam and wash.’ So I went and while I was washing the clay from my eyes I began to see *for the very first time ever!*”

So the people of the neighborhood inquired, “Where is this man?”

“I have no idea,” the man replied.

So the people marched him over to the Pharisees to speak with them. They were concerned because the miracle Jesus performed by making clay with his saliva and anointing the man’s eyes happened on a Sabbath day, a day that no one was allowed to “work.”

Then the Pharisees asked the man, “How did you have your sight restored?”

He replied, “A man anointed my eyes with clay, then I washed, and now I can see for the first time in my life!”

Then an argument broke out among the Pharisees over the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath. Some said, “This man who performed this healing is clearly not from God! He doesn’t even observe the Sabbath!” Others said, “If Jesus is just an ordinary sinner, how could he perform a miracle like that?”

This prompted them to turn on the man healed of blindness, putting him on the spot in front of them all, demanding an answer. They asked, “Who do you say he is—this man who opened your blind eyes?”

“He’s a prophet of God!” the man replied.

Still refusing to believe that the man had been healed and was truly blind from birth, the Jewish leaders called for the man’s parents to be brought to them.

So they asked his parents, “Is this your son?”

“Yes,” they answered.

“Was he really born blind?”

“Yes, he was,” they replied.

So they pressed his parents to answer, “Then how is it that he’s now seeing?”

“We have no idea,” they answered. “We don’t know what happened to our son. Ask him, he’s a mature adult. He can speak for himself.” (Now the parents were obviously intimidated by the Jewish religious leaders, for they had already announced to the people that if anyone publicly confessed Jesus as the Messiah, they would be excommunicated. That’s why they told them, “Ask him, he’s a mature adult. He can speak for himself.”)

So once again they summoned the man who was healed of blindness and said to him, “Swear to God to tell us the truth! We know the man who healed you is a sinful man! Do you agree?”

The healed man replied, “I have no idea what kind of man he is. All I know is that I was blind and now I can see for the first time in my life!”

“But what did he do to you?” they asked. “How did he heal you?”

The man responded, “I told you once and you didn’t listen to me. Why do you make me repeat it? Are you wanting to be his followers too?”

This angered the Jewish leaders. They heaped insults on him, “We can tell you are one of his followers—now we know it! We are true followers of Moses, for we know that God spoke to Moses directly. But as for this one, we don’t know where he’s coming from!”

“Well, what a surprise this is!” the man said. “You don’t even know where he comes from, but he healed my eyes and now I can see! We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but only to godly people who do his will. Yet who has ever heard of a man born blind that was healed and given his eyesight for the very first time? I tell you, if this man isn’t from God, he wouldn’t be able to heal me like he has!”

Some of the Jewish leaders were enraged and said, “Just who do you think you are to lecture us! You were born a blind, filthy sinner!” So they threw the man out in the street.

When Jesus learned they had thrown him out, he went to find him and said to him, “**Do you believe in the Son of God?**”

The man whose blind eyes were healed answered, “Who is he, Master? Tell me so that I can place all my faith in him.”

Jesus replied, “**You’re looking right at him. He’s speaking with you. It’s me, the one in front of you now.**”

Then the man threw himself at his feet and worshiped Jesus and said, “Lord, I believe in you!”

And Jesus said, “**I have come to judge those who think they see and make them blind. And for those who are blind, I have come to make them see.**”

Some of the Pharisees were standing nearby and overheard these words. They interrupted Jesus and said, “You mean to tell us that we are blind?”

Jesus told them, “**If you would acknowledge your blindness, then your sin would be removed. But now that you claim to see, your sin remains with you!**”

Day 21

THE PARABLE OF THE KIND SHEPHERD (JN. 10:1–21)

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Listen to this eternal truth: The person who sneaks over the wall to enter into the sheep pen, rather than coming through the gate, reveals himself as a thief coming to steal. But the true Shepherd walks right up to the gate, and because the gatekeeper knows who he is, he opens the gate to let him in. And the sheep recognize the voice of the true Shepherd, for he calls his own by name and leads them out, for they belong to him. And when he has brought out all his sheep, he walks ahead of them and they will follow him, for they are familiar with his voice. But they will run away from strangers and never follow them because they know it’s the voice of a stranger.” Jesus told the Pharisees this parable even though they didn’t understand a word of what he meant.

So Jesus went over it again, “*I speak to you eternal truth: I am the Gate for the flock. All those who broke in before me are thieves who came to steal, but the sheep never listened to them. I am the Gateway. To enter through me is to experience life, freedom, and satisfaction. A thief has only one thing in mind—he wants to steal, slaughter, and destroy. But I have come to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow! I am the Good Shepherd who lays down my life as a sacrifice for the sheep. But the worker who serves only for wages is not a real shepherd. Because he has no heart for the sheep he will run away and abandon them when he sees the wolf coming. And then the wolf mauls the sheep, drags them off, and scatters them.*”

"I alone am the Good Shepherd, and I know those whose hearts are mine, for they recognize me and know me, just as my Father knows my heart and I know my Father's heart. I am ready to give my life for the sheep.

"And I have other sheep that I will gather which are not of this Jewish flock. And I, their shepherd, must lead them too, and they will follow me and listen to my voice. And I will join them all into one flock with one shepherd.

"The Father has an intense love for me because I freely give my own life—to raise it up again. I surrender my own life, and no one has the power to take my life from me. I have the authority to lay it down and the power to take it back again. This is the destiny my Father has set before me."

This teaching set off another heated controversy among the Jewish leaders. Many of them said, "This man is a demon-possessed lunatic! Why would anyone listen to a word he says?" But then there were others who weren't so sure: "His teaching is full of insight. These are not the ravings of a madman! How could a demonized man give sight to one born blind?"

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF RENEWAL (JN. 10:22–42)

The time came to observe the winter Feast of Renewal in Jerusalem. Jesus walked into the temple area under Solomon's covered walkway when the Jewish leaders encircled him and said, "How much longer will you keep us in suspense? Tell us the truth and clarify this for us once and for all. Are you really the Messiah, the Anointed One?"

Jesus answered them, "I have told you the truth already and you did not believe me. The proof of who I am is revealed by all the miracles that I do in the name of my Father. Yet, you stubbornly refuse to follow me, because you are not my sheep. As I've told you before: My own sheep will hear my voice and I know each one, and they will follow me. I give to them the gift of eternal life and they will never be lost and no one has the power to snatch them out of my hands. My Father, who has given them to me as his gift, is the mightiest of all, and

no one has the power to snatch them from my Father's care. The Father and I are one."

When they heard this, the Jewish leaders were so enraged that they picked up rocks to stone him to death. But Jesus said, "My Father has empowered me to work many miracles and acts of mercy among you. So which one of them do you want to stone me for?"

The Jewish leaders responded, "We're not stoning you for anything good you did—it's because of your blasphemy! You're just *a son of Adam*, but you've claimed to be God!"

Jesus answered, "Isn't it written in your Scriptures that God said, 'You are gods?' The Scriptures cannot be denied or found to be in error. So if those who have the message of the Scriptures are said to be 'gods,' then why would you accuse me of blasphemy? For I have been uniquely chosen by God and he is the one who sent me to you. How then could it be blasphemy for me to say, 'I am the Son of God!' If I'm not doing the beautiful works that my Father sent me to do, then don't believe me. But if you see me doing the beautiful works of God upon the earth, then you should at least believe the evidence of the miracles, even if you don't believe my words! Then you would come to experience me and be convinced that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

Once again they attempted to seize him, but he escaped *miraculously* from their clutches. Then Jesus went back to the place where John had baptized him at the crossing of the Jordan. Many came out to where he was and said about him, "Even though John didn't perform any miracles, everything he predicted about this man is true!" And many people became followers of Jesus at the Jordan and believed in him.

LABOR SHORTAGE (Lk. 10:1–12)

After this, the Lord Jesus formed thirty-five teams among the other disciples. Each team was two disciples, seventy in all, and he commissioned them to go ahead of him into every town he was about to visit. He released them with these instructions:

"The harvest is huge and ripe. But there are not enough harvesters to bring it all in. As you go, plead with the Owner of

the Harvest to drive out into his harvest fields many more workers. Now, off you go! I am sending you out even though you feel as vulnerable as lambs going into a pack of wolves. You won't need to take anything with you—trust in God alone. And don't get distracted from my purpose by anyone you might meet along the way.

“Once you enter a house, speak to the people there and say, ‘God’s blessing of peace be upon this house!’ If a lover of peace resides there, your peace will rest upon that household. But if you are rejected, your blessing of peace will come back upon you. Don’t feel the need to shift from one house to another, but stay put in one home during your time in that city. Eat and drink whatever they serve you. Receive their hospitality, for you are my harvester, and you deserve to be cared for.

“When you enter into a new town, and you have been welcomed by its people, follow these rules: Eat what is served you. Then heal the sick, and tell them all, ‘God’s kingdom realm has arrived and is now within your reach!’ But when you enter a city and they do not receive you, say to them publicly, ‘We wipe from our feet the very dust of your streets as a testimony before you! Understand this: God’s kingdom realm came within your reach and yet you have rejected God’s invitation!’”

Jesus continued, “Let me say it clearly: on the day of judgment the wicked people of Sodom will have a lesser degree of judgment than the city that rejects you, *for Sodom did not have the opportunity that was given to them.*”

JESUS CONDEMNS THE UNREPENTANT CITIES (Lk. 10:13–16)

“How disastrous it will be for the city of Korazin! How horrible for the city of Bethsaida! For if the powerful miracles that I performed in Korazin and Bethsaida had been done *in Tyre and Sidon*, they would have humbled themselves and repented, and turned from their sins. *Tyre and Sidon* will face a lesser degree of judgment than you will on the day of judgment. And Capernaum! Do you really think you’ll be highly exalted because

of the great things I have done there? No! You'll be brought down to the depths of hell because of your rejection of me!"

Jesus concluded his instructions to the seventy with these words: "Remember this: Whoever listens to your message is actually listening to me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me, and not only me but the one who sent me."

THE SEVENTY RETURN (Lk. 10:17-24)

When the seventy missionaries returned to Jesus, they were ecstatic with joy, telling him, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when we commanded them in your name!"

Jesus replied, "While you were ministering, I watched Satan topple until he fell suddenly from heaven like lightning to the ground. Now you understand that I have imparted to you all my authority to trample over his kingdom. You will trample upon every demon before you and overcome every power Satan possesses. Absolutely nothing will be able to harm you as you walk in this authority. However, your real source of joy isn't merely that these spirits submit to your authority, but that your names are written in the journals of heaven and that you belong to God's kingdom. This is the true source of your authority."

Then Jesus, overflowing with the Holy Spirit's anointing of joy, exclaimed, "Father, thank you, for you are Lord Supreme over heaven and earth! You have hidden the great revelation of this authority from those who are proud, those wise in their own eyes, and you have shared it with these who humbled themselves. Yes, Father. This is what pleases your heart and the very way you've chosen to extend your kingdom: to give to those who become like trusting children.

"Father, you have entrusted me with all that you are and all that you have. No one fully knows the Son except the Father. And no one fully knows the Father except the Son. But the Son is able to introduce and reveal the Father to anyone he chooses."

When Jesus was alone with the Twelve, he said to them, "You are very privileged to see and hear all these things. Many kings and prophets of old longed to see these days of miracles that you've been favored to see. They would have given

everything to hear the revelation you've been favored to hear. Yet they didn't get to see as much as a glimpse or hear even a whisper."

LOVING GOD, LOVING OTHERS (Lk. 10:25–37)

Just then a religious scholar stood before Jesus in order to test his doctrines. He posed this question: "Teacher, what requirement must I fulfill if I want to live forever in heaven?"

Jesus replied, "What does Moses teach us? What do you read in the Law?"

The religious scholar answered, "It states, 'You must love the Lord God with all your heart, all your passion, all your energy, and your every thought. And you must love your neighbor as well as you love yourself.'"

Jesus said, "That is correct. Now go and do exactly that and you will live."

Wanting to justify himself, he questioned Jesus further, saying, "What do you mean by 'my neighbor'?"

Jesus replied, "Listen and I will tell you. There was once a Jewish man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when bandits robbed him along the way. They beat him severely, stripped him naked, and left him half dead.

"Soon, a Jewish priest walking down the same road came upon the wounded man. Seeing him from a distance, the priest crossed to the other side of the road and walked right past him, not turning to help him one bit.

"Later, a religious man, a Levite, came walking down the same road and likewise crossed to the other side to pass by the wounded man without stopping to help him.

"Finally, another man, a Samaritan, came upon the bleeding man and was moved with tender compassion for him. He stooped down and gave him first aid, pouring olive oil on his wounds, disinfecting them with wine, and bandaging them to stop the bleeding. Lifting him up, he placed him on his own donkey and brought him to an inn. Then he took him from his donkey and carried him to a room for the night. The next morning he took his own money from his wallet and gave it to

the innkeeper with these words: 'Take care of him until I come back from my journey. If it costs more than this, I will repay you when I return.' So, now, tell me, which one of the three men who saw the wounded man proved to be the true neighbor?"

The religious scholar responded, "The one who demonstrated kindness and mercy."

Jesus said, "You must go and do the same as he."

Day 22

JESUS VISITS MARTHA AND MARY (LK. 10:38–42)

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their journey, they came to a village where a woman welcomed Jesus into her home. Her name was Martha and she had a sister named Mary. Mary sat down attentively before the Master, absorbing every revelation he shared. But Martha became exasperated by finishing the numerous household chores in preparation for her guests, so she interrupted Jesus and said, “Lord, don’t you think it’s unfair that my sister left me to do all the work by myself? You should tell her to get up and help me.”

The Lord answered her, “Martha, my beloved Martha. Why are you upset and troubled, pulled away by all these many distractions? Are they really that important? Mary has discovered the one thing most important by choosing to sit at my feet. She is undistracted, and I won’t take this privilege from her.”

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER (LK. 11:1–13)

One day, as Jesus was in prayer, one of his disciples came over to him as he finished and said, “Would you teach us a *model prayer* that we can pray, just like John did for his disciples?”

So Jesus taught them this prayer: “Our heavenly Father, may the glory of your name be the center on which our life turns. May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us. Manifest your kingdom on earth. And give us our needed bread for the coming day. Forgive our sins as we ourselves release forgiveness to those who have wronged us. And rescue us every time we face tribulations.”

Then Jesus gave this illustration: “Imagine what would happen if you were to go to one of your friends in the middle of the night and pound on his door and shout, ‘Please! Do you have some food you can spare? A friend just arrived at my house unexpectedly and I have nothing to serve him.’ But your friend says, ‘Why are you bothering me? The door’s locked and my family and I are all in bed. Do you expect me to get up and give you our food?’ But listen—because of your shameless impudence, even though it’s the middle of the night, your friend will get up out of his bed and give you all that you need. So it is with your prayers. Ask and you’ll receive. Seek and you’ll discover. Knock on heaven’s door, and it will one day open for you. Every persistent person will get what he asks for. Every persistent seeker will discover what he needs. And everyone who knocks persistently will one day find an open door.

“Let me ask you this: Do you know of any father who would give his son a snake on a plate when he asked for a serving of fish? Of course not! Do you know of any father who would give his daughter a spider when she had asked for an egg? Of course not! If imperfect parents know how to lovingly take care of their children and give them what they need, how much more will the perfect heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit’s fullness when his children ask him.”

JESUS RESPONDS TO CONTROVERSY (Lk. 11:14–28)

One day there was a crowd gathered around Jesus, [which prevented him from even eating a meal],¹ and among them was a man who was mute. Jesus drove out of the man the spirit that made him unable to speak. Once the demon left him, the mute man’s tongue was loosed and he was able to speak again. The stunned crowd saw it all and marveled in amazement over this miracle! [And they kept saying to one another, “Could this man be the Messiah?”]²

But there were some in the crowd who protested, saying, “[Satan has possessed him!]³ He casts out demons by the power

1 Mk. 3:20. 2 Matt. 12:23. 3 Mk. 3:22.

of Satan, the demon king.” Others were skeptical and tried to persuade Jesus to perform a spectacular display of power *to prove that he was the Messiah*.

Jesus, well aware of their every thoughts [and motives],⁴ said to them, “[Any kingdom that fights against itself will end up in ruins.]⁵ Every kingdom that is split against itself is doomed to fail and will eventually collapse. [How can Satan cast out Satan?]⁶ If it is true that Satan casts out his own demons through me, how could his kingdom remain intact? [If Satan casts out Satan, he is making war on himself, {he will not endure, and his end has come}.⁷ How then could his kingdom survive?]⁸ If Satan gives me the power to cast out his demons, who is it that gives your exorcists their power? Let them become your judges! Go and ask them and they will tell you, [for what they do proves you’re wrong in your accusations].⁹ Yet if I am casting out demons by God’s mighty power, [then the end of Satan’s kingdom has come],¹⁰ God’s kingdom realm is now released upon you—but you still reject it!

“[Who would dare enter the house of a mighty man and steal his property? First he must be overpowered and tied up by one who is stronger than he. Then his entire house can be plundered and every possession stolen.]¹¹ Satan’s belongings are undisturbed as he stands guard over his fortress kingdom, strong and fully armed with an arsenal of many weapons. But when one stronger than he comes to attack and overpower him, the stronger one will empty the arsenal in which he trusted. The conqueror will ransack his kingdom and distribute all the spoils of victory. *This is a war*, and whoever is not on my side is against me, and whoever does not gather the spoils with me will be forever scattered.

[Jesus said to them, “Listen. No one is able to break into a mighty man’s house and steal his property unless he first overpowers the mighty man and ties him up. Then his entire house can be plundered and his possessions taken. {*So join*

4 Matt. 12:25. 5 Matt. 12:25. 6 Mk. 3:23. 7 Mk. 3:26.

8 Matt. 12:26. 9 Matt. 12:27. 10 Matt. 12:28. 11 Matt. 12:29.

with me, for if you're not on my side you are against me. And if you refuse to help me gather the spoils, *you are making things worse.*}¹² I tell you this timeless truth: All sin will be forgiven, even all the blasphemies they speak. But there can never be forgiveness for the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, for he is guilty of an eternal sin! {If anyone speaks evil of me, the Son of Man, he can be forgiven; but if anyone contemptuously speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven, now or ever!}¹³ (This is because they said he was empowered by a demon spirit.)¹⁴

“When a demon is cast out of a person, it goes to wander in the waterless realm, searching for rest, [but never finds it].¹⁵ Finding no place to rest it says, ‘I will go back to the body of the one I left. [I’ll return to the house I moved out of,’ and so it goes back, only to find that the house is vacant, warm, and ready for it to move back in].¹⁶ When it returns, it finds the person like a house that has been swept clean and made tidy *but is empty*. Then it goes and enlists seven demons more evil than itself, and they all enter [to live there]¹⁷ and possess the person, leaving that one with a much worse fate than before. [Then the person’s condition becomes much worse than it was in the beginning. This describes what will also happen to the people of this evil generation.]¹⁸”

While he was saying all this, a woman shouted from the crowd, “God bless the one who gave you birth and nursed you as a child!”

“Yes,” said Jesus. “But God will bless all who listen to the word of God and carefully obey everything they hear.”

ONLY GOOD TREES BEAR GOOD FRUIT (MATT. 12:33–37)

“You must determine if a tree is good or rotten. You can recognize good trees by their delicious fruit. But if you find rotten fruit, you can be certain that the tree is rotten. The fruit defines

12 Matt. 12:30. 13 Matt. 12:32. 14 Mk. 3:27–30. 15 Matt. 12:43.

16 Matt. 12:44. 17 Matt. 12:45. 18 Matt. 12:45.

the tree. But you who are known as the Pharisees are rotten to the core! You've been poisoned by the nature of a venomous snake. How can your words be good and trustworthy if you are rotten within? For what has been stored up in your hearts will be heard in the overflow of your words!

"When virtue is stored within, the hearts of good and upright people will produce good fruit. But when evil is hidden within, those who are evil will produce evil fruit. You can be sure of this: when the day of judgment comes, everyone will be held accountable for every careless word he has spoken. Your very words will be used as evidence against you, and your words will declare you either innocent or guilty."

THE MIRACLE SIGN OF JONAH THE PROPHET (Lk. 11:29–32)

[Then a few Jewish scholars and Pharisees spoke up and said, "Teacher, why don't you perform a miraculous sign for us."]¹⁹

As the crowds swelled even more, Jesus went on to say, "How evil is this generation! For when you demand a mighty display of power simply to prove who I am, *you demonstrate your unbelief*. [Only evil people who are unfaithful to God would demand a sign.]²⁰ The only sign given you will be a repeat of the miracle of [the prophet]²¹ Jonah. For in the same way Jonah [was in the belly of the huge sea creature for three days and three nights]²² and became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man [will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights]²³ and will be a sign to this generation.

"The Queen of Sheba will rise up on the day of judgment to accuse and condemn this generation for its unbelief. She journeyed from a far and distant land just to listen to the wisdom of King Solomon. There is one greater than Solomon speaking with you today, *but you refuse to listen*. Yes, the people of Nineveh will also rise up on the day of judgment

19 Matt. 12:38. 20 Matt. 12:39. 21 Matt. 12:39. 22 Matt. 12:40.
23 Matt. 12:40.

to accuse and condemn this generation. For they all repented when they heard the preaching of Jonah, but you refuse to repent. Yet there is one greater than Jonah who is preaching to you today.”

REVELATION LIGHT (Lk. 11:33–36)

“No one would think of lighting a lamp and then hiding it in the basement where no one would benefit. A lamp belongs on a lampstand, where all who enter may see its light. The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light to enter into your being. When your heart is open, the light floods in. When your heart is hard and closed, the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. Open your heart and consider my words. Watch out that you do not mistake your opinions for revelation-light! If your spirit burns with light, fully illuminated with no trace of darkness, you will be a shining lamp, reflecting rays of truth by the way you live.”

Day 23

JESUS WARNS HYPOCRITES (Lk. 11:37–54)

After Jesus finished saying this, a Jewish religious leader, one of the “separated ones,” asked him to come for a meal at his home. When everyone had been seated at the table, the religious leader noticed that Jesus hadn’t performed the cleansing ritual before he began eating. He was shocked.

The Lord said, “You Pharisees are religiously strict to your customs and obsessed with the peripheral issues. You are like one who will wipe clean only the outside of a cup or bowl, *leaving the inside filthy*. You are foolish to ignore the greed and wickedness within you! Shouldn’t the one who cleans the outside also be concerned with cleaning the inside? If you free your heart of greed, showing compassion and true generosity to the poor, you have more than clean hands; you will be clean within.

“You Pharisees are hopeless frauds! For you are obsessed with peripheral issues, like paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs that grow in your gardens. These matters you should do. Yet when you unjustly cheat others, you ignore the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God. *Readjust your values and place first things first.*

“You Pharisees are hopeless frauds! For you love to be honored before men with your titles of respect, seeking public recognition as you aspire to become important among others.

“You Pharisees, what hopeless frauds! Your true character is hidden, like an unmarked grave that hides the corruption inside, defiling all who come in contact with you.”

Just then a specialist in interpreting religious law blurted out, “But Teacher, don’t you realize that your words insult me and those of my profession? You’re being rude to us all!”

Jesus responded, “Yes, and you are also hopeless frauds, you experts of the law! For you crush people beneath the burden of obeying impossible religious regulations, yet you would never even think of doing them yourselves. What hypocrites! What hopeless frauds! You build monuments to honor the prophets of old, yet it was your murdering ancestors who killed them. *The only prophet you’ll honor is a dead one!* In fact, by erecting monuments to the prophets they killed, you demonstrate your agreement with your murdering ancestors and bear witness to their deeds. You’re no better than they! That accounts for the wisdom of God, saying, ‘I will send to them apostles and prophets though some they will murder and others they will chase away.’

“This generation will be held accountable for every drop of blood shed by every murdered prophet from the beginning of time until now, from the blood of Abel, who was killed by his brother, to the blood of Zechariah, who was murdered in the middle of the temple court. Yes, the blood-guilt of all your ancestors will be laid before you in this generation.

“You are nothing but hopeless frauds, you experts of religion! You take away from others the key that opens the door to the house of knowledge. Not only do you lock the door and refuse to enter, you do your best to keep others from the truth.”

The religious leaders and experts of the law became enraged and began to furiously oppose him. They harassed Jesus all the way out the door, spewing out their hostility, arguing over everything he said—wanting nothing more than to find a reason to entrap him with his own words.

JESUS WARNS AGAINST HYPOCRISY (Lk. 12:1–12)

By now a crowd of many thousands had gathered around Jesus. So many people pushed to be near him, they began to trample on one another.

Jesus turned to his disciples and warned them, “Make sure you are not influenced by the hypocrisy and phoniness of the

religious leaders. It permeates everything they do and teach, for they are merely serving their own interests. Everything hidden and covered up will soon be exposed. For the facade is falling down, and nothing will be kept secret for long. Whatever you have spoken in private will be public knowledge, and what you have whispered secretly behind closed doors will be broadcast far and wide for all to hear.

“Listen, my beloved friends, don’t fear those who may want to take your life but nothing more. [Don’t be afraid or intimidated by others, for God will bring everything out into the open and every secret will be told. What I say to you in the dark, repeat in broad daylight, and what you hear in a whisper, announce it publicly. Don’t be in fear of those who can kill only the body but not your soul.]¹ It’s true that they may kill your body, but they have no power over your soul. The one you must fear is God, for he has both the power to take your life and the authority to cast your soul into hell. Yes, the only one you need to fear is God.

“What is the value of your soul to God? Could your worth be defined by an amount of money? [You can buy two sparrows for only a copper coin, yet not even one sparrow falls from its nest without the knowledge of your Father. Aren’t you worth much more to God than many sparrows?]² God doesn’t abandon or forget even the small sparrow he has made. How then could he forget or abandon you? What about the seemingly minor issues of your life? Do they matter to God? Of course they do! So you never need to worry, for you are more valuable to God than anything else in this world. [Don’t worry. For your Father cares deeply about even the smallest detail of your life.]³

“I can assure you of this: If you don’t hold back, but freely declare in public that I am the Son of Man, the Messiah, I will freely declare to all the angels of God that you are mine. [If you openly and publicly acknowledge me, I will freely and openly acknowledge you before my heavenly Father.]⁴ But if you

1 Matt. 10:26–28. 2 Matt. 10:29. 3 Matt. 10:30–31. 4 Matt. 10:32.

publicly pretend that you don't know me, I will deny you before the angels of God, [I will also deny you before my heavenly Father].⁵ If anyone speaks evil of me, the Son of Man, he can be forgiven. But if anyone scornfully speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven. And remember this: When people accuse you before everyone and forcefully drag you before the religious leaders and authorities, do not be troubled. Don't worry about defending yourself or be concerned about how to answer their accusations. Simply be confident and allow the Spirit of Wisdom access to your heart, and he will reveal in that very moment what you are to say to them."

JESUS CONDEMNS GREED (Lk. 12:13–21)

Just then someone spoke up from the crowd and said, "Master, you should tell my older brother that he has to divide the family inheritance and give me my fair share!"

Jesus answered, "My friend, you can't expect me to help you with this. It's not my business to settle arguments between you and your brother—that's yours to settle."

Speaking to the people, Jesus continued, "Be alert and guard your heart from greed and always wishing for what you don't have. For your life can never be measured by the amount of things you possess."

Jesus then gave them this illustration: "A wealthy land owner had a farm that produced bumper crops. In fact, it filled his barns to overflowing! He thought, 'What should I do now that every barn is full and I have nowhere else to store more? I know what I'll do! I'll tear down the barns and build one massive barn that will hold all my grain and goods. Then I can just sit back, surrounded with comfort and ease. I'll enjoy life with no worries at all.'

"God said to him, 'What a fool you are to trust in your riches and not in me. This very night the messengers of death are demanding to take your life. Then who will get all the wealth you have stored up for yourself?' This is what will happen to all those who fill up their lives with everything but God."

⁵ *Matt. 10:33.*

DON'T WORRY (Lk. 12:22–34)

Jesus taught his disciples, saying, “Listen to me. Never let anxiety enter your hearts. Never worry about any of your needs, such as food or clothing. For your life is infinitely more than just food or the clothing you wear. Take the carefree birds as your example. Do you ever see them worry? They don’t grow their own food or put it in a storehouse for later. Yet God takes care of every one of them, feeding each of them from his love and goodness. Isn’t your life more precious to God than a bird? *Be carefree in the care of God!*”

“Does worry add anything to your life? Can it add one more year, or even one day? So if worrying adds nothing, but actually subtracts from your life, why would you worry about God’s care of you?

“Think about the lilies. They grow and become beautiful, not because they work hard or strive to clothe themselves. Yet not even Solomon, wearing his kingly garments of splendor, could be compared to a field of lilies. If God can clothe the fields and meadows with grass and flowers, can’t he clothe you as well, O struggling one with so many doubts? I repeat it: Don’t let worry enter your life. Live above the anxious cares about your personal needs. People everywhere seem to worry about making a living, but your heavenly Father knows your every need and will take care of you. Each and every day he will supply your needs as you seek his kingdom passionately, above all else. So don’t ever be afraid, dearest friends! Your loving Father joyously gives you his kingdom realm with all its promises!

“So, now, go and sell what you have and give to those in need, making deposits in your account in heaven, an account that will never be taken from you. Your gifts will become a secure and unfailing treasure, deposited in heaven forever. Where you deposit your treasure, that is where your thoughts will turn to—and your heart will long to be there also.”

BE READY (Lk. 12:35–40)

“Be prepared for action at a moment’s notice. Be like the servants who anticipate their master’s return from a wedding celebration. They are ready to unlock and open the door for him at a moment’s notice. What great joy is ahead for the awakened ones who are waiting for the Master’s return! He himself will become their servant and wait on them at his table as he passes by. He may appear at midnight or even later, but what great joy for the awakened ones whenever he comes! Of course, if they knew ahead of time the hour of the master’s appearing, they would be alert, just as they would be ready if they knew ahead of time that a thief was coming to break into their house. So keep being alert and ready at all times. For I can promise you that the Son of Man will surprise you and will appear when you don’t expect him.”

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT (Lk. 12:41–48)

“Lord,” Peter asked, “does this apply only to the twelve of us, or is it for everyone else as well?”

The Lord said, “A trustworthy and thoughtful manager who understands the ways of his master will be given a ministry of responsibility in his master’s house, serving others exactly what they need at just the right time. And when the master returns, he will find that his servant has served him well. I can promise you, he will be given a great reward and will be placed as an overseer of everything the master owns.

“But what if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master delays his coming, and who knows when he will return?’ Because of the delay, the servant elevates himself and mistreats those in his master’s household. Instead of caring for the ones he was appointed to serve, he abuses the other servants, both men and women. He throws drunken parties for his friends and gives himself over to every pleasure. Let me tell you what will happen to him. His master will suddenly return at a time that shocks him, and he will remove the abusive, selfish servant from his position of trust. He will be severely punished and assigned a portion with the unbelievers.

“Every servant who knows full well what pleases his master, yet who does not make himself ready and refuses to put his master’s will to action, will be punished with many blows. But the servant who does not know *his master’s will* and unwittingly does what is wrong will be punished less severely. For those who have received a greater revelation from their master are required a greater obedience. And those who have been entrusted with great responsibility will be held more responsible to their master.”

Day 24



JESUS BRINGS FIRE TO THE EARTH (Lk. 12:49–53)

“I have come to set the earth on fire. And how I long for every heart to be already ablaze with this fiery passion for God! But first I must be immersed into the baptism of *God’s judgment*, and I am consumed with passion as I await its fulfillment. [Perhaps you think I’ve come to spread peace and calm over the earth—but my coming will bring conflict and division, not peace.]¹ Don’t think for a moment that I came to grant peace and harmony to everyone. No, for my coming will change everything and create hostility among you. From now on, even family members will be divided over me and will choose sides against one another. Fathers will be split off against sons and sons against fathers; mothers will be against daughters and daughters against mothers; mothers-in-law will be against brides and brides against mothers-in-law—all because of me.

[“Because of me,

A son will turn against his father,
a daughter her mother
and against her mother-in-law.

Within your own families you will find enemies.]²

1 Matt. 10:34. 2 Matt. 10:35–36.

DISCERNING THE TIME (Lk. 12:54–59)

Jesus then said to the crowds gathered around him, “When you see a cloud forming in the west, don’t you say, ‘A storm is brewing’? And then it arrives. And when you feel the south wind blowing, you say, ‘A heat wave is on the way.’ And so it happens. What hypocrites! You are such experts at forecasting the weather, but you are totally unwilling to understand *the spiritual significance* of the time you’re living in.

“You can’t even judge for yourselves what is good and right.

“When you are wrong, it is better that you agree with your adversary and settle your dispute before you have to go before a judge. If not, you may be dragged into court, and the judge may find you guilty and throw you into prison until you have paid off your fine entirely.”

THE NEED FOR TRUE REPENTANCE (Lk. 13:1–5)

Some of those present informed Jesus that Pilate had slaughtered some Galilean Jews while they were offering sacrifices at the temple, mixing their blood with the sacrifices they were offering.

Jesus turned and asked the crowd, “Do you believe that the slaughtered Galileans were the worst sinners of all the Galileans? No, they weren’t! So listen to me. Unless you all repent, you will perish as they did. Or what about the eighteen who perished when the tower of Siloam fell upon them? Do you really think that they were more guilty than all of the others in Jerusalem? No, they weren’t. But unless you repent, you will all eternally perish, just as they did.”

THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN TREE (Lk. 13:6–9)

Then Jesus told them this parable: “There was a man who planted a fig tree in his orchard. But when he came to gather fruit from his tree he found none, for it was barren and had no fruit. So he said to his gardener, ‘For the last three years I’ve come to gather figs from my tree but it remains fruitless. What a waste! Go ahead and cut it down!’

“But the gardener said, ‘Sir, we should leave it one more year. Let me fertilize and cultivate it, then let’s see if it will produce fruit. If it doesn’t bear fruit by next year, we’ll cut it down.’”

JESUS HEALS ON THE SABBATH DAY (Lk. 13:10–17)

One Sabbath day, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, he encountered a seriously handicapped woman. She was crippled and had been doubled over for eighteen years. Her condition was caused by a demonic spirit of bondage that had left her unable to stand up straight.

When Jesus saw her condition, he called her over and gently laid his hands on her. Then he said, “**Dear woman, you are free. I release you forever from this crippling spirit.**” Instantly she stood straight and tall and overflowed with glorious praise to God!

The Jewish leader who was in charge of the synagogue was infuriated over Jesus healing on the Sabbath day. “Six days you are to work,” he shouted angrily to the crowd. “Those are the days you should come here for healing, but not on the seventh day!”

The Lord said, “**You hopeless frauds! Don’t you care for your animals on the Sabbath day, untying your ox or donkey from the stall and leading it away to water? If you do this for your animals, what’s wrong with allowing this beloved daughter of Abraham, who has been bound by Satan for eighteen long years, to be untied and set free on a Sabbath day?**”

When they heard this, his critics were completely humiliated. But the crowds shouted with joy over the glorious things Jesus was doing among them.

PARABLES OF JESUS (Lk. 13:18–21)

Jesus taught them this parable: “**How can I describe God’s kingdom realm? Let me illustrate it this way. It is like the smallest of seeds that you would plant in a garden. And when it grows, it becomes a huge tree, with so many spreading branches that various birds make nests there.**”

Jesus taught them another parable: “**How can I describe God’s kingdom realm? Let me give you this illustration: It is like**

something as small as yeast that a woman kneads into a large amount of dough. It works unseen until it permeates the entire batch and rises high.”

THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM (LK. 13:22–30)

Jesus ministered in one town and village after another, teaching the people as he made his way toward Jerusalem. A bystander asked him, “Lord, will only a few have eternal life?”

Jesus said to the crowd, “There is a great cost for anyone to enter through the narrow doorway to God’s kingdom realm. I tell you, there will be many who will want to enter but won’t be able to. For once the head of the house has shut and locked the door, it will be too late. Even if you stand outside knocking, begging to enter, and saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us,’ he will say to you, ‘I don’t know who you are. *You are not a part of my family.*’

“Then you will reply, ‘But Lord, we dined with you and walked with you as you taught us.’ And he will reply, ‘Don’t you understand? I don’t know who you are, for you are not a part of my family. You cannot enter in. Now, go away from me! For you are all disloyal to me and do evil.’

“You will experience great weeping and great anguish when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with all the prophets of Israel, enjoying God’s kingdom realm while you yourselves are barred from entering. And you will see people streaming from the four corners of the earth, accepting the invitation to feast in God’s kingdom, *while you are kept outside looking in.* And take note of this: There are some who are despised and viewed as the least important now, but will one day be placed at the head of the line. And there are others who are viewed as ‘elite’ today who will become least important then.”

JESUS’ SORROW FOR JERUSALEM (LK. 13:31–35)

Just then some Jewish religious leaders came to Jesus to inform him that Herod was out to kill him and urged him to flee from that place. Jesus told them, “Go and tell that deceiver that I will continue to cast out demons and heal the sick today and tomorrow, but on the third day I will bring my work to perfection. For

everyone knows I am safe until I come to Jerusalem, for that is where all the prophets have been killed. O city of Jerusalem, you are the city that murders your prophets! You are the city that pelts to death with stones the very messengers who were sent to deliver you! So many times I have longed to gather your wayward children together around me, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings—but you were too stubborn to let me. And now it is too late, since your house will be left in ruins. You will not see me again until you are able to say, ‘We welcome the one who comes to us in the name of the Lord.’”

JESUS HEALS ON THE SABBATH (Lk. 14:1–6)

One day Jesus was on his way to dine with a prominent Jewish religious leader for a Sabbath meal. Everyone was watching him to see if he would heal anyone on the Sabbath. Just then, standing right in front of him was a man suffering with his limbs swollen with fluid.

Jesus asked the experts of the law and the Pharisees who were present, “Is it permitted within the law to heal a man on the Sabbath day? Is it right or wrong?” No one dared to answer. So Jesus turned to the sick man, took hold of him, and released healing to him, then sent him on his way.

Jesus said to them all, “If one of your children or one of your animals fell into a well, wouldn’t you do all you could to rescue them even if it was a Sabbath day?”

There was nothing they could say—all were silenced.

HUMILITY AND HOSPITALITY (Lk. 14:7–24)

When Jesus noticed how the guests for the meal were all vying for the seats of honor, he shared this story with the guests around the table:

“When you are invited to an important social function, don’t be quick to sit near the head of the table, choosing the seat of honor. What will happen when someone more distinguished than you arrives? The host will then bring him over to where you are sitting and ask for your seat, saying in front of all the guests, ‘You’re in the wrong place. Please give this person your seat.’

Disgraced, you will have to take whatever seat is left. Instead, when you're invited to a banquet, you should choose to sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes and sees you there, he may say, 'My friend, come with me and let me seat you in a better place.' Then, in front of all the other guests at the banquet, you will be honored and seated in the place of highest respect.

"Remember this: everyone with a lofty opinion of who he is and who seeks to raise himself up will be humbled before all. And everyone with a modest opinion of who he is and chooses to humble himself will be raised up before all."

Then Jesus turned to his host and said, "When you throw a banquet, don't just invite your friends, relatives, or rich neighbors—for it is likely they will return the favor. It is better to invite those who never get an invitation. Invite the poor to your banquet, along with the outcast, the handicapped, and the blind—those who could never repay you the favor. Then you will experience a great blessing in this life, and at the resurrection of the godly you will receive a full reward."

When they heard this, one of the dinner guests said to Jesus, "Someday God will have a kingdom feast, and how happy and privileged will be the ones who get to share in that joy!"

[As was his custom, Jesus continued to teach the people by using allegories.]³ Jesus replied with this parable:

"There was a man who invited many to join him in a great feast, [an extravagant wedding feast for his son].⁴ When the day for the feast arrived, the host instructed his servant to notify all the invited guests and tell them, 'Come, for everything is now ready for you! [The oxen and fattened cattle have been killed and everything is prepared, so come! Come to the wedding feast for my son and his bride!]'⁵ But one by one they all made excuses, [the invited guests were not impressed. One was preoccupied with his business; another went off to his farming enterprise.]⁶ One said, 'I can't come. I just bought some property and I'm obligated to go and look it over.' Another said, 'Please accept my regrets, for I just purchased five teams of oxen and I need

3 Matt. 22:1. 4 Matt. 22:2. 5 Matt. 22:4. 6 Matt. 22:5.

to make sure they can pull the plow.’ Another one said, ‘I can’t come because I just got married.’ [And the rest seized the king’s messengers and shamefully mistreated them, and even killed them. This infuriated the king! So he sent his soldiers to execute those murderers and had their city burned to the ground.]⁷

“The servant reported back to the host and told him of all their excuses. So the master became angry and said to his servant, ‘[The wedding feast is ready, yet those who had been invited to attend didn’t deserve the honor.]⁸ Go at once throughout the city, [into the streets and alleyways],⁹ and invite anyone you find—the poor, the blind, the disabled, the hurting, and the lonely—and invite them to my banquet [to come and enjoy the wedding feast in honor of my son].’¹⁰

“When the servant returned to his master, he said, ‘Sir, I have done what you’ve asked, but there’s still room for more.’

“So the master told him, ‘All right. Go out again, and this time bring them all back with you. Persuade the beggars on the streets, the outcasts, even the homeless. Urgently insist that they come in and enjoy the feast so that my house will be full.’

“I say to you all, the one who receives an invitation to feast with me and makes excuses will never enjoy my banquet.”

[“So the servants went out into the city streets and invited everyone to come to the wedding feast, good and bad alike, until the banquet hall was crammed with people! Now, when the king entered the banquet hall, he looked with glee over all his guests. But then he noticed a guest who was not wearing the wedding robe *provided for him*. So he said, ‘My friend, how is it that you’re here and you’re not wearing your wedding garment?’ But the man was speechless.

“Then the king turned to his servants and said, ‘Tie him up and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be great sorrow, with weeping and grinding of teeth.’ For everyone is invited to enter in, but few respond in excellence.”]¹¹

7 Matt. 22:6–7. 8 Matt. 22:8. 9 Matt. 22:9. 10 Matt. 22:9.

11 Matt. 22:10–14.

Day 25

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS (Lk. 14:25–34)

As massive crowds followed Jesus, he turned to them and said, “When you follow me as my disciple, you must put aside your father, your mother, your wife, your sisters, your brothers—yes, you will even seem as though you hate your own life. [Whoever loves father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not fit to be my disciple. And whoever comes to me must follow in my steps and be willing to share my cross and experience it as his own, or he cannot be considered to be my disciple. All who seek to live apart from me will lose it all. But those who let go of their lives for my sake and surrender it all to me will discover true life!]¹ This is the price you’ll pay to be considered one of my followers. And anyone who comes to me must be willing to share my cross and experience it as his own, or he cannot be considered to be my disciple. So don’t follow me without considering what it will cost you. For who would construct a house before first sitting down to estimate the cost to complete it? Otherwise he may lay the foundation and not be able to finish. The neighbors will ridicule him, saying, ‘Look at him! He started to build but couldn’t complete it!’

“Have you ever heard of a commander who goes out to war without first sitting down with strategic planning to determine the strength of his army to win the war against a stronger opponent? If he knows he doesn’t stand a chance of winning

¹ Matt. 10:37–38.

the war, the wise commander will send out delegates to ask for the terms of peace. Likewise, unless you surrender all to me, giving up all you possess, you cannot be one of my disciples.

“Salt is good for seasoning. But if salt were to lose its flavor, how could it ever be restored? It will never be useful again, not even fit for the soil or the manure pile! If you have ears opened by the Spirit, then hear the meaning of what I have said *and apply it to yourselves.*”

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST LAMB (LK. 15:1–7)

Many dishonest tax collectors and other notorious sinners often gathered around to listen as Jesus taught the people. This raised concerns with the Jewish religious leaders and experts of the law. Indignant, they grumbled and complained, saying, “Look at how this man associates with all these notorious sinners and welcomes them all to come to him!”

In response, Jesus gave them this illustration:

“There once was a shepherd with a hundred lambs, but one of his lambs wandered away and was lost. So the shepherd left the ninety-nine lambs out in the open field and searched in the wilderness for that one lost lamb. He didn’t stop until he finally found it. With exuberant joy he raised it up and placed it on his shoulders, carrying it back with cheerful delight! Returning home, he called all his friends and neighbors together and said, ‘Let’s have a party! Come and celebrate with me the return of my lost lamb. It wandered away, but I found it and brought it home.’”

Jesus continued, “In the same way, there will be a glorious celebration in heaven over the rescue of one lost sinner who repents, comes back home, and returns to the fold—more so than for all the righteous people who never strayed away.”

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN (LK. 15:8–10)

Jesus gave them another parable:

“There once was a woman who had ten valuable silver coins. When she lost one of them, she swept her entire house, diligently searching every corner of her house for that one lost coin. When she finally found it, she gathered all her friends and

neighbors for a celebration, telling them, ‘Come and celebrate with me! I had lost my precious silver coin, but now I’ve found it.’ That’s the way God responds every time one lost sinner repents and turns to him. He says to all his angels, ‘Let’s have a joyous celebration, for that one who was lost I have found!’”

THE LOVING FATHER (Lk. 15:11–32)

Then Jesus said, “Once there was a father with two sons. The younger son came to his father and said, ‘Father, don’t you think it’s time to give me the share of your estate that belongs to me?’ So the father went ahead and distributed among the two sons their inheritance. Shortly afterward, the younger son packed up all his belongings and traveled off to see the world. He journeyed to a far-off land where he soon wasted all he was given in a binge of extravagant and reckless living.

“With everything spent and nothing left, he grew hungry, for there was a severe famine in that land. So he begged a farmer in that country to hire him. The farmer hired him and sent him out to feed the pigs. The son was so famished, he was willing to even eat the slop given to the pigs, because no one would feed him a thing.

“Humiliated, the son finally realized what he was doing and he thought, ‘There are many workers at my father’s house who have all the food they want with plenty to spare. They lack nothing. Why am I here dying of hunger, feeding these pigs and eating their slop? I want to go back home to my father’s house, and I’ll say to him, “Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I’ll never be worthy to be called your son. Please, Father, just treat me like one of your employees.”’

“So the young son set off for home. From a long distance away, his father saw him coming, *dressed as a beggar*, and great compassion swelled up in his heart for his son who was returning home. So the father raced out to meet him. He swept him up in his arms, hugged him dearly, and kissed him over and over with tender love.

“Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be—’

“The father interrupted and said, ‘Son, you’re home now!’

“Turning to his servants, the father said, ‘Quick, bring me the best robe, my very own robe, and I will place it on his shoulders. Bring the ring, the seal of sonship, and I will put it on his finger. And bring out the best shoes you can find for my son. Let’s *prepare a great feast* and celebrate. For this beloved son of mine was once dead, but now he’s alive again. Once he was lost, but now he is found!’ And everyone celebrated with overflowing joy.

“Now, the older son was out working in the field when his brother returned, and as he approached the house he heard the music of celebration and dancing. So he called over one of the servants and asked, ‘What’s going on?’

“The servant replied, ‘It’s your younger brother. He’s returned home and your father is throwing a party to celebrate his homecoming.’

“The older son became angry and refused to go in and celebrate. So his father came out and pleaded with him, ‘Come and enjoy the feast with us!’

“The son said, ‘Father, listen! How many years have I been working like a slave for you, performing every duty you’ve asked as a faithful son? And I’ve never once disobeyed you. But you’ve never thrown a party for me because of my faithfulness. Never once have you even given me a goat that I could feast on and celebrate with my friends like he’s doing now. But look at this son of yours! He comes back after wasting your wealth on prostitutes and reckless living, and here you are throwing a great feast to celebrate—for him!’

“The father said, ‘My son, you are always with me by my side. Everything I have is yours to enjoy. It’s only right to celebrate like this and be overjoyed, because this brother of yours was once dead and gone, but now he is alive and back with us again. He was lost but now he is found!’”

THE DISHONEST MANAGER (Lk. 16:1–18)

Jesus taught his disciples using this story:

“There was once a very rich man who hired a manager to run his business and oversee all his wealth. But soon a rumor spread that the manager was wasting his master’s money. So the master called him in and said, ‘Is it true that you are mismanaging my estate? You need to provide me with a complete audit of everything you oversee for me. I’ve decided to dismiss you.’

“The manager thought, ‘Now what am I going to do? I’m finished here. I can’t hide what I’ve done, and I’m too proud to beg to get my job back. I have an idea that will secure my future. It will win me favor and secure friends who can take care of me and help me when I get fired!’

“So the dishonest manager hatched his scheme. He went to everyone who owed his master money, one by one, and he asked them, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ One debtor owed twenty thousand dollars, so he said to him, ‘Let me see your bill. Pay me now and we’ll settle for twenty percent less.’ The clever manager scratched out the original amount owed and reduced it by twenty percent. And to another who owed two hundred thousand dollars, he said, ‘Pay me now and we’ll reduce your bill by fifty percent.’ And the clever manager scratched out the original amount owed and reduced it by half.

“Even though his master was defrauded, when he found out about the shrewd way this manager had feathered his own nest, he congratulated the clever scoundrel for what he’d done to lay up for his future needs.”

Jesus continued, “Remember this: The sons of darkness are more shrewd than the sons of light in their interactions with others. It is important that you use the wealth of this world to demonstrate your friendship with God by winning friends and blessing others. Then, when this world fails and falls apart, your generosity will provide you with an eternal reward.

“The one who manages the little he has been given with faithfulness and integrity will be promoted and trusted with greater responsibilities. But those who cheat with the little they have been given will not be considered trustworthy to receive more. If

you have not handled the riches of this world with integrity, why should you be trusted with the eternal treasures of the spiritual world? And if you've not been proven faithful with what belongs to another, why should you be given wealth of your own? It is impossible for a person to serve two masters at the same time. You will be forced to love one and reject the other. One master will be despised and the other will have your loyal devotion. It is no different with God and the wealth of this world. You must enthusiastically love one and definitively reject the other."

Now, the Jewish religious leaders who were listening to Jesus were lovers of money. They laughed at what he said and mocked his teachings.

So Jesus addressed them directly. "You always want to look spiritual in the eyes of others, but you have forgotten the eyes of God, which see what is inside you. The very things that you approve of and applaud are the things God despises. The law of Moses and the revelation of the prophets have prepared you for the arrival of the kingdom realm announced by John. And now, when this wonderful news of God's kingdom realm is preached, people's hearts burn with extreme passion to press in and receive it. Heaven and earth will disintegrate before even the smallest detail of the word of God will fail or lose its power.

"It is wrong for you to divorce your wife so that you can marry another—that is adultery. And when you take that one you have lusted after as your wife, and contribute to the breakup of her marriage, you are once again guilty of adultery."

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (LK. 16:19–31)

Jesus continued. "There once was a very rich man who had the finest things imaginable, living every day enjoying his life of opulent luxury. *Outside the gate of his mansion* was a poor beggar named Lazarus. He lay there every day, covered with boils, and all the neighborhood dogs would come and lick his open sores. The only food he had to eat was the garbage that the rich man threw away.

"One day poor Lazarus died, and the angels of God came and escorted his spirit into paradise.

“The day came that the rich man also died. In hell he looked up from his torment and saw Abraham in the distance, and Lazarus the beggar was standing beside him in the glory. So the rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham! Father Abraham! Have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and come to cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames of fire!’

“But Abraham responded, ‘My friend, don’t you remember? While you were alive, you had all you desired, surrounded in luxury, while Lazarus had nothing. Now Lazarus is in the comforts of paradise and you are in agony. Besides, between us is a huge chasm that cannot be bridged, keeping anyone from crossing from one realm to the other, even if he wanted to.’

“So the rich man said, ‘Then let me ask you, Father Abraham, to please send Lazarus to my relatives. Tell him to witness to my five brothers and warn them not to end up where I am in this place of torment.’

“Abraham replied, ‘They’ve already had enough warning. They have the teachings of Moses and the prophets, and they must obey them.’

“‘But what if they’re not listening?’ the rich man added. ‘If someone from the dead were to go and warn them, they would surely repent.’

“Abraham said to him, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe even if someone was raised from the dead!’”

Day 26

FAITH AND FORGIVENESS (Lk. 17:1–10)

One day Jesus taught his disciples this: “Betrayals are inevitable, but great devastation will come to the one guilty of betraying others. It would be better for him to have a heavy boulder tied around his neck and be hurled into the deepest sea than to face the punishment of betraying one of my dear ones! So be alert to your brother’s condition, and if you see him going the wrong direction, cry out and correct him. If there is true repentance on his part, forgive him. No matter how many times in one day your brother sins against you and says, ‘I’m sorry; I am changing; forgive me,’ you need to forgive him each and every time.”

Upon hearing this, the apostles said to Jesus, “Lord, you must increase our measure of faith!”

Jesus responded, “If you have even the smallest measure of authentic faith, it would be powerful enough to say to this large tree, ‘My faith will pull you up by the roots and throw you into the sea,’ and it will respond to your faith and obey you.”

Jesus continued, “After a servant has finished his work in the field or with the livestock, he doesn’t immediately sit down to relax and eat. No, a true servant prepares the food for his master and makes sure his master is served his meal before he sits down to eat his own. Does the true servant expect to be thanked for doing what is required of him? So learn this lesson: After doing all that is commanded of you, simply say, ‘We are mere servants, undeserving of special praise, for we are just doing what is expected of us and fulfilling our duties.’”

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD (JN. 11:1–54)

In the village of Bethany there was a man named Lazarus, and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary was the one who would anoint Jesus' feet with costly perfume and dry his feet with her long hair. One day Lazarus became very sick to the point of death. So his sisters sent *a message* to Jesus, "Lord, our brother Lazarus, the one you love, is very sick. Please come!"

When he heard this, he said, "*This sickness will not end in death for Lazarus, but will bring glory and praise to God. This will reveal the greatness of the Son of God by what takes place.*"

Now even though Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, he remained where he was for two more days. Finally, on the third day, he said to his disciples, "*Come. It's time to go to Bethany.*"

"But Teacher," they said to him, "do you really want to go back there? It was just a short time ago the people of Judea were going to stone you!"

Jesus replied, "*Are there not twelve hours of daylight in every day? You can go through a day without the fear of stumbling when you walk in the One who gives light to the world. But you will stumble when the light is not in you, for you'll be walking in the dark.*"

Then Jesus added, "*Lazarus, our friend, has just fallen asleep. It's time that I go and awaken him.*"

When they heard this, the disciples replied, "Lord, if he has just fallen asleep, then he'll get better." Jesus was speaking about Lazarus' death, but the disciples presumed he was talking about natural sleep.

Then Jesus made it plain to them, "*Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I wasn't there, because now you have another opportunity to see who I am so that you will learn to trust in me. Come, let's go and see him.*"

So Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, remarked to the other disciples, "Let's go so that we can die with him."

Now when they arrived at Bethany, which was only about two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Many friends of Mary and Martha had come from the region to console them over the loss of

their brother. And when Martha heard that Jesus was approaching the village, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house.

Martha said to Jesus, “My Lord, if only you had come sooner, my brother wouldn’t have died. But I know that if you were to ask God for anything, he would do it for you.”

Jesus told her, **“Your brother will rise and live.”**

She replied, “Yes, I know he will rise with everyone else on resurrection day.”

“Martha,” Jesus said, **“You don’t have to wait until then. I am the Resurrection, and I am Life Eternal. Anyone who clings to me in faith, even though he dies, will live forever. And the one who lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

Then Martha replied, “Yes, Lord, I do! I’ve always believed that you are the Anointed One, the Son of God who has come into the world for us!” Then she left and hurried off to her sister, Mary, and called her aside from all the mourners and whispered to her, “The Master is here and he’s asking for you.”

So when Mary heard this, she quickly went off to find him, for Jesus was lingering outside the village at the same spot where Martha met him. Now when Mary’s friends who were comforting her noticed how quickly she ran out of the house, they followed her, assuming she was going to the tomb of her brother to mourn.

When Mary finally found Jesus outside the village, she fell at his feet in tears and said, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus looked at Mary and saw her weeping at his feet, and all her friends who were with her grieving, he shuddered with emotion and was deeply moved with tenderness and compassion. He said to them, **“Where did you bury him?”**

“Lord, come with us and we’ll show you,” they replied.

Then tears streamed down Jesus’ face.

Seeing Jesus weep caused many of the mourners to say, “Look how much he loved Lazarus.” Yet others said, “Isn’t this the One who opens blind eyes? Why didn’t he do something to keep Lazarus from dying?”

Then Jesus, with intense emotions, came to the tomb—a cave with a stone placed over its entrance. Jesus told them, “**Roll away the stone.**”

Then Martha said, “But Lord, it’s been four days since he died—by now his body is already decomposing!”

Jesus looked at her and said, “**Didn’t I tell you that if you will believe in me, you will see God unveil his power?**”

So they rolled away the heavy stone. Jesus gazed into heaven and said, “**Father, thank you that you have heard my prayer, for you listen to every word I speak. Now, so that these who stand here with me will believe that you have sent me to the earth as your messenger, I will use the power you have given me.**” Then with a loud voice Jesus shouted with authority: “**Lazarus! Come out of the tomb!**”

Then in front of everyone, Lazarus, who had died four days earlier, slowly hobbled out—he still had grave clothes tightly wrapped around his hands and feet and covering his face! Jesus said to them, “**Unwrap him and let him loose.**”

From that day forward many of those who had come to visit Mary believed in him, for they had seen with their own eyes this amazing miracle! But a few went back to inform the Pharisees about what Jesus had done.

So the Pharisees and the chief priests called a special meeting of the High Council and said, “So what are we going to do about this man? Look at all the great miracles he’s performing! If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will take action and destroy both our country and our people!”

Now Caiaphas, the high priest that year, spoke up and said, “You don’t understand a thing! Don’t you realize we’d be much better off if this one man were to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish?”

(This prophecy that Jesus was destined to die for the Jewish people didn’t come from Caiaphas himself, *but he was moved by God* to prophesy as the chief priest. And Jesus’ death would not be for the Jewish people only, but to gather

together God's children scattered around the world and unite them as one.) So from that day on, they were committed to killing Jesus.

For this reason Jesus no longer went out in public among the Jews. But he went in the wilderness to a village called Ephraim, where he secluded himself with his disciples.

JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS (Lk. 17:11–19)

Jesus traveled on toward Jerusalem and passed through the border region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one village, ten men approached him, but they kept their distance, for they were lepers. They shouted to him, “Mighty Lord, our wonderful Master! Won’t you have mercy on us *and heal us?*”

When Jesus stopped to look at them, he spoke these words: **“Go to be examined by the Jewish priests.”**

They set off, and they were healed while walking along the way. One of them, *a foreigner from Samaria*, when he discovered that he was completely healed, turned back to find Jesus, shouting out joyous praises and glorifying God. When he found Jesus, he fell down at his feet and thanked him over and over, saying to him, “You are the Messiah.” This man was a Samaritan.

“So where are the other nine?” Jesus asked. **“Weren’t there ten who were healed? They all refused to return to give thanks and give glory to God except you, a foreigner from Samaria?”**

Then Jesus said to the healed man lying at his feet, **“Arise and go. It was your faith that brought you salvation and healing.”**

GOD’S KINGDOM REALM WITHIN YOU (Lk. 17:20–37)

Jesus was once asked by the Jewish religious leaders, “When will God’s kingdom realm come?”

Jesus responded, **“God’s kingdom realm does not come simply by obeying principles or by waiting for signs. The kingdom is not discovered in one place or another, for God’s kingdom realm is already expanding within some of you.”**

Later, Jesus addressed this again with his apostles, saying, “The time is coming when a great passion will be awakened within you to see me again. Yes, you will long to see the beginning of the days of the Son of Man, but you won’t be able to find me. You will hear reports from some who will say, ‘Look, he has returned,’ ‘He’s over here,’ or, ‘He’s over there!’ Don’t believe it or run after them, *for their claims will be false*. The day of the Son of Man will burst forth with the brightness of a lightning strike that shines from one end of the sky to the other, illuminating the earth.

“But before this takes place, the Son of Man must pass through great suffering and rejection from this generation. The same things that happened in the days of Noah will take place in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, and they were given in marriage until the day Noah boarded the ark and the devastating flood came and swept them all away.

“The days of the Son of Man can also be compared to the days of Lot. The people of that time lived their lives as normal. They got married, raised families, built homes and businesses, yet they were totally unaware of what was coming until the day Lot departed from Sodom. The sky opened up and rained fire and burning sulfur upon them, destroying everyone and everything they had built. So it will be on the day of the unveiling of the Son of Man.

“In the day of my appearing, if one is outside, he won’t even have time to go back into the house to gather his belongings. And those toiling in their fields won’t have time to run back home. Don’t forget the example of Lot’s wife and what happened to her when she turned back. All who are obsessed with being secure in life will lose it all—including their lives. But those who let go of their lives and surrender them to me will discover true life. For in that night there will be two lying in their bed; one will be suddenly swept away while the other will be left alive. There will be two women working together at

household duties; one will be suddenly swept away while the other will be left alive.”

His apostles asked, “Lord, where will this *judgment* happen?”

Jesus responded, “*It will be obvious*, for wherever there are those spiritually dead, there you will find the eagles circling.”

Day 27

JESUS GIVES A PARABLE ABOUT PRAYER (LK. 18:1–8)

One day Jesus taught the apostles to keep praying and never stop or lose hope. He shared with them this illustration:

“In a certain town there was a judge, a thick-skinned and godless man who had no fear of others’ opinions. And there was a poor widow in that town who kept pleading with the judge, ‘Grant me justice and protect me against my oppressor!’

“He ignored her pleas for quite some time, but she kept asking. Eventually he said to himself, ‘This widow keeps annoying me, demanding her rights, and I’m tired of listening to her. Even though I’m not a religious man and don’t care about the opinions of others, I’ll just get her off my back by answering her claims for justice and I’ll rule in her favor. Then she’ll leave me alone.’”

The Lord continued, “Did you hear what the ungodly judge said—that he would answer her persistent request? Don’t you know that God, the true judge, will grant justice to all of his chosen ones who cry out to him night and day? He will pour out his Spirit upon them. He will not delay to answer you and give you what you ask for. God will give swift justice to those who don’t give up. So be ever praying, ever expecting, just like the widow was with the judge. Yet when the Son of Man comes back, will he find this kind of persistent faithfulness in his people?”

HUMILITY IN PRAYER (LK. 18:9–14)

Jesus taught this parable to those who were convinced they were morally upright and those who trusted in their own virtue yet looked down on others with disgust:

“Once there were two men who went into the temple to pray. One was a proud religious leader, the other a despised tax collector. The religious leader stood apart from the others and prayed, ‘How I thank you, O God, that I’m not wicked like everyone else. They’re cheaters, swindlers, and crooks—like that tax collector over there. God, you know that I never cheat or commit adultery; I fast from food twice a week and I give you a tenth of all I make.’

“The tax collector stood off alone in the corner, *away from the Holy Place*, and covered his face in his hands, feeling that he was unworthy to even look up to God. Beating his breast, he sobbed with brokenness and tears saying, ‘God, please, in your mercy *and because of the blood sacrifice, forgive me*, for I am nothing but the most miserable of all sinners!’

“Which one of them left for home that day made right with God? It was the humble tax collector and not the religious leader! For everyone who praises himself will one day be humiliated before all, and everyone who humbles himself will one day be lifted up and honored before all.”

THE REVOLUTIONARY VALUES OF THE KINGDOM (MK. 10:1–12)

Then Jesus left the [Galilee]¹ region and went into the district of Judea, across from the Jordan River, and again, massive crowds flocked to him [and he healed all who were sick.]² And Jesus, as was his custom, began to teach the people. At one point, some of the Pharisees came, seeking to entrap him with a question. “Tell us,” they asked, “is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife [for any reason]?³”

He answered them, “**What did Moses command you?**”

They replied, “Moses permitted us to write a certificate of separation that would be valid to complete a divorce.”

Jesus said, “[**Haven’t you read the Scriptures about creation?**]⁴ Yes, Moses wrote this exception for you because you are hard-hearted [and stubborn, but originally there was no such thing].⁵

1 Matt. 19:1. 2 Matt. 19:2. 3 Matt. 19:3. 4 Matt. 19:4. 5 Matt. 19:8.

From the beginning God created male and female. For this reason a man will leave his parents and be wedded to his wife. And the husband and wife will be joined as one flesh, and after that they no longer exist as two, but [united as]⁶ one flesh. So there you have it. What God has joined together, no one has the right to split apart.”

[His disciples spoke up and said, “If this is the standard, then it seems better to never get married.”

“Not everyone is meant to remain single—only those whom God gives grace to be unmarried. For some are born to celibacy; others have been made eunuchs by others. And there are some who have chosen to live in celibacy for the sacred purpose of heaven’s kingdom realm. Let those who can, accept this truth for themselves.”⁷

Once indoors, his disciples asked him to explain it to them again. So he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if the wife divorces her husband and marries another, she also commits adultery.”

JESUS BLESSES CHILDREN (Lk. 18:15–17)

The people brought their babies and small children to Jesus so that he might lay his hands on them to bless them [and pray for them].⁸ When the disciples saw this, they scolded the parents [for doing it]⁹ and told them to stop troubling the Master, [saying, “Don’t bother him with this now!”]¹⁰ But [when Jesus saw what was happening, he became indignant with his disciples and]¹¹ called for the parents, the children, and his disciples to come and listen to him. Then he told them, “Never hinder a child from coming to me. [I want little children to come to me, so]¹² let them all come, for God’s kingdom realm belongs to them as much as it does to anyone else. [Don’t you know that God’s kingdom realm exists for such as these?]¹³ *They demonstrate to you what faith is all about.*

6 Matt. 19:6. 7 Matt. 19:10–12. 8 Matt. 19:13. 9 Mk. 10:13.

10 Matt. 19:13. 11 Mk. 10:14. 12 Matt. 19:14. 13 Mk. 10:14.

Learn this well: unless you receive the revelation of the kingdom realm the same way a [teachable]¹⁴ little child receives it, you will never be able to enter in.” [Then he embraced each child, and laying his hands on them, he lovingly blessed each one.]¹⁵

JESUS SPEAKS WITH A YOUNG, WEALTHY OFFICIAL (LK. 18:18–30)

One day a wealthy Jewish nobleman of high standing posed this question to Jesus: “Wonderful Teacher, what must I do to be saved and receive eternal life? [Is there a good work I have to do to obtain eternal life?]¹⁶”

Jesus answered, “Why would you call me wonderful when there is only one who is wonderful—and that is God alone? [And why would you ask what good work you need to do?]¹⁷ You already know what is right and what the commandments teach: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not lie, and respectfully honor your father and your mother, [and love those around you as you love yourself].¹⁸’”

The wealthy leader replied, “[Teacher, I have carefully obeyed these laws since my youth.]¹⁹ These are the very things I’ve been doing for as long as I can remember. [What else do I lack?]²⁰”

“Ah,” Jesus said. “But there’s still one thing you’re missing in your life.”

“What is that?” asked the man.

“[If you really want to be perfect,]²¹ you must go [immediately]²² and sell everything you own and give all the proceeds to the poor so you will have eternal treasures. [After you’ve done this],²³ then come and follow me [for the rest of your life].²⁴”

When the rich leader heard these words, he was devastated. [Completely shocked by Jesus’ answer, he turned and walked away very sad],²⁵ for he was extremely wealthy.

14 Mk. 10:15. 15 Mk. 10:16. 16 Matt. 19:16. 17 Matt. 19:17.

18 Matt. 19:19. 19 Mk. 10:20. 20 Matt. 19:20. 21 Matt. 19:21.

22 Matt. 19:21. 23 Mk. 10:21. 24 Matt. 19:21. 25 Mk. 10:22.

Jesus saw his disappointment, and looking right at [the faces of his disciples]²⁶ he said, “[Listen. Do you understand how difficult it is for the rich to enter into heaven’s kingdom realm?]”²⁷ It is next to impossible for those who have everything to enter into God’s kingdom realm. Nothing could be harder! It could be compared to trying to stuff a rope through the eye of a needle. [In fact, it’s easier to stuff a heavy rope through the eye of a needle than it is for the wealthy to enter into God’s kingdom realm!”

Stunned and bewildered],²⁸ those who heard this said, “Then who can be saved?”

Jesus responded, “[Humanly speaking, no one, *because no one can save himself.*”²⁹ What appears humanly impossible is more than possible with God. For God can do what man cannot.”

Peter said, “Lord, see how we’ve left all that we have, our houses and our careers, to follow you. [What reward will there be for us?]”³⁰

Jesus replied, “Listen to my words: [In the age of the restoration of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will have twelve thrones of your own, and you will govern the twelve tribes of Israel.]”³¹ For anyone who leaves his home behind and chooses God’s kingdom realm over wife, children, parents, and family, [all for the sake of the gospel],³² it will come back to him many more times in this lifetime—[homes, family, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, possessions—along with persecutions].³³ And in the age to come, he will inherit even more than that—he will inherit eternal life! [But many who are considered to be the most important now will be the least important then. And many who are viewed as the least important now will be considered the most important then.]”³⁴

A PARABLE OF WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD (MATT. 20:1–16)

“This will help you understand the way heaven’s kingdom operates:

26 Mk. 10:23. 27 Matt. 19:23. 28 Matt. 19:24–25.

29 Matt. 19:26. 30 Matt. 19:27. 31 Matt. 19:28. 32 Mk. 10:29.

33 Mk. 10:30. 34 Mk. 10:31.

“There once was a wealthy landowner who went out at day-break to hire all the laborers he could find to work in his vineyard. After agreeing to pay them the standard day’s wage, he put them to work. Then at nine o’clock, as he was passing through the town square, he found others standing around without work. He told them, ‘Come and work for me in my vineyard and I’ll pay you a fair wage.’ So off they went to join the others. He did the same thing at noon and again at three o’clock, making the same arrangement as he did with the others.

“Hoping to finish his harvest that day, he went to the town square again at five o’clock and found more who were idle. So he said to them, ‘Why have you been here all day without work?’

“‘Because no one hired us,’ they answered.

“So he said to them, ‘Then go and join my crew and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard went to his foreman and said, ‘Call in all the laborers, line them up, and pay them the same wages, starting with the most recent ones I hired and finishing with the ones who worked all day.’

“When those hired late in the day came to be paid, they were given a full day’s wage. And when those who had been hired first came to be paid, they were convinced that they would receive more. But everyone was paid the standard wage. When they realized what had happened, they were offended and complained to the landowner, saying, ‘You’re treating us unfairly! They’ve only worked for one hour while we’ve slaved and sweated all day under the scorching sun. You’ve made them equal to us!’

“The landowner replied, ‘Friends, I’m not being unfair—I’m doing exactly what I said. Didn’t you agree to work for the standard wage? If I want to give those who only worked for an hour equal pay, what does that matter to you? Don’t I have the right to do what I want with what is mine? Why should my generosity make you jealous of them?’

“Now you can understand what I meant when I said that the first will end up last and the last will end up being first. Everyone is invited, but few are the chosen.”

Day 28

JESUS AGAIN PROPHESES HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (Lk. 18:31–34)

[Jesus and his disciples were on the road that went up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was leading them forward. The disciples were filled with wonder and amazement at his bravery, but those following along with them were very afraid. As they approached the city],¹ Jesus took the Twelve aside in private and told them, “[Listen to me].² We are going to Jerusalem so that everything prophesied about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. [I need to remind you that the Son of Man will be handed over to the religious leaders and scholars, and they will sentence him to be executed {and hand him over to the Romans}.³]⁴ They will betray him and hand him over to the people, and they will mock him, insult him, [torture him],⁵ and spit in his face. And after they have abused and flogged the Son of Man, they will kill him. But in three days he will rise [to life]⁶ again.”

The disciples didn’t have a clue what he was saying, for his words were a mystery that was hidden from them.

JACOB (JAMES) AND JOHN ASK A FAVOR OF JESUS (Mk. 10:35–45)

Jacob and John, sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said, “Teacher, will you do a favor for us?”

“What is it you’re wanting me to do?” he asked.

1 Mk. 10:32. 2 Matt. 20:17. 3 Mk. 10:33. 4 Matt. 20:18. 5 Mk. 10:34.
6 Matt. 20:19.

“We want to sit next to you when you come into your glory, [to rule with you in your kingdom]” they said, “one at your right hand and the other at your left.”

Jesus said to them, “**You don’t have a clue what you’re asking for!**” [Then, looking in the eyes of Jacob and John, Jesus said,]⁸ “**Are you prepared to drink from the cup of suffering that I am about to drink? And are you able to endure the baptism into death that I am about to experience?**”

They replied, “Yes, we are able.”

Jesus said to them, “**You will certainly drink from the cup of my sufferings and be immersed into my death, but to have you sit in the position of highest honor is not mine to decide. It is reserved for those whom grace has prepared them to have it. [My Father is the one who chooses them and prepares them.]**”⁹

Now the other ten disciples overheard this, and they became angry and began to criticize Jacob and John. Jesus, [knowing their thoughts],¹⁰ gathered them all together and said to them, “**Those recognized as rulers of the people and those who are in top leadership positions rule oppressively over their subjects, [like tyrants. But this is not your calling],**¹¹ **this is not the example you are to follow. You are to lead by a different model. If you want to be the greatest one, then live as one called to serve others [because the greatest honor and authority is reserved for the one with the heart of a servant].**¹² **The path to promotion and prominence comes by having the heart of a bond-slave who serves everyone. For even the Son of Man did not come expecting to be served by everyone, but to serve everyone, and to give his life as the ransom price in exchange for the salvation of many.**”

JESUS HEALS BLIND BEGGAR BAR-TIMAI (Lk. 18:35–43)

As Jesus and his followers arrived at Jericho [a large crowd joined them. Upon leaving the village, they met]¹³ a blind beggar sitting on the roadside [named Timai, the son of Timai].¹⁴

7 Matt. 20:21. 8 Matt. 20:22. 9 Matt. 20:23. 10 Matt. 20:25.

11 Matt. 20:25–26. 12 Matt. 20:27. 13 Mk. 10:46. 14 Mk. 10:47.

When he heard the crowd approaching, he asked, “What’s all this commotion about?”

“It’s Jesus!” they said. “Jesus the Nazarene is passing by.”

The blind beggar shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity and show me mercy [now in my affliction. *Heal me!*]¹⁵”

Those who were in the front of the crowd [were indignant and]¹⁶ scolded him and warned him to be quiet. But the blind beggar screamed out even louder [with all his might],¹⁷ “Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy [now *and heal me!*]¹⁸”

Suddenly Jesus stopped. He told those nearby, “**Bring the man over to me.**” [So they went to the blind man and said, “Have courage! Get up! Jesus is calling for you!” So he threw off his beggars’ cloak, jumped up, and made his way to Jesus.]¹⁹ When they brought him before Jesus, he asked the man, “**What is it you want me to do for you?**”

“Lord, [my Master],²⁰” he said, “please, I want to see again.”

Jesus said, “**Now you will see. Receive your sight this moment. For your faith in me has given you sight and new life. [Go in peace, with your sight restored.]**²¹”

Instantly he could see again. His eyes popped open, and he saw Jesus. He shouted loud praises to God and he [at once]²² followed Jesus, [walking down the road with him].²³ And when the crowd saw what happened, they too erupted with shouts of praise to God.

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS (Lk. 19:1–10)

In the city of Jericho there lived a very wealthy man named Zacchaeus, who was the supervisor over all the tax collectors. As Jesus made his way through the city, Zacchaeus was eager to see Jesus. He kept trying to get a look at him, but the crowd around Jesus was massive. Zacchaeus was a very short man and couldn’t see over the heads of the people. So he ran on ahead of everyone and climbed up a blossoming fig tree so he could get a glimpse of Jesus as he passed by.

15 Mk. 10:47. 16 Mk. 10:48. 17 Mk. 10:48. 18 Mk. 10:48. 19 Mk. 10:50.
20 Mk. 10:51. 21 Mk. 10:52. 22 Mk. 10:52. 23 Mk. 10:52.

When Jesus got to that place, he looked up into the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry on down, for I am appointed to stay at your house today!”

So he scurried down the tree and came face-to-face with Jesus.

As Jesus left to go with Zacchaeus, many in the crowd complained, “Look at this! Of all the people to have dinner with, he’s going to eat in the house of a crook.”

Zacchaeus joyously welcomed Jesus and was amazed over his gracious visit to his home. Zacchaeus stood in front of the Lord and said, “Half of all that I own I will give to the poor. And Lord, if I have cheated anyone, I promise to pay back four times as much as I stole.”

Jesus said to him, “This shows that today life has come to you and your household, for you are a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man has come to seek out and to give life to those who are lost.”

THE PARABLE OF A PRINCE AND HIS SERVANTS (LK. 19:11–27)

At this time Jesus was getting close to entering Jerusalem. The crowds that followed him were convinced that God’s kingdom realm would fully manifest when Jesus established it in Jerusalem. So he told them this story to change their perspective:

“Once there was a wealthy prince who left his province to travel to a distant land, where he would be crowned king and then return. Before he departed he summoned his ten servants together and said, ‘I am entrusting each of you with fifty thousand dollars to trade with while I am away. Invest it and put the money to work until I return.’

“Some of his countrymen despised the prince and sent a delegation after him to declare before the royals, ‘We refuse to let this man rule over us! He will not be our king!’

“Nevertheless, he was crowned king and returned to his land. Then he summoned his ten servants to see how much each one had earned and what their profits came to.

“The first one came forward and said, ‘Master, I took what you gave me and invested it, and it multiplied ten times.’

“Splendid! You have done well, my excellent servant. Because you have shown that you can be trusted in this small matter, I now grant you authority to rule over ten fortress cities.’

“The second came and said, ‘Master, what you left with me has multiplied five times.’

“His master said, ‘I also grant you authority in my kingdom over five fortress cities.’

“Another came before the king and said, ‘Master, here is the money you entrusted to me. I hid it for safekeeping. You see, I live in fear of you, for everyone knows you are a strict master and impossible to please. You push us for a high return on all that you own, and you always want to gain from someone else’s efforts.’

“The king said, ‘You wicked servant! I will judge you using your own words. If what you said about me is true, that I am a harsh man, pushing you for a high return and wanting gain from others’ efforts, why didn’t you at least put my money in the bank to earn some interest on what I entrusted to you?’

“The king said to his other servants, ‘Take the money he has and give it to the faithful servant who multiplied my money ten times over.’

“‘But master,’ the other servants objected, ‘why give it to him? He already has so much!’

“‘Yes,’ replied the king. ‘But to all who have been faithful, even more will be given them. And for the ones who have nothing, even the little they seem to have will be taken from them. Now, bring all those rebellious enemies of mine who rejected me as their king—bring them here before me and execute them!’”

PREPARING FOR PASSOVER (JN. 11:55–57)

Now the time came for the Passover preparations, and many from the countryside went to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the feast began. And all the people kept looking out for Jesus, expecting him to come to the city. They said to themselves while they waited in the temple courts, “Do you think that he will dare come to the feast?” For the leading priests and the Pharisees had given orders that they be

informed immediately if anyone saw Jesus, so they could seize and arrest him.

MARY ANOINTS JESUS (JN. 12:1–11)

Six days before the Passover began, Jesus went back to Bethany, the town where he raised Lazarus from the dead. They had prepared a supper for Jesus. Martha served, and Lazarus and Mary were among those at the table. Mary picked up an alabaster jar filled with nearly a liter of extremely rare and costly perfume—the purest extract of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet. Then she wiped them dry with her long hair. And the fragrance of the costly oil filled the house. But Judas the locksmith, Simon’s son, the betrayer, spoke up and said, “What a waste! We could have sold this perfume for a fortune and given the money to the poor!”

(In fact, Judas had no heart for the poor. He only said this because he was a thief and in charge of the money case. He would steal money whenever he wanted from the funds *given to support Jesus’ ministry*.)

Jesus said to Judas, “**Leave her alone! She has saved it for the time of my burial. You’ll always have the poor with you; but you won’t always have me.**”

When the word got out that Jesus was not far from Jerusalem, a large crowd came out to see him, and they also wanted to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. This prompted the chief priests to seal their plans to do away with both Jesus and Lazarus, for his miracle testimony was incontrovertible and was persuading many of the Jews living in Jerusalem to believe in Jesus.

Day 29

KING JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM (Lk. 19:28–40)

[Now, as they were approaching Jerusalem they]¹ arrived at the stables of Annia near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ahead, saying, “When you enter the next village, you will find tethered there a donkey’s young colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. And if anyone stops you and asks, ‘What are you doing?’ just tell them this: ‘It is needed for the Lord of All [and will send it back to you soon],’² [and he will let you take them].”³

[All of this happened to fulfill the prophecy:

Tell Zion’s daughter:

“Look, your King arrives!

He’s coming to you full of gentleness,

sitting on a donkey, riding on a donkey’s colt.”]⁴

The two who were sent entered the village and found the colt exactly like Jesus had said. While they were untying the colt, the owners approached them and asked, “What are you doing?”

The disciples replied, “We need this donkey for the Lord of All.” [So the bystanders let them go.]⁵

They brought the colt to Jesus. Then they placed their [cloaks and]⁶ prayer shawls on its back, and Jesus rode it as he descended

1 Matt. 21:1. 2 Mk. 11:3. 3 Matt. 21:3. 4 Matt. 21:4–5. 5 Mk. 11:6.

6 Matt. 21:7.

the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem. As he rode along, people spontaneously threw their prayer shawls on the path in front of him like a carpet. [Others cut down branches from trees to spread in his path. Jesus rode in the center of the procession—crowds going before him and crowds coming behind him.]⁷ [They all shouted in celebration, “Bring the victory! We welcome the one coming with the blessings of being sent from the Lord Yahweh! Blessings rest on this kingdom he ushers in right now—the kingdom of our father David! Bring us the victory in the highest realms of heaven!”]⁸

As soon as he got to the bottom of the Mount of Olives, the crowds of his followers shouted with a loud outburst of ecstatic joy over all the mighty wonders of power they had witnessed—[the entire city was thrown into an uproar!]⁹ They shouted over and over, “Highest praises to God for the one who comes as King in the name of the Lord! Heaven’s peace and glory from the highest realm *now comes to us!*” [Some asked, “Who is this man?” And the crowds shouted back, “This is Jesus! He’s the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee!”]¹⁰

[Now Jesus’ disciples didn’t fully understand the importance of what was taking place, but after he was raised and exalted into glory, they understood how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies in the Scriptures that were written about him.

All the eyewitnesses of the miracle Jesus performed when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead kept spreading the news about Jesus to everyone. The news of this miracle of resurrection caused the crowds to swell as great numbers of people *welcomed him into the city with joy*. But the Pharisees were disturbed by this and said to each other, “We won’t be able to stop this. The whole world is going to run after him!”]¹¹

Some Jewish religious leaders who stood off from the procession said to Jesus, “Teacher, you must order your followers at once to stop saying these things!”

Jesus responded, “**Listen to me. If my followers were silenced, the very stones would break forth with praises!**”

7 Matt. 21:8–9. 8 Mk. 11:9–10. 9 Matt. 21:10. 10 Matt. 21:11.

11 Jn. 12:16–19.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM (Lk. 19:41–44)

When Jesus caught sight of the city, he burst into tears with uncontrollable weeping over Jerusalem, saying, “If only you could recognize that this day peace is within your reach! But you cannot see it. For the day is soon coming when your enemies will surround you, pressing you in on every side, and laying siege to you. They will crush you to pieces, and your children too! And when they leave, your city will be totally destroyed. Since you would not recognize God’s day of visitation, your day of devastation is coming!”

[Jesus rode through the gates of Jerusalem and up to the temple. After looking around at everything, he left for Bethany with the Twelve to spend the night, for it was already late in the day.]¹²

JESUS AND A FRUITLESS FIG TREE (Mk. 11:12–14)

The next day, as he left Bethany, Jesus was feeling hungry. He noticed a leafy fig tree in the distance, so he walked over to see if there was any fruit on it, but there was none—only leaves (for it wasn’t yet the season for bearing figs). Jesus spoke to the fig tree, saying, “No one will ever eat fruit from you again!” And the disciples overheard him.

JESUS DRIVES MERCHANTS OUT OF THE TEMPLE COURTS (Mk. 11:15–19)

When they came into Jerusalem, Jesus went directly into the temple area and [forcibly]¹³ overturned all the tables and benches of the merchants who were doing business there. One by one he drove them all out of the temple courts, and they scattered away, including the money changers and those selling doves. And he would not allow them to use the temple courts as a thoroughfare for carrying their merchandise and their furniture.

Then he began to teach the people, saying, “Does not the Scripture say, ‘My house will be a house of prayer for all the world to share’? But you have made it a thieves’ hangout!”

¹² Mk. 11:11. ¹³ Lk. 19:45.

[Then the blind and the crippled came into the temple courts, and Jesus healed them all. And the children circled around him shouting out, “Blessings and praises to the Son of David!”]

But when the chief priests and religious scholars heard the children shouting and saw all the wonderful miracles of healing, they were furious. They said to Jesus, “Don’t you hear what these children are saying? This is not right!”

Jesus answered, “**Yes, I hear them. But have you never heard the words ‘You have fashioned the lips of children and little ones to compose your praises?’**”¹⁴

When the chief priests and religious scholars heard this, they began to hatch a plot as to how they could eliminate Jesus. But they feared him and his influence, because the entire crowd was carried away with astonishment by his teaching. So he and his disciples spent the nights outside the city.

[From then on Jesus continued teaching in the temple area, but all the while, the high priests, the experts of the law, and the prominent men of the city kept trying to find a way to accuse Jesus, for they wanted him dead. They could find no reason to accuse him, for he was a hero to the people and the crowds were awestruck by every word he spoke.]¹⁵

[Jesus then left at once for the nearby village of Bethany, where he spent the night.]¹⁶

LESSONS OF FAITH (Mk. 11:20–26)

In the morning, they passed by the fig tree that Jesus spoke to and it was completely withered from the roots up. Peter remembered and said to him, “Teacher, look! That’s the fig tree you cursed. It’s now all shriveled up and dead.”

Jesus replied, “**Let the faith of God be in you! Listen to the truth I speak to you: [If you have no doubt of God’s power and speak out of faith’s fullness, you can be the ones who speak to a tree and it will wither away.]**¹⁷ If someone says to this mountain with great faith and having no doubt, ‘Mountain, be lifted up and thrown into the midst of the sea,’ and believes that what he says

14 Matt. 21:14–17. 15 Lk. 19:47–48. 16 Matt. 21:17. 17 Matt. 21:21.

will happen, it will be done. [Everything you pray for with the fullness of faith you will receive!]¹⁸ This is the reason I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer—be convinced that you have received it and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, if you find that you carry something in your heart against another person, release him and forgive him so that your Father in heaven will also release you and forgive you of your faults. But if you will not release forgiveness, don't expect your Father in heaven to release you from your misdeeds.”

TRUE SEEKERS (JN. 12:20–36)

Now there were a number of foreigners from among the nations who were worshipers at the feast. They went to Philip (who came from the village of Bethsaida in Galilee) and they asked him, “Would you take us to see Jesus? We want to see him.” So Philip went to find Andrew, and then they both went to inform Jesus.

He replied to them, “Now is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified. Let me make this clear: A single grain of wheat will never be more than a single grain of wheat unless it drops into the ground and dies. Because then it sprouts and produces a great harvest of wheat—all because one grain died.

“The person who loves his life and pampers himself will miss true life! But the one who detaches his life from this world and abandons himself to me, will find true life and enjoy it forever! If you want to be my disciple, follow me and you will go where I am going. And if you truly follow me as my disciple, the Father will shower his favor upon your life.

“Even though I am torn within, and my soul is in turmoil, I will not ask the Father to rescue me from this hour of trial. For I have come to fulfill my purpose—to *offer myself to God*. So, Father, bring glory to your name!” Then suddenly a booming voice was heard from the sky,

“I have glorified my name! And I will glorify it *through you* again!”

¹⁸ Matt. 21:22.

The audible voice of God startled the crowd standing nearby. Some thought it was only thunder, yet others said, “An angel just spoke to him!”

Then Jesus told them, “The voice you heard was not for my benefit, but for yours—to *help you believe*. From this moment on, everything in this world is about to change, for the ruler of this dark world will be overthrown. *And I will do this* when I am lifted up off the ground and when I draw the hearts of people to *gather them to me*.” He said this to indicate that he would die by being lifted up on the cross.

People from the crowd spoke up and said, “Die? How could the Anointed One die? The Word of God says that the Anointed One will live with us forever, but you just said that the Son of Man must be lifted up from the earth. And who is this Son of Man anyway?”

Jesus replied, “You will have the light shining with you for only a little while longer. While you still have me, walk in the light, so that the darkness doesn’t overtake you. For when you walk in the dark you have no idea where you’re going. So believe and cling to the light while I am with you, so that you will become children of light.” After saying this, Jesus then entered into the crowd and hid himself from them.

THE UNBELIEF OF THE CROWD (JN. 12:37–43)

Even with the overwhelming evidence of all the many signs and wonders that Jesus had performed in front of them, his critics still refused to believe. This fulfilled the prophecy given by Isaiah:

Lord, who has believed our message? Who has seen the unveiling of your great power?

And the people were not able to believe, for Isaiah also prophesied:

God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts to the truth. So with their eyes and hearts closed they

cannot understand the truth nor turn to me so that I could instantly cleanse and heal them.

Isaiah said these things because he had seen and experienced the splendor of Jesus and prophesied about him. Yet there were many Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus, but because they feared the Pharisees they kept it secret, so they wouldn't be ostracized by the assembly of the Jews. For they loved the glory that men could give them rather than the glory that came from God!

JESUS' LAST PUBLIC TEACHING (JN. 12:44–50)

Jesus shouted out passionately, “To believe in me is to also believe in God who sent me. For when you look at me you are seeing the One who sent me. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world so that all who trust in me will no longer wander in darkness. If you hear my words and refuse to follow them, I do not judge you. For I have not come to judge you but to save you. If you reject me and refuse to follow my words, you already have a judge. The message of truth I have given you will rise up to judge you at the Day of Judgment. For I'm not speaking as someone who is self-appointed, but I speak by the authority of the Father himself who sent me, and who instructed me what to say. And I know that the Father's commands result in eternal life, and that's why I speak the very words I've heard him speak.”

Day 30

A DAY OF CONTROVERSY (Lk. 20:1–8)

One day Jesus was teaching in the temple courts and sharing with the people the wonderful news of salvation. The high priest and the experts of the law were there with the prominent men of the city. They confronted Jesus and asked him, “We want to know right now [by what power do you do these things, and]¹ by what authority you’re doing this. Who gave you the authority to teach these things here in the temple?”

Jesus responded, “First, let me ask you a question and you tell me right now. [If you can answer this question, then I will tell you by what power I do these things.]² Did John baptize because of a mandate from heaven or merely from men? [Where did John’s authority to immerse come from? Was it from heaven or from people? Answer me now.]³”

His interrogators pulled aside to discuss this among themselves. “[How should we answer this?]”⁴ What should we say? If we say that John’s mandate was from heaven, he will ask us, ‘Then why didn’t you [respond to John],⁵ believe him, and get baptized?’ But if we [deny that God gave him his authority]⁶ and say, ‘John’s mandate was merely from men,’ then [we’ll be mobbed by the people]⁷ and all the people around him will stone us, for they believe John was a prophet of God.” So they answered Jesus, “We cannot tell where John’s authority came from. [We don’t know.]”⁸

1 Matt. 21:23. 2 Matt. 21:24. 3 Mk. 11:30. 4 Matt. 21:26.

5 Mk. 11:31. 6 Matt. 21:26. 7 Matt. 21:26. 8 Mk. 11:33.

Jesus said, “Then neither will I tell you where [my power],⁹ my authority comes from to do what I do.”

THE PARABLE OF TWO SONS (MATT. 21:28–32)

Jesus said to his critics, “Tell me what you think of this parable:

“There once was a man with two sons. The father came to the first and said, ‘Son, I want you to go and work in the vineyard today.’ The son replied, ‘I’d rather not.’ But afterward, he deeply regretted what he said to his father, changed his mind, and decided to go to the vineyard. The father approached the second son and said the same thing to him. The son replied, ‘Father, I will go and do as you said.’ But he never did—he didn’t go to the vineyard. Tell me now, which of these two sons did the will of his father?”

They answered him, “The first one.”

Jesus said, “You’re right. For many sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes are going into God’s kingdom realm ahead of you! John came to show you the path of goodness and righteousness, yet the despised and outcasts believed in him, but you did not. When you saw them turn, you neither repented of your ways nor believed his words.”

THE STORY OF THE VINE GROWERS (LK. 20:9–19)

Jesus taught the people this story:

[“Pay close attention to this parable,” Jesus said.]¹⁰ “Once there was a man who planted a vineyard [and put a secure fence around it. He dug a pit for its winepress and erected a watch tower.]¹¹ Then leased it out to tenants and left to go abroad and was away for a long time. When the harvest season arrived, the owner sent one of his servants to the tenants to collect the landowner’s share of the harvest. But the tenants [seized him]¹² and sent him away, beaten and empty-handed. So the owner dispatched another one of his servants to collect his portion. But the tenants treated him the same way. They [shamefully humiliated],¹³ cursed him, beat him, and sent him away

9 Matt. 21:27. 10 Matt. 21:33. 11 Mk. 12:1. 12 Mk. 12:3. 13 Mk. 12:4.

empty-handed. Then the owner sent a third servant, but they brutalized him also with the same treatment. [So the landowner sent other servants, even more than at first, but they were mistreated the same way, {all severely beaten or killed}.¹⁴]¹⁵ Finally the owner of the vineyard said to his son, ‘Perhaps if I send you, my own cherished son, they will be ashamed of what they’ve done. [Surely they will restrain themselves and respect my son.]’¹⁶

“But when the tenants saw the son coming, they schemed among themselves. ‘This is the heir of the vineyard! If we kill him, the inheritance will be ours.’ So they [violently seized him],¹⁷ threw the son off the property and killed him, [and threw his body over the fence!]¹⁸

“I ask you, what do you think the owner of the vineyard will do to those who murdered his son? He will come and destroy them and give his vineyard to another.”

When the people heard this story, they all agreed, “This should never happen! [He will bring a horrible death to those who did this evil and he will completely destroy them. Then he’ll lease his vineyard to different tenants who will be faithful to give him the portion he deserves.”

Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read the Scripture that says:

The very stone the builder rejected as flawed
has now become the most important
capstone of the arch.
This was the Lord’s plan—
isn’t it a miracle for our eyes to behold?

“This is why I say to you that the kingdom realm of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will bear its fruit. The one who comes against this stone will be broken, but the one on whom it falls will be pulverized!”]¹⁹

14 Mk. 12:7. 15 Matt. 21:36. 16 Mk. 12:6. 17 Matt. 21:39. 18 Mk. 12:8. 19 Matt. 21:41–44.

Jesus looked straight at the people and said, “What do you think this verse means: ‘The worthless, rejected stone has become the cornerstone, the most important stone of all’? Everyone who falls *in humility* upon that stone will be broken. But if that stone falls on you, it will grind you to pieces!”

When the high priests and experts of the law realized that this story was about them, they [were outraged and]²⁰ wanted to have Jesus arrested that very moment, but they were afraid of all the people, [because the people considered him to be a prophet],²¹ [so they left him alone and went away].²²

PAYING TAXES (Lk. 20:20–26)

So they sent spies who pretended to be honest seekers, but who watched closely for an opportunity to entangle Jesus by his words. Their plan was to catch him saying something against the government, and then they could hand him over to the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities *to be killed*.

[Then they sent a delegation of Pharisees, together with some staunch supporters of Herod, to entrap Jesus with his own words.]²³ At the right time they asked him this question: “Teacher, we know that all you say is straightforward and what you teach us is right, giving us the true ways of God. You’re one who doesn’t show favoritism to anyone’s status. [We can clearly see that you’re not one who speaks only to win the people’s favor, because you speak the truth without regard to the consequences.]²⁴ So we ask you—is it proper or not to pay taxes [to Caesar],²⁵ *to a corrupt government?*”

Jesus saw right through [the malice that was hidden behind]²⁶ their cunning ploy and said, “Why are you testing me, [you imposters who think you have all the answers]?²⁷ Show me one of the Roman coins.” [They brought him a silver coin used to pay the tax.]²⁸

“Whose head is on the coin? Whose title is stamped on it?”

They answered, “Why, it’s Caesar’s.”

Jesus said, “Precisely. The coin bears the image of the Emperor Caesar, and you should give back to Caesar all that belongs to

20 Matt. 21:45–46. 21 Matt. 21:46. 22 Mk. 12:12. 23 Mk. 12:13.

24 Matt. 22:16. 25 Mk. 12:14. 26 Matt. 22:18. 27 Matt. 22:18.

28 Mk. 12:16.

him. But you bear the image of God. So give back to God all that belongs to him.”

The imposters were left speechless and amazed in the presence of all the people, unable to trap Jesus with his words. [So they left, stunned by Jesus’ words.]²⁹

A QUESTION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION (LK. 20:27–40)

Some of the Sadducees, a religious group that denies there is a resurrection of the dead, came to ask Jesus this question: “Teacher, the law of Moses teaches that if a man dies before he has children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up children for his brother’s family line. But suppose there was a family with seven brothers, and the oldest married and died without children. Then his brother married the widow, but he too died with no children. And so it happened, one brother after another brother, until each of the seven had married the widow and died childless. Then finally, the widow died too. So here’s our dilemma: Whose wife will the woman be when she’s resurrected from the dead? Which of the brothers will be her husband, for all seven were once married to her?”

Jesus replied, “[You are deluded, because your hearts are not filled with the revelation of the Scriptures or the power of God. For after the resurrection, men and women will not marry, just like the angels of heaven don’t marry. {Now, concerning the resurrection},³⁰ haven’t you read {in the Torah}³¹ what God said: ‘I am the Living God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.]³² Marriage is for the sons of this world only. But those who are worthy of the resurrection from the dead into glory become immortal, like the angels, who never die nor marry. When the dead come to life again, they will be sons of God’s life—the sons of the resurrection. In fact, it was Moses who taught the resurrection of the dead when he wrote of the Lord God who was at the burning bush and described him as ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Don’t you agree that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living? For in his eyes, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive forevermore. He must be the God who raises the dead.”

29 Matt. 22:22. 30 Mk. 12:26. 31 Mk. 12:26. 32 Matt. 22:29–32.

[When the crowds heard this they were dazed, stunned over such wisdom!]³³

The experts of the law chimed in, “Yes, Teacher, you speak the truth beautifully.”

From then on, the religious Sadducees never dared to ask Jesus a question again.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT (Mk. 12:28–34)

[When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they called a meeting to discuss how to trap Jesus.]³⁴ Now a certain religious scholar overheard them debating. When he saw how beautifully Jesus answered all their questions, he posed one of his own, and asked him, “Teacher, which commandment is the greatest of all?”

Jesus answered him, “The most important of all the commandments is this: ‘The Lord Yahweh, our God, is one!’ You are to love the Lord Yahweh, your God, with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, with every thought that is within you, and with all your strength. This is the great and supreme commandment. And the second is [like it in importance]:³⁵ ‘You must love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself.’ You will never find a greater commandment than these. [Contained within these commandments to love you will find all the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.]³⁶”

The religious scholar replied, “Yes, that’s true, Teacher. You spoke beautifully when you said that God is one, and there is no one else besides him. And there is something more important to God than all the sacrifices and burnt offerings: it’s the commandment to constantly love God with every passion of your heart, with your every thought, and with all your strength—and to love your neighbor in the same way as you love yourself.”

When Jesus noticed how thoughtfully and sincerely the man answered, he said to him, “You’re not far from the reality of God’s kingdom realm.” After that, no one dared to question him again.

33 Matt. 22:33. 34 Matt. 22:34. 35 Matt. 22:39. 36 Matt. 22:40.

Day 31

THE MESSIAH, BOTH GOD AND MAN (LK. 20:41–44)

[While Jesus was teaching in the courts of the temple],¹ he then posed this question to the people: [**“What do you think about the Anointed One? Whose son is he?”**]

“The son of David,” they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, [**“How is it that David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, could call his son the Lord?”**]² How can the experts of the law say that Christ the Messiah is David’s son? Haven’t you read in the Psalms where David himself wrote:

The Lord Jehovah said to my Lord,
‘Sit near me in the place of authority
until I subdue all your enemies under Your feet!’”

Jesus explained, [**“If David calls this one ‘my Lord,’ how can he merely be his son?”**]

[No one could come up with an answer. {The large crowd that had gathered around Jesus took delight in hearing his words.}³ And from that day on none of the Pharisees had the courage to question Jesus any longer.]⁴

SUPERFICIAL SPIRITUALITY VERSUS GENUINE HUMILITY (MATT. 23:1–12)

[Within earshot of all the people],⁵ Jesus addressed both the crowds and his disciples and said, [**“The religious scholars and the**

1 Mk. 12:35. 2 Matt. 22:42–43. 3 Mk. 12:37. 4 Matt. 22:46. 5 Lk. 20:45.

Pharisees sit on Moses' throne as the authorized interpreters of the Law. So listen and follow what they teach, but don't do what they do, for they tell you one thing and do another. They tie on your backs an oppressive burden of religious obligations and insist that you carry it, but will never lift a finger to help ease your load. [Beware of the religious scholars. {Don't follow the example of these pretentious experts of the law!}⁶ They love to parade around in their clergy robes and be greeted with respect on the street.]⁷ Everything they do is done for show and to be noticed by others. *They want to be seen as holy*, so they wear oversized prayer boxes on their arms and foreheads with Scriptures inside, and wear extra-long tassels on their outer garments. They crave the seats of highest honor at banquets and in their meeting places. [They crave to be made the leaders of synagogue councils, and they push their way to the head table at banquets. For appearance's sake, they will pray long religious prayers at the homes of widows for an offering, cheating them out of their very livelihood.]⁸ And how they love to be admired by men with their titles of respect, aspiring to be recognized in public and have others call them 'Reverend.' [Beware of them all, for they will one day be stripped of honor, and the judgment they receive will be severe.]⁹

"But you are to be different from that. You are not to be called 'master,' for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers and sisters. And you are not to be addressed as 'father,' for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Nor are you to be addressed as 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Anointed One. The greatest among you will be the one who always serves others from the heart. Remember this: If you have a lofty opinion of yourself and seek to be honored, you will be humbled. But if you have a modest opinion of yourself and choose to humble yourself, you will be honored."

JESUS PRONOUNCES SEVEN WOES (MATT. 23:13–36)

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and you Pharisees—such frauds and pretenders! You do all you can to keep people

from experiencing the reality of heaven's kingdom realm. Not only do you refuse to enter in, you also forbid anyone else from entering in!

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and you Pharisees—frauds and pretenders! For you eat up the widow's household with the ladle of your prayers. Because of this, you will receive a greater judgment.

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and you Pharisees—such frauds and pretenders! For you will travel over lake and land to find one disciple, only to make him twice the child of hell as yourselves.

"You blind guides! Great sorrow awaits you, for you teach that there's nothing binding when you swear by God's temple, but if you swear by the gold of the temple, you are bound by your oath. You are deceived in your blindness! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred? And you say that whoever takes an oath by swearing, 'By the altar,' it is nothing. But if you swear, 'By the gift upon the altar,' then you are obligated to keep your oath. What deception! For what is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Whoever swears by the altar swears by the altar and everything offered on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and the one who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by God, who sits upon it.

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and pretenders! For you are obsessed with peripheral issues, like insisting on paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs that grow in your gardens. These matters are fine, yet you ignore the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God, to display mercy to others, and to live with integrity. Readjust your values and place first things first. What blind guides! Nit-pickers! You will spoon out a gnat from your drink, yet at the same time you've gulped down a camel without realizing it!

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and imposters! You are like one who will only wipe clean the outside of a cup or bowl, leaving the inside filthy. You are foolish to ignore the greed and self-indulgence that live like

germs within you. You are blind and deaf to your evil. Shouldn't the one who cleans the outside also be concerned with cleaning the inside? You need to have more than clean dishes; you need clean hearts!

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and imposters! You are nothing more than tombs painted with fresh coats of white paint—tombs that look shining and beautiful on the outside, but within are found decaying corpses full of nothing but corruption. Outwardly you masquerade as righteous people, but inside your hearts you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and imposters! You build memorials for the prophets your ancestors killed and decorate the monuments of the godly people your ancestors murdered. Then you boast, 'If we had lived back then, we would never have permitted them to kill the prophets.' But your words and deeds testify that you are just like them and prove that you are indeed the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started! You are nothing but snakes in the grass, the offspring of poisonous vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell if you refuse to turn in repentance?

"For this reason I will send you more prophets and wise men and teachers of truth. Some you will crucify, and some you will beat mercilessly with whips in your meeting houses, abusing and persecuting them from city to city. As your penalty, you will be held responsible for the righteous blood spilled and the murders of every godly person throughout your history—from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, whom you killed as he stood in the temple between the brazen altar and the Holy Place. I tell you the truth: the judgment for all these things will fall upon this generation!"

JESUS PROPHECIES JUDGMENT COMING TO JERUSALEM (MATT. 23:37–39)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem—you are the city that murders your prophets! You are the city that stones the very messengers

who were sent to deliver you! So many times I have longed to gather a wayward people, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings—but you were too stubborn to let me. And now it is too late, since your city will be left in ruins. For you will not see me again until you are able to say, ‘We welcome the one who comes to us in the name of the Lord.’”

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING (Lk. 21:1–4)

Jesus was in the temple, observing all the wealthy wanting to be noticed as they came with their offerings. [Then he sat down near the offering box, watching all the people dropping in their coins. Many of the rich would put in very large sums, but]¹⁰ he noticed a very poor widow dropping two small copper coins, [worth less than a penny],¹¹ in the offering box. “Listen to me,” he said. “This poor widow has given a larger offering than any of the wealthy. For the rich only gave out of their surplus, but she sacrificed out of her poverty and gave to God all that she had to live on, [which was everything she had].”¹²

THE SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE (Lk. 21:5–19)

Some of the disciples remarked about the beauty of the temple. They pointed out all the lovely adornments and how it was built with excellence from the gifts given to God. [One of his disciples came to him and said, “Teacher, look at these magnificent buildings! And what tremendous stones were used to build all this!”]¹³

Jesus said, “[Take a good look at all these things, for I’m telling you, there will not be one stone left upon another.]”¹⁴ The day will come that everything you admire here will be utterly destroyed. It will all become a heap of rubble!”

[Later, when they arrived at the Mount of Olives, his disciples, {Peter, Jacob, John, and Andrew},¹⁵ came privately to where he was sitting.]¹⁶ “Master, tell us,” they asked, “when exactly will this happen? Can you tell us what warning sign to

10 Mk. 12:41–42. 11 Mk. 12:42. 12 Mk. 12:44. 13 Mk. 13:1. 14 Matt. 24:2. 15 Mk. 13:3. 16 Matt. 24:3.

look for when it is about to take place? [And what supernatural sign should we expect to signal your coming and the completion of this age?]¹⁷

Jesus responded, “Deception will run rampant with many who will appear on the scene, saying I have sent them, or saying about themselves, ‘I am the Messiah!’ [and they will lead many astray.]¹⁸ [So beware that you’re not fooled!]¹⁹ And the doomsday deceivers will say, ‘The end of the age is now here!’ But listen to me. Don’t be fooled by these imposters.

“There will also be many wars and revolutions on every side, with rumors of more wars to come. Don’t panic or give in to your fears, [for the breaking apart of the world’s systems is]²⁰ bound to happen. This is still not the end yet; [it will still be unfolding].²¹ [Prepare for it, but still the end is not yet.]²²”

Jesus continued, “*There will be upheavals of every kind. Nations will go to war against each other and kingdom against kingdom—and there will be terrible earthquakes, seismic events of epic proportion, resulting in famines in one place after another. There will be horrible plagues and epidemics, cataclysmic storms on the earth, and astonishing signs and cosmic disturbances in the heavens. [This is how the first contractions and birth pains of the new age will begin!]*²³ But before all of this happens, you will be hunted down and arrested, persecuted by both civil and religious authorities, and thrown into prison. [Be on your guard! For they will repeatedly hand you over to the ruling councils, and you will be beaten in public gatherings.]²⁴ And because you follow me, you will be on trial before kings and governmental leaders as an opportunity to testify to them in my name. [*But prior to the end of the age*, the hope of the gospel must first be preached to all nations.]²⁵ Yet determine in your hearts not to prepare for your own defense. Simply speak with the words of wisdom that I will give you that moment, and none of your persecutors will be able to withstand the grace and wisdom that

17 Matt. 24:3. 18 Matt. 24:5. 19 Mk. 13:5. 20 Matt. 24:6.

21 Matt. 24:6. 22 Mk. 13:7. 23 Matt. 24:8. 24 Mk. 13:9. 25 Mk. 13:10.

comes from your mouths. [And realize that it won't be you speaking but the Holy Spirit repeatedly speaking through you.]²⁶

"You can expect betrayal even by your parents, your brothers, your relatives and friends—and yes, some of you will die as martyrs. You will be hated by all because of *my life in you*, [all because of your allegiance to the cause that bears my name].²⁷ But don't worry. My grace will never desert you or depart from your life. And by standing firm with patient endurance you will find your souls' deliverance."

PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS (MATT. 24:9–14)

"You can expect to be persecuted, even killed; for you will be hated by all the nations because of your love for me. Then many will stop following me and fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many lying prophets will arise, deceiving multitudes and leading them away from the path of truth. There will be such an increase of sin and lawlessness that those whose hearts once burned with passion for God and others will grow cold. But keep your hope to the end and you will experience life and deliverance.

"Yet through it all, this joyful assurance of the realm of heaven's kingdom will be proclaimed all over the world, providing every nation with a demonstration of the reality of God. And after this the end of this age will arrive."

²⁶ Mk. 13:11. ²⁷ Mk. 13:13.

Day 32

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (LK. 21:20–24)

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know for sure that its devastation is imminent. At that time all who are living in Judea must flee to the mountains. Those who live inside the city gates, go out and flee, and those who live outside the city must not enter it seeking refuge. For these are the days of God’s vengeance to fulfill what has been written against Jerusalem. It will be extremely difficult for pregnant women and for those nursing little ones in that day, for there will be great persecution and wrath against this nation. Many will be cut down by the sword or scattered as prisoners in many countries. And Jerusalem shall be trampled down by nations until the days of world empires come to an end.”

THE DETESTABLE IDOL THAT BRINGS MISERY (MATT. 24:15–28)

“When you witness what Daniel prophesied, ‘the disgusting destroyer,’ taking its stand in the Holy Place (let the reader learn), then those in the land of Judah must escape to the higher ground. On that day, if you happen to be outside, don’t go back inside to gather belongings. And if you’re working out in the field, don’t run back home to get a coat. It will be especially hard for pregnant women and for those nursing their babies in those days. So pray that your escape will not be during the winter months or on a Sabbath. For this will be a time of great misery beyond the magnitude of anything the world has ever seen

[from the beginning of time]¹ or ever will see. Unless God limited those days, no one would escape. But because of his love for those chosen to be his, he will shorten that time of trouble.

“And you will hear reports from some, saying, ‘Look, [the Messiah]² has returned,’ ‘The Messiah is over here,’ or ‘The Messiah is over there!’ Don’t believe it. For there will be imposters falsely claiming to be God’s ‘Anointed One,’ and false prophets will arise to perform miracle signs to lead astray, if possible, those God has chosen to be his. Remember this, [be alert],³ for I prophesy it will happen! So if someone says to you, ‘Look, the Anointed One has returned! He’s in the desert,’ don’t go chasing after him. Or if they say to you, ‘Look, he’s here in our house,’ don’t believe it. The appearing of the Son of Man will burst forth with the brightness of a lightning strike that shines from one end of the sky to the other, illuminating the earth. How do birds of prey know where the dead body is? They just know instinctively, and so you will know when I appear.”

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (Lk. 21:25–28)

[“This is what will take place after that suffering:

The sun will be darkened and the moon will reflect no light.
The stars will be falling from the sky
and all the cosmic powers will be shaken.]⁴

“Expect to witness amazing and perplexing signs throughout the universe with the sun, the moon, and the stars. The raging of the sea will bring desperation and turmoil to many nations. Earthquakes will bring panic and disaster. What men see coming to the earth will cause the fear of doom to grip their hearts, for they will even see the powers of the heavenly realm shaken!

“[Then the sign announcing the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn over him.]⁵ And at last, when you see how the Son of Man comes—surrounded with a cloud, with great power and miracles, in the radiance of

¹ Mk. 13:19. ² Mk. 13:21. ³ Mk. 13:23. ⁴ Mk. 13:24–25.

⁵ Matt. 24:30.

his splendor, and with great glory and praises—it will make you jump for joy! For the day of your full transformation has arrived. [And he will send his messengers with the loud blast of the trumpet, and with a great voice they will gather his beloved chosen ones by the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other!]⁶

THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE (LK. 21:29–33)

Jesus gave his disciples this parable:

“Haven’t you observed the fig tree, or any tree, that when it buds and blooms you realize that the season is changing and summer is near? [When spring arrives, and it sends out its tender branches and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is soon to appear.]⁷ In the same way, when you see these prophetic signs occurring, you realize the earth is yielding to *the fullness of God’s kingdom realm*, [even at the door!]⁸ I assure you, the end of this age will not come until all I have spoken comes to pass. Earth and sky will wear out and fade away before one word I speak loses its power or fails to accomplish its purpose.”

LIVE ALWAYS READY FOR HIS APPEARING (MATT. 24: 36–44)

“Concerning that day and exact hour, no one knows when it will arrive, not even the angels of heaven, [not even the Son]⁹—only the Father knows. For it will be exactly like it was in the days of Noah when the Son of Man appears. Before the flood, people lived their lives eating, drinking, marrying, and having children. They didn’t realize the end was near until Noah entered the ark, and then suddenly, the flood came and took them all away in judgment. It will happen the same way when the Son of Man appears. At that time, two men will be working on the farm; one will be taken away in judgment, the other left. Two women will be grinding grain; one will be taken away in judgment, the other left. This is why you must stay alert—[waiting, watching and praying]:¹⁰ because no one knows the day your Lord will come.

6 Matt. 24:31. 7 Matt. 24:32. 8 Mk. 13:29. 9 Mk. 13:32.

10 Mk. 13:33.

“But realize this: If a homeowner had known what time of night the burglar would come to rob his house, he would have been alert and ready, and not let his house be robbed. So always be ready, alert, and prepared, because at an hour when you’re not expecting him, the Son of Man will come.”

THE WISE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT (MATT. 24:45–51)

“Who is the one qualified to oversee the master’s house? He will be a reliable servant who is wise and faithful, one he can depend on. The master will want to give him the responsibility of overseeing others in his house, for his servant will lead them well and give them food at the right time. What joy and blessing will come to that faithful servant when the master comes home to find him serving with excellence! I can promise you, the master will raise him up and put him in charge of all that he owns.

“But the evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master delays his coming, and who knows when he will return?’ *And because of the delay, the servant mistreats those in his master’s household. Instead of caring for the ones he was appointed to serve, he abuses the other servants and gives himself over to eating and drinking with drunkards.* Let me tell you what will happen to him. His master will suddenly return at a time that surprises him, and he will remove the abusive, selfish servant from his position of trust. And the master will cut him in two and assign him to the place of great sorrow and anguish along with all the other pretenders and unbelievers.”

A PARABLE OF A MAN WHO LEFT ON A JOURNEY (MK. 13:34–37)

“For those days can be compared to a man who was about to leave on a journey, but before leaving he placed his servants in charge and gave each one work to do while he was away. Then he commanded the watchman to be on guard at all times. So I say to you, keep awake and alert—for you have no idea when the master of the house will return; in the evening, at midnight, at four o’clock in the morning, or at dawn. Be alert, for he’s

coming suddenly and may find you sleeping! And what I say to the four of you, I say to everyone—be awake at all times!”

GUARD YOUR HEARTS (LK. 21:34–38)

“Be careful that you never allow your hearts to grow cold. Remain passionate and free from anxiety and the worries of this life. Then you will not be caught off guard by what happens. Don’t let me come and find you drunk or careless in living like everyone else. For that day will come as a shocking surprise to all, like a downpour that drenches everyone, catching many unaware and unprepared. Keep a constant watch over your soul, and pray for the courage and grace to prevail over these things that are destined to occur and that you will stand before the presence of the Son of Man *with a clear conscience*.”

A PARABLE ABOUT TEN VIRGINS (MATT. 25:1–13)

“At the time my coming draws near, heaven’s kingdom realm can be compared to ten maidens who took their oil lamps and went outside to meet the bridegroom and his bride. Five of them were foolish and ill-prepared, for they took no *extra* oil for their lamps. Five of them were wise and sensible, for they took flasks of olive oil with their lamps. When the bridegroom didn’t come when they expected, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. Then suddenly, in the middle of the night, they were awakened by the shout ‘Get up! The bridegroom is here! Come out and have an encounter with him!’ So all the girls got up and trimmed their lamps. But the foolish ones were running out of oil, so they said to the five wise ones, ‘Share your oil with us, because our lamps are going out!’

“‘We can’t,’ they replied. ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. You’ll have to go and buy some for yourselves!’

“While the five girls were out buying oil, the bridegroom appeared. Those who were ready and waiting were escorted inside with him and the wedding party to enjoy the feast. And then the door was locked. Later, the five foolish girls came running up to the door and pleaded, ‘Lord, Lord, let us come in!’

“But he called back, ‘Go away! Do I know you? I can assure you, I don’t even know you!’

“That is the reason you should always stay awake and be alert, because you don’t know the day or hour when the Bridegroom will appear.”

A PARABLE ABOUT FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP (MATT. 25:14–30)

“Again, heaven’s kingdom realm is like the wealthy man who went on a long journey and summoned all his trusted servants and assigned his financial management over to them. Before he left on his journey, he entrusted a bag of five thousand gold coins to one of his servants, to another a bag of two thousand gold coins, and to the third a bag of one thousand gold coins, each according to his ability to manage.

“The one entrusted with five thousand gold coins immediately went out and traded with the money, and he doubled his investment. In the same way, the one who was entrusted with two thousand gold coins traded with the sum and likewise doubled his investment. But the one who had been entrusted with one thousand gold coins dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money.

“After much time had passed, the master returned to settle accounts with his servants. The one who was entrusted with five thousand gold coins came and brought ten thousand, saying, ‘See, I have doubled your money.’

“Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy servant. Because you have been a faithful steward to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. You will experience the delight of your master, who will say to you, “Come celebrate with me!”’

“Then the one who had been entrusted with two thousand gold coins came in and said, ‘See, my master, I have doubled what you have entrusted to me.’

“Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy

servant. Because you were faithful to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. You will experience the delight of your master, who will say to you, “Come celebrate with me!”

“Then the one who had been entrusted with one thousand gold coins came to his master and said, ‘Look, sir. I know that you are a hard man to please and you’re a shrewd and ruthless businessman who grows rich on the backs of others. I was afraid of you, so I went and hid your money and buried it in the ground. But here it is—take it, it’s yours.’

“Angered by what he heard, the master said to him, ‘You’re an untrustworthy and lazy servant! If you knew I was a shrewd and ruthless business man who always makes a profit, why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? Then I would have received it all back with interest when I returned. But because you were unfaithful, I will take the one thousand gold coins and give them to the one who has ten thousand. For the one who has will be given more, until he overflows with abundance. And the one with hardly anything, even what little he has will be taken from him.’

“Then the master said to his other servants, ‘Now, throw that good-for-nothing servant far away from me into the outer darkness, where there will be great misery and anguish!’”

Day 33



THE JUDGMENT OF THE MULTITUDES (MATT. 25:31–46)

“When the Son of Man appears in his majestic glory, with all his angels by his side, he will take his seat on his throne of splendor, and all the nations will be gathered together before him. And like a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats, he will separate all the people. The ‘sheep’ he will put on his right side and the ‘goats’ on his left. Then the King will turn to those on his right and say, ‘You have a special place in my Father’s heart. Come and experience the full inheritance of the kingdom realm that has been destined for you from before the foundation of the world! For when you saw me hungry, you fed me. When you found me thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I had no place to stay, you invited me in, and when I was poorly clothed, you covered me. When I was sick, you tenderly cared for me, and when I was in prison you visited me.’

“Then the godly will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and give you food and something to drink? When did we see you with no place to stay and invite you in? When did we see you poorly clothed and cover you? When did we see you sick and tenderly care for you, or in prison and visit you?’

“And the King will answer them, ‘Don’t you know? When you cared for one of the least important of these my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you demonstrated love for me.’

“Then to those on his left the King will say, ‘Leave me! For you are under the curse of eternal fire that has been destined for the devil and all his demons. For when you saw me hungry,

you refused to give me food, and when you saw me thirsty, you refused to give me something to drink. I had no place to stay, and you refused to take me in as your guest. When you saw me poorly clothed, you closed your hearts and would not cover me. When you saw that I was sick, you didn't lift a finger to help me, and when I was imprisoned, you never came to visit me.'

"And then those on his left will say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and not give you food and something to drink? When did we see you homeless, or poorly clothed? When did we see you sick and not help you, or in prison and not visit you?'

"Then he will answer them, 'Don't you know? When you refused to help one of the least important among these my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you refused to help and honor me.' And they will depart from his presence and go into eternal punishment. But the godly and beloved 'sheep' will enter into eternal bliss."

JESUS TEACHES, PEOPLE COME TO LISTEN (LK. 21:37–38)

Each day, Jesus taught in the temple, and he spent his nights on the Mount of Olives. And all the people came early to the temple courts to listen to the words he taught.

JESUS PROPHECIES HIS CRUCIFIXION (MATT. 26:1–5)

After Jesus had completed his teachings, [as the celebration of the Passover Lamb {and the Feast of Unleavened Bread}¹ was approaching],² he said to his disciples, "You know that the Feast of the Passover begins in two more days. That's when the Son of Man is to be betrayed and handed over to be crucified."

Meanwhile, the prominent priests and religious leaders of the nation were gathered in the palace of the high priest Caiaphas and [committed to finding a way to secretly arrest Jesus and have him executed {without starting a riot—for they feared the crowds}³].⁴ That's when they made their decision to secretly

1 Mk. 14:1. 2 Lk. 22:1. 3 Lk. 22:2. 4 Mk. 14:1.

have Jesus captured and killed. But they all agreed, “We can’t do this during the Passover celebrations or we could have a riot on our hands.”

JESUS IS ANOINTED FOR HIS DEATH AND BURIAL (Mk. 14:3–9)

Now Jesus was in Bethany, in the home of Simon, a man Jesus had healed of leprosy. And as he was reclining at the table, a woman came into the house, holding an alabaster flask. It was filled with the highest quality of fragrant and expensive oil. *She walked right up to Jesus, and with a gesture of extreme devotion, she broke the flask and poured out the precious oil [and it cascaded]⁵ over his head.* But some [disciples]⁶ were highly indignant when they saw this, and they complained to one another, saying, “What a total waste! It could have been sold for a great sum, and the money could have benefited the poor.” So they scolded her harshly.

Jesus said to them, “*Leave her alone! Why are you so critical of this woman? She has honored me with this beautiful act of kindness. For you will always have the poor, whom you can help whenever you want, but you will not always have me. When she poured the fragrant oil over me, she was preparing my body in advance of my burial. She has done all that she could to honor me. I promise you that as this wonderful gospel spreads all over the world, the story of her lavish devotion to me will be mentioned in memory of her.*”

SATAN ENTERS INTO JUDAS (Lk. 22:3–6)

At that time Satan himself entered into Judas [Iscaiot]⁷ the locksmith, who was one of the twelve apostles. He secretly went to the religious hierarchy and the captains of the temple guards to discuss with them how he could betray Jesus and turn him over to their hands, [and said, “How much are you willing to pay me to betray Jesus into your hands?”].⁸ The religious hierarchy was elated over Judas’ treachery, and they agreed to give him a sum

5 Matt. 26:7. 6 Matt. 26:8. 7 Mk. 14:10. 8 Matt. 26:15.

of money, [thirty silver coins],⁹ in exchange for Jesus' betrayal. Judas vowed that he would find them a suitable opportunity to betray Jesus when he was away from the crowds.

JESUS PROPHESES THE LOCATION OF THE LAST SUPPER (Lk. 22:7–13)

On the day [of Unleavened Bread, when]¹⁰ the sacrifice of the Passover lambs was to take place, [the day when any bread made with yeast was removed from every Jewish home, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where should we prepare the Passover meal for you?"]¹¹ Jesus sent for Peter and John and instructed them, "Go and prepare the Passover supper so we can eat it together. [My heart longs with great desire to eat this Passover meal with you.]¹²"

They asked him, "Where do we make the preparations to eat the meal?"

Jesus gave them this sign: "When you enter the city, you will find a man carrying a jug of water. Follow him home and [tell him that the teacher says, 'My appointed time is near. I am coming to your home to eat the Passover meal with my disciples'].¹³ Say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher told us to ask you, "Where is the room I may use to have the Passover meal with my disciples?"' He will then take you to a large, fully furnished upstairs room. Make the preparations for us there."

They went and found everything to be exactly like Jesus had prophesied, and they prepared the Passover meal.

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES EAT THE LAST SUPPER (Lk. 22:14–23)

When Jesus arrived at the upper room, he took his place at the table along with all the apostles. [Over dinner, while they were reclining around the table, Jesus said, "Listen to the truth: One of you eating here with me is about to betray me."

Feeling deeply troubled by these words, one after another asked him, "You don't mean me, do you?"

9 Matt. 26:15. 10 Mk. 14:12. 11 Matt. 26:17. 12 Matt. 26:18.

13 Matt. 26:18.

He answered, “It is one of you twelve who has shared meals with me as an intimate friend. All that was prophesied of me, the Son of Man, is destined to soon take place, but it will be disastrous for the one who betrays the Son of Man. It would be far better for him if he had never been born!”¹⁴

[Then finally, Judas the traitor spoke up and asked him, “Teacher, perhaps it is I?”

Jesus answered, “You said it.”¹⁵

Then [as they ate]¹⁶ he told them, “I have longed with passion and desire to eat this Passover lamb with you before I endure my sufferings. I promise you that the next time we eat this, we will be together in the banquet of God’s kingdom realm.”

Then he raised a cup [of wine]¹⁷ and gave thanks to God, and [he entered into covenant with them]¹⁸ and said to them, “Take this and pass it on to one another and drink. I promise you that the next time we drink this wine, we will be together [and we will drink it together with a new understanding]¹⁹ in the feast of God’s kingdom realm [of my Father].²⁰”

Then he lifted up a loaf, and after praying a prayer of thanksgiving to God, he gave each of his apostles a piece of bread, saying, “[Receive this];²¹ this loaf is my body, which is now being offered to you. Always eat it to remember me.”

After supper was over, he lifted the cup again and said, “This cup is my blood of the new covenant I make with you, and it will be poured out soon for all of you [for the complete forgiveness of sins].²² But I want you to know that the hands of the one who delivers me to be the sacrifice are with mine on the table this very moment. The Son of Man must now go where he will be sacrificed. But there will be great and unending doom for the man who betrays me.”

The apostles questioned among themselves which one of them was about to do this.

14 Mk. 14:18–21. 15 Matt. 26:25. 16 Mk. 14:22.

17 Matt. 26:27. 18 Matt. 26:27. 19 Matt. 26:29. 20 Mk. 14:25.

21 Mk. 14:22. 22 Matt. 26:28.

APOSTLES ARGUE OVER WHICH OF THEM WILL BE THE GREATEST (LK. 22:24–30)

The disciples bickered over which one of them would be considered the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus interrupted their argument, saying, “The kings and men of authority in this world rule oppressively over their subjects, claiming that they do it for the good of the people. They are obsessed with how others see them. But this is not your calling. You will lead by a different model. The greatest one among you will live as one called to serve others without honor. The greatest honor and authority is reserved for the one who has a servant heart. The leaders who are served are the most important in your eyes, but in the kingdom, it is the servants who lead. Am I not here with you as one who serves you?”

“Because you have stood with me through all my trials and ordeals, *I give you your destiny*: I am promising you the kingdom realm that the Father has promised me. We will celebrate in this kingdom and you will feast with me at my table. And each of you will be given a throne, twelve thrones in all, and you will be made rulers on thrones to judge the tribes of Israel.”

Day 34

JESUS WASHES FEET (JN. 13:1–17)

Jesus knew that the night before Passover would be his last night on earth before leaving this world to return to the Father's side. All throughout his time with his disciples, Jesus had demonstrated a deep and tender love for them. And now he longed to show them the full measure of his love. Before their evening meal had begun, the accuser had already planted betrayal into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

Now Jesus was fully aware that the Father had placed all things under his control, for he had come from God and was about to go back to be with him. So he got up from the meal and took off his outer robe, and took a towel and wrapped it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' dirty feet and dry them with his towel.

But when Jesus got to Simon Peter, he objected and said, "I can't let you wash my dirty feet—you're my Lord!"

Jesus replied, "**You don't understand yet the meaning of what I'm doing, but soon it will be clear to you.**"

Peter looked at Jesus and said, "You'll never wash my dirty feet—never!"

"But Peter, if you don't allow me to wash your feet," Jesus responded, **"then you will not be able to share life with me."**

So Peter said, "Lord, in that case, don't just wash my feet, wash my hands and my head too!"

Jesus said to him, **"You are already clean. You've been washed completely and you just need your feet to be cleansed—but**

that can't be said of all of you." For Jesus knew which one was about to betray him, and that's why he told them that not all of them were clean.

After washing their feet, he put his robe on and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I just did?" Jesus said. "You've called me your teacher and lord, and you're right, for that's who I am. So if I'm your teacher and lord and have just washed your dirty feet, then you should follow the example that I've set for you and wash one another's dirty feet. Now do for each other what I have just done for you. I speak to you timeless truth: a servant is not superior to his master, and an apostle is never greater than the one who sent him. So now put into practice what I have done for you, and you will experience a life of happiness enriched with untold blessings!"

JESUS PREDICTS HIS BETRAYAL (JN. 13:18–30)

"I don't refer to all of you when I tell you these things, for I know the ones I've chosen—to fulfill the Scripture that says, 'The one who shared supper with me treacherously betrays me.' I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when the prophecy comes to pass you will be convinced that I AM. Listen to this timeless truth: whoever receives the messenger I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives the Father who sent me."

Then Jesus was moved deeply in his spirit. Looking at his disciples, he announced, "I tell you the truth—one of you is about to betray me."

Eyeing each other, his disciples puzzled over which one of them could do such a thing. The disciple that Jesus dearly loved was at the right of him at the table and was leaning his head on Jesus. Peter gestured to this disciple to ask Jesus who it was he was referring to. Then the dearly loved disciple leaned into Jesus' chest and whispered, "Master, who is it?"

"The one I give this piece of bread to after I've dipped it in the bowl," Jesus replied. Then he dipped the piece of bread into

the bowl and handed it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And when Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus looked at Judas and said, “**What you are planning to do, go do it now.**” None of those around the table realized what was happening. Some thought that Judas, their trusted treasurer, was being told to go buy what was needed for the Passover celebration, or perhaps to go give something to the poor. So Judas left quickly and went out into the dark night to betray Jesus.

JESUS PROPHECIES PETER'S DENIAL (Lk. 22:31–38)

[After Judas left the room, Jesus said, “**The time has come for the glory of God to surround the Son of Man, and God will be greatly glorified through what happens to me. And very soon God will unveil the glory of the Son of Man.**”

“My dear friends, I only have a brief time left to be with you. And then you will search and long for me. But I tell you what I told the Jewish leaders: you’ll not be able to come where I am.

“So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you’re my true followers.”

Peter interjected, “But, Master, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “**Where I am going you won’t be able to follow, but one day you will follow me there.**”

Peter said, “What do you mean I’m not able to follow you now? I would sacrifice my life to die for you!”

Jesus answered, “**Would you really lay down your life for me, Peter?**”¹

[Jesus said to them, “**{Before the night is over}² you will all fall away and desert me. This will fulfill the prophecy of the Scripture that says:**

**I will strike down the shepherd
and all the sheep will scatter far and wide.**

¹ Jn. 13:31–38. ² Matt. 26:31.

“But after I am risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”³

“Peter, my dear friend, listen to what I’m about to tell you. Satan has obtained permission to come and sift you all like wheat and test your faith. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that you would stay faithful to me no matter what comes. Remember this: after you have turned back to me and have been restored, make it your life mission to strengthen the faith of your brothers.”

“But Lord,” Peter replied, “[Even if all the rest lose their faith and fall away],⁴ I am ready to stand with you to the very end, even if it means prison or death!”

[“Are you sure, Peter?”]⁵ Jesus looked at him and prophesied, “[Mark my words, Peter. {Here’s the absolute truth}:⁶ This very night],⁷ before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

[But Peter was insistent and replied emphatically, “I will absolutely not! Under no circumstances will I ever deny you—even if I have to die with you!” And all the others repeated the same thing.]⁸

Then he said to all of them, “When I sent you out empty-handed, did you lack anything?”

“Not a thing,” they answered. “God provided all we needed.”

Jesus said, “But now I say to you: Take what you need. If you have money, take it—and a knapsack and a sword. Danger is imminent. For the prophetic Scripture about me ‘He will be accused of being a criminal’ will now come to pass. All that was prophesied of me will be fulfilled.”

The disciples told him, “Lord, we already have two swords!”

“You still don’t understand,” Jesus responded.

JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES (JN. 14:1–14)

“Don’t worry or surrender to your fear. For you’ve believed in God, now trust and believe in me also. My Father’s house has many dwelling places. If it were otherwise, I would tell you plainly, because I go to prepare a place for you to rest. And

3 Mk. 14:27–28. 4 Matt. 26:33. 5 Matt. 26:34. 6 Jn. 13:38.

7 Mk. 14:30. 8 Mk. 14:31.

when everything is ready, I will come back and take you to myself so that you will be where I am. And you already know the way to the place where I'm going."

Thomas said to him, "Master, we don't know where you're going, so how could we know the way there?"

Jesus explained, "I am the Way, I am the Truth, and I am the Life. No one comes next to the Father except through *union with me*. To know me is to know my Father too. And from now on you will realize that you have seen him and experienced him."

Philip spoke up, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be all that we need!"

Jesus replied, "Philip, I've been with you all this time and you still don't know who I am? How could you ask me to show you the Father, for anyone who has looked at me has seen the Father. Don't you believe that the Father is living in me and that I am living in the Father? Even my words are not my own but come from my Father, for he lives in me and performs his miracles of power through me. Believe that I live as one with my Father and that my Father lives as one with me—or at least, believe because of the mighty miracles I have done.

"I tell you this timeless truth: The person who follows me in faith, believing in me, will do the same mighty miracles that I do—even greater miracles than these because I go to be with my Father! For I will do whatever you ask me to do when you ask me in my name. And that is how the Son will show what the Father is really like and bring glory to him. Ask me anything in my name, and I will do it for you!"

JESUS PROPHECIES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT (JN. 14:15–31)

"Loving me empowers you to obey my commands. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Savior, the Holy Spirit of Truth, who will be to you a friend just like me—and he will never leave you. The world won't receive him because they can't see him or know him. But you know him intimately because he remains with you and will live inside you.

“I promise that I will never leave you helpless or abandon you as orphans—I will come back to you! Soon I will leave this world and they will see me no longer, but you will see me, because I will live again, and you will come alive too. So when that day comes, you will know that I am living in the Father and that you are one with me, for I will be living in you. Those who truly love me are those who obey my commands. Whoever passionately loves me will be passionately loved by my Father. And I will passionately love you in return and will manifest my life within you.”

Then one of the disciples named Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “Lord, why is it you will only reveal your identity to us and not to everyone?”

Jesus replied, “Loving me empowers you to obey my word. And my Father will love you so deeply that we will come to you and make you our dwelling place. But those who don’t love me will not obey my words. The Father did not send me to speak my own revelation, but the words of my Father. I am telling you this while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Spirit of Holiness, the One like me who sets you free, he will teach you all things in my name. And he will inspire you to remember every word that I’ve told you.

“I leave the gift of peace with you—my peace. Not the kind of fragile peace given by the world, but my perfect peace. Don’t yield to fear or be troubled in your hearts—instead, be courageous! Remember what I’ve told you, that I must go away, but I promise to come back to you. So if you truly love me, you will be glad for me, since I’m returning to my Father, who is greater than I. So when all of these things happen, you will still trust and cling to me. I won’t speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this dark world is coming. But he has no power over me, *for he has nothing to use against me*. I am doing exactly what the Father destined for me to accomplish, so that the world will discover how much I love my Father. Now come with me.”

Day 35



JESUS THE LIVING VINE (JN. 15:1–17)

“I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is my Father. He cares for the branches connected to me by lifting and propping up the fruitless branches and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest. The words I have spoken over you have already cleansed you. So you must remain in life-union with me, for I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine.

“I am the sprouting vine and you’re my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless. If a person is separated from me, he is discarded; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned. But if you live in life-union with me and if my words live powerfully within you—then you can ask whatever you desire and it will be done. When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are my mature disciples who glorify my Father!

“I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. You must continually let my love nourish your hearts. If you keep my commands, you will live in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands, for I continually live nourished and empowered by his love. My purpose for telling you these things is so that the joy that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness!

“So this is my command: Love each other deeply, as much as I have loved you. For the greatest love of all is a love that

sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends.

“You show that you are my intimate friends when you obey all that I command you. I have never called you ‘servants,’ because a master doesn’t confide in his servants, and servants don’t always understand what the master is doing. But I call you my most intimate friends, for I reveal to you everything that I’ve heard from my Father. You didn’t choose me, but I’ve chosen and commissioned you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of my Father, for my sake, he will give it to you! So this is my parting command: Love one another deeply!”

TRUE DISCIPLES CAN EXPECT PERSECUTION (JN. 15:18–27)

“Just remember, when the unbelieving world hates you, they first hated me. If you were to give your allegiance to the world, they would love and welcome you as one of their own. But because you won’t align yourself with the values of this world, they will hate you. I have chosen you and taken you out of the world to be mine. So remember what I taught you, that a servant isn’t superior to his master. And since they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And if they obey my teachings, they will also obey yours. They will treat you this way because you are mine, and they don’t know the One who sent me.

“If I had not come and spoken these things to the unbelieving world, they would not feel the guilt of their sin, but now their sin is left uncovered. If anyone hates me, they hate my Father also. If I had not performed miracles in their presence like no one else has done, they would not feel the guilt of their sins. But now, they have seen and hated both me and my Father. And all of this has happened to fulfill what is written in their Scriptures: They hated me for no reason.

“And I will send you the Divine Encourager from the very presence of my Father. He will come to you, the Spirit of Truth, emanating from the Father, and he will speak to you about me. And you will tell everyone the truth about me, for you have walked with me from the start.”

JESUS WARNS HIS DISCIPLES (JN. 16:1–33)

“I have told you this so that you would not surrender to confusion or doubt. For you will be excommunicated from the synagogues, and a time is coming when you will be put to death by misguided ones who will presume to be doing God a great service by putting you to death. And they will do these things because they don’t know anything about the Father or me. I’m telling you this now so that when their time comes you will remember that I foretold it. I didn’t tell you this in the beginning because I was still with you. But now that I’m about to leave you and go back to join the One who sent me, you need to be told. Yet, not one of you are asking me where I’m going. Instead your hearts are filled with sadness because I’ve told you these things. But here’s the truth: It’s to your advantage that I go away, for if I don’t go away the Divine Encourager will not be released to you. But after I depart, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will expose sin and prove that the world is wrong about God’s righteousness and his judgments.

“‘Sin,’ because they refuse to believe in who I am.

“God’s ‘righteousness,’ because I’m going back to join the Father and you’ll see me no longer.

“And ‘judgment’ because the ruler of this dark world has already received his sentence.

“There is so much more I would like to say to you, but it’s more than you can grasp at this moment. But when the truth-giving Spirit comes, he will unveil the reality of every truth within you. He won’t speak on his own, but only what he hears from the Father, and he will reveal *prophetically* to you what is to come. He will glorify me on the earth, for he will receive from me what is mine and reveal it to you. Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to me—that’s why I say that the Divine Encourager will receive what is mine and reveal it to you. Soon you won’t see me any longer, but then, after a little while, you will see me *in a new way*.”

Some of the disciples asked each other, “What does he mean, ‘Soon you won’t see me,’ and, ‘A little while after that and you will see me in a new way’? And what does he mean, ‘Because I’m going to my Father’?” So they kept on repeating, “What’s the

meaning of ‘a little while’? We have no clue what he’s talking about!”

Jesus knew what they were thinking, and it was obvious that they were anxious to ask him what he had meant, so he spoke up and said, “Let me make it quite clear: You will weep and be overcome with grief *over what happens to me*. The unbelieving world will be happy, while you will be filled with sorrow. But know this, your sadness will turn into joy *when you see me again!* Just like a woman giving birth experiences intense labor pains in delivering her baby, yet after the child is born she quickly forgets what she went through because of the overwhelming joy of knowing that a new baby has been born into the world.

“So will you also pass through a time of intense sorrow *when I am taken from you*, but you will see me again! And then your hearts will burst with joy, with no one being able to take it from you! For here is eternal truth: When that time comes you won’t need to ask me for anything, but instead you will go directly to the Father and ask him for anything you desire and he will give it to you, because of your relationship with me. Until now you’ve not been bold enough to ask the Father for a single thing in my name, but now you can ask, and keep on asking him! And you can be sure that you’ll receive what you ask for, and your joy will have no limits!

“I have spoken to you using figurative language, but the time is coming when I will no longer teach you with veiled speech, but I will teach you about the Father with your eyes unveiled. And I will not need to ask the Father on your behalf, for you’ll ask him directly because of your new relationship with me. For the Father tenderly loves you, because you love me and believe that I’ve come from God. I came to you sent from the Father’s presence, and I entered into the created world, and now I will leave this world and return to the Father’s side.”

His disciples said, “At last you’re speaking to us clearly and not using veiled speech and metaphors! Now we understand that you know everything there is to know, and we don’t need to question you further. And everything you’ve taught us convinces us that you have come directly from God!”

Jesus replied, “Now you finally believe in me. And the time has come when you will all be scattered, and each one of you will go your own way, leaving me alone! Yet I am never alone, for the Father is always with me. And everything I’ve taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!”

Day 36

JESUS FINISHED THE FATHER'S WORK (JN. 17:1-5)
This is what Jesus prayed as he looked up into heaven,

“Father, the time has come.
Unveil the glorious splendor of your Son
so that I will magnify your glory!
You have already given me authority
over all people so that I may give
the gift of eternal life to all those that you have
given to me.
Eternal life means to know and experience you
as the only true God,
and to know and experience Jesus Christ,
as the Son whom you have sent.
I have glorified you on the earth
by faithfully doing everything you've told me to do.
So my Father, restore me back to the glory
that we shared together when we were face-to-face
before the universe was created.”

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES (JN. 17:6-19)

“Father, I have manifested who you really are
and I have revealed you to the men and women
that you gave to me.
They were yours, and you gave them to me,
and they have fastened your Word firmly to their hearts.

And now at last they know that everything I have is a gift
from you,
And the very words you gave to me to speak
I have passed on to them.
They have received your words
and *carry them in their hearts*.
They are convinced that I have come from your
presence,
and they have fully believed that you sent me to
represent you.
So with deep love, I pray for my disciples.
I'm not asking on behalf of the unbelieving world,
but for those who belong to you,
those you have given me.
For all who belong to me now belong to you.
And all who belong to you now belong to me as well,
and my glory is revealed through *their surrendered lives*.

"Holy Father, I am about to leave this world
to return and be with you,
but my disciples will remain here.
So I ask that by the power of your name,
protect each one that you have given me,
and watch over them so that they will be united
as one, even as we are one.
While I was with these that you have given me,
I have kept them safe by your name that you have
given me.
Not one of them is lost,
except the one that was destined to be lost,
so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

"But now I am returning to you so Father,
I pray that they will experience
and enter into my joyous delight in you
so that it is fulfilled in them and overflows.
I have given them your message

and that is why the unbelieving world hates them.
 For their allegiance is no longer to this world
 because I am not of this world.
 I am not asking that you remove them from the world,
 but I ask that you guard their hearts from evil,
 For they no longer belong to this world any more than I do.

“Your Word is truth! So make them holy by the truth.
 I have commissioned them to represent me
 just as you commissioned me to represent you.
 And now I dedicate myself to them as a holy sacrifice
 so that they will live as fully dedicated to God
 and be made holy by your truth.”

JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU (JN. 17:20–26)

“And I ask not only for these disciples,
 but also for all those who will one day
 believe in me through their message.
 I pray for them all to be joined together as one
 even as you and I, Father, are joined together as one.
 I pray for them to become one with us
 so that the world will recognize that you sent me.
 For the very glory you have given to me I have given them
 so that they will be joined together as one
 and experience the same unity that we enjoy.
 You live fully in me and now I live fully in them
 so that they will experience perfect unity,
 and the world will be convinced that you have sent me,
 for they will see that you love each one of them
 with the same passionate love that you have for me.

“Father, I ask that you allow everyone that you have given to me
 to be with me where I am!
 Then they will see my full glory—
 the very splendor you have placed upon me
 because you have loved me even before the beginning
 of time.

“You are my righteous Father,
 but the unbelieving world has never known you
 in the perfect way that I know you!
And all those who believe in me
 also know that you have sent me!
 I have revealed to them who you are
 and I will continue to make you even more real to them,
 so that they may experience the same endless love
 that you have for me,
 for your love will now live in them, even as I live in them!”

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE (LK. 22:39–46)

[After Jesus finished this prayer],¹ Jesus left the upper room with his disciples and, as was his habit, went [across the Kidron Valley]² to the Mount of Olives, *his place of secret prayer*, [to an orchard called “The Oil Press”].³ There he told the apostles, “Keep praying for strength to be spared from the severe test of your faith that is about to come. [Sit here while I go and pray over there.” He took Peter, Jacob, and John with him. However, an intense feeling of great sorrow plunged his soul into deep sorrow and agony. And he said to them, “My heart is overwhelmed and crushed with grief. It feels as though I’m dying. Stay here and keep watch with me.”]⁴

Then he withdrew from them a short distance to be alone, [and being overcome with grief, he threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to experience this hour of suffering.]⁵ Kneeling down, he prayed, “[Abba, my]⁶ Father, if you are willing, take this cup of agony away from me. [Please—don’t allow me to drink this cup of suffering!]⁷ But no matter what, [I only desire to fulfill your plan for me],⁸ your will must be mine.”

Jesus called for an angel of glory to strengthen him, and the angel appeared. [Then he came back to his three disciples and found them all sound asleep. He awakened Peter and said to

1 Jn. 18:1. 2 Jn. 18:1. 3 Mk. 14:32. 4 Matt. 26:36–38.

5 Mk. 14:35. 6 Mk. 14:36. 7 Mk. 14:36. 8 Matt. 26:39.

him, “Simon, are you asleep? Do you lack the strength to stay awake with me for even just an hour? Keep alert and pray that you’ll be spared from this time of testing. For your spirit is eager enough, but your humanity is feeble.”

Then he left them a second time and went to pray the same thing.⁹ He prayed even more passionately, like one being sacrificed, until he was in such intense agony of spirit that his sweat became drops of blood, dripping onto the ground. [He said to God, “My Father, if there is not a way that you can deliver me from this suffering, then your will must be done.”]¹⁰

When Jesus finished praying, he got up and went to his disciples and found them all asleep, for they were exhausted and overwhelmed with sorrow. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “[That’s enough sleep! The end has come and the hour has arrived for the Son of Man to be handed over to the authority of sinful men. Get up and let’s go. Don’t you see? My betrayer draws near.]¹¹ You need to be alert and pray for the strength to endure the great temptation.”

JUDAS BETRAYS JESUS (Lk. 22:47–53)

No sooner had he finished speaking when suddenly a mob approached, and right in front of the mob was his disciple Judas, [along with a large crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent to arrest Jesus by order of the ruling priests and Jewish religious leaders.]¹² [Judas, the traitor, knew where this place was, for Jesus had gone there often with his disciples. The Pharisees and the leading priests had given Judas a large detachment of Roman soldiers and temple police to seize Jesus. Judas guided them to the garden, all of them carrying torches and lanterns and armed *with swords and spears*. Jesus, knowing full well what was about to happen, went out to the garden entrance to meet them. Stepping forward, he asked, “Who are you looking for?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. (Now Judas, the traitor, was among them.)

9 Mk. 14:37–39. 10 Matt. 26:42. 11 Mk. 14:41–42. 12 Mk. 14:43.

He replied, “I am he.”

And the moment Jesus spoke the words, “I am he,” the mob fell backward to the ground!

So once more, Jesus asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

As they stood up, they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus replied, “I told you that I am the one you’re looking for, so if you want me, let these men go home.”

He said this to fulfill the prophecy he had spoken, “Father, not one of those you have given me has been lost.”¹³ [Judas quickly stepped up to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, my Teacher!”]¹⁴ He walked up close to Jesus and greeted him with a kiss. For he had agreed to give the religious leaders a sign, saying, “The one I kiss is the one to seize.”

[“My beloved friend,” Jesus said, “is this why you’ve come?”]¹⁵

He looked at Judas with sorrow and said, “A kiss, Judas? Are you really going to betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

[Then the armed men seized Jesus to arrest him.]¹⁶ When the other disciples understood what was happening, they asked, “Lord, shall we fight them with our swords?”

Just then, one of the disciples, [Peter],¹⁷ swung his sword at the high priest’s servant and slashed off his right ear. [The servant’s name was Malchus.

Jesus ordered Peter, “Put your sword away! {For all those who embrace violence will die by violence. Don’t you realize that I could ask my heavenly Father for angels to come at any time to deliver me? And instantly he would answer me by sending twelve armies of the angelic host to come and protect us. But that would thwart the prophetic plan of God. For it has been written that it would happen this way.}¹⁸ Do you really think I will avoid the suffering which my Father has assigned to me?”]¹⁹ Jesus stopped the incident from escalating any further by shouting, “Stop! That’s enough of this!” Then he touched the right side of the injured man’s head and *the ear grew back*—he was healed!

13 Jn. 18:2–9. 14 Mk. 14:45. 15 Matt. 26:50. 16 Mk. 14:46.

17 Jn. 18:10. 18 Matt. 25:53–54. 19 Jn. 18:10–11.

Jesus turned to those who had come to seize him—the ruling priests, the officers of the temple police, and the religious leaders—and said, “Am I a criminal that you come to capture me with clubs and swords? Wasn’t I with you day after day, teaching in the temple courts? You could have seized me at any time, [yet you didn’t arrest me].²⁰ But in the darkness of night you have now found your time, for it belongs to you and to the prince of darkness. [But all of this fulfills the prophecies of the Scriptures.” At that point all of his disciples ran away and abandoned him.

There was a young man there following Jesus, wearing only a linen sheet wrapped around him. They tried to arrest him also, but he slipped from their grasp and ran off naked, leaving his linen cloth in their hands.]²¹

JESUS IS TAKEN BEFORE ANNAS AND INTERROGATED (JN. 18:12–14, 19–24)

Then the soldiers and their captain, along with the Jewish officers, seized Jesus and tied him up. They took him first to Annas, as he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had persuaded the Jewish leaders that it would be better off to have one person die for the sake of the people.

The high priest interrogated Jesus concerning his disciples and his teachings.

Jesus answered Annas’ questions by saying, “I have said nothing in secret. At all times I have taught openly and publicly in a synagogue, in the temple courts, and wherever the people assemble. Why would you ask me for evidence to condemn me? Ask those who have heard what I’ve taught. They can tell you.”

Just then one of the guards standing near Jesus punched him in the face with his fist and said, “How dare you answer the high priest like that!”

²⁰ Matt. 26:55. ²¹ Mk. 14:49–52.

Jesus replied, “If my words are evil, then prove it. But if I haven’t broken any laws, then why would you hit me?”

Then Annas sent Jesus, still tied up, across the way to the high priest Caiaphas.

Day 37

JESUS CONDEMNED BY THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (Mk. 14:53–65)

Those who arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, to a meeting where the religious scholars and Jewish leaders were assembled. Now, Peter had followed him from a distance all the way to the chief priest's courtyard. He sat with the guards and was warming himself by the fire, [waiting to see how things would unfold].¹

The chief priests and the entire supreme Jewish council of leaders were doing their best to find false charges that they could bring against Jesus and condemn him to death, but they could not find any. Many false witnesses came forward, but the evidence could not be corroborated. Some came forward and testified against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I can destroy this temple made with hands and then build another one again in three days not made with hands!’” Yet even on this point the witnesses did not agree.

Finally, the chief priest stood up in the middle of them and said to Jesus, “Have you nothing to say about these allegations? Is what they’re saying about you true?”

But Jesus remained silent before them and did not answer. So the chief priest said to him, “[I charge you under oath—in the name of the living God, tell us once and for all]:² Are you the anointed Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?”

Jesus answered him, **“I am. [You just said it yourself.]³ And more than that, you are about to see the Son of Man seated at**

1 Matt. 26:58. 2 Matt. 26:63. 3 Matt. 26:64.

the right hand of [God],⁴ the Almighty and [one day you will also see the Son of Man]⁵ coming in the heavenly clouds!”

[This infuriated the chief priest, and]⁶ then, *as an act of outrage*, the high priest tore his robe and shouted, “[What blasphemy!]⁷ No more witnesses are needed, for you’ve heard this grievous blasphemy.” *Turning to the council he said*, “Now, what is your verdict?”

“He’s guilty and deserves the death penalty!” they all answered.

Then they spat on his face [and slapped him],⁸ then blindfolded him. Others struck him over and over with their fists and taunted him by saying, “[Oh, Anointed One],⁹ prophesy to us! *Tell us which one of us is about to hit you next?*” And the guards took him and beat him.

PETER DENIES HE KNEW JESUS (Lk. 22:54–62)

The religious leaders had seized Jesus and led him away, but Peter [and another disciple]¹⁰ had followed from a safe distance. They had brought him to the home of the high priest, where people were already gathered out in the courtyard. [Since the other disciple was well known to the high priest, he entered in, but Peter was left standing outside by the gate.]¹¹ Someone had built a fire, so Peter inched closer and sat down among them to stay warm.

A girl, [a servant of the high priest],¹² noticed Peter sitting in the firelight. Staring at him, she pointed him out and said, “[I recognize you. You were with Jesus the Galilean.]¹³ This man is one of Jesus’ disciples!”

[In front of everyone]¹⁴ Peter flatly denied it, saying, “What are you talking about, girl? I don’t know him!”

[Meanwhile, Peter was still standing in the courtyard by the fire {and the rooster crowed}.¹⁵]¹⁶ A little while later, [as he stood near the gateway of the courtyard],¹⁷ someone else spotted Peter and said, “I recognize you. [I know this man is one of {Jesus the Nazarene’s}¹⁸ followers!]¹⁹ You’re one of his, I know it!”

4 Matt. 26:64. 5 Matt. 26:64. 6 Matt. 26:65. 7 Matt. 26:65.

8 Matt. 26:67. 9 Matt. 26:68. 10 Jn. 18:15. 11 Jn. 18:15–16.

12 Mk. 14:66. 13 Matt. 26:69. 14 Matt. 26:70. 15 Mk. 14:68.

16 Jn. 18:25. 17 Matt. 26:71. 18 Matt. 26:71. 19 Mk. 14:69.

Peter again [denied it, and with an oath he]²⁰ said, “I’m not one of his disciples.”

About an hour later, someone else identified Peter and insisted he was a disciple of Jesus, saying, “Look at him! He’s from Galilee, just like Jesus. I know he’s one of them—[for his accent proves it!]²¹”

But Peter was adamant. [He denied it, and using profanity he said,]²² “Listen, I don’t know what you’re talking about. Don’t you understand? I don’t even know him.” While the words were still in his mouth, the rooster crowed, [piercing the night for the second time].²³

At that moment, the Lord, who was being led through the courtyard by his captors, turned around and gazed at Peter. All at once Peter remembered the words Jesus had prophesied over him, “**Before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.**” [With a shattered heart],²⁴ Peter burst into tears, ran off from the crowd, and wept bitterly.

JESUS IS MOCKED AND SEVERELY BEATEN (Lk. 22:63–65)

Those who were guarding Jesus mocked and beat him severely. They also made fun of him, blindfolding him and slapping his face and saying, “Prove that you are a prophet and tell us which one of us hit you!” They blasphemed and heaped insult after insult upon him.

JESUS CONDEMNED BY THE JEWISH COUNCIL (Lk. 22:66–71)

At daybreak [that morning],²⁵ the high priests, the experts of the law, and the top religious leaders convened and had Jesus brought before their council. They asked him point blank, “Tell us, are you the Christ, the Messiah, or not?”

Jesus responded, “**If I tell you the truth, you won’t believe me. And if I question you, you will not answer me or release me. But**

20 Matt. 26:72. 21 Mk. 14:70. 22 Matt. 26:74. 23 Mk. 14:72.
24 Matt. 26:75. 25 Mk. 15:1.

from today on, the Son of Man will be enthroned in the place of honor, power, and authority with Almighty God.”

They all shouted, “Then you do claim to be the Son of God?”

He said to them, “**You are the ones who say I am.**”

They all shouted, “We’ve heard it from his very lips! What further proof do we need?”

[All the chief priests and religious leaders resolved to take action against Jesus and decided that he should be executed. So they bound him with chains and led him away to Pilate, the Roman governor.]²⁶

JUDAS COMMITS SUICIDE (MATT. 27:3–10)

Now, when Judas, the betrayer, saw that Jesus had been sentenced to death, remorse filled his heart. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and religious leaders, saying, “I have sinned because I have betrayed an innocent man.”

They replied, “Why are you bothering us? That’s your problem.”

Then Judas flung the silver coins inside the temple and went out and hanged himself.

The chief priests, picking up the pieces of silver, said, “We can’t keep this, for it’s unlawful to put blood money into the temple treasury.” So after some deliberation, they decided to purchase the potter’s field *of clay*, to use as a cemetery for burying strangers. That’s why that land has been called “The Field of Blood.” This fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah:

They took the thirty pieces of silver,
the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel,
the price of a precious man,
And with the silver they bought the potter’s field,
as the Lord directed.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE (LK. 23:1–5)

[Before dawn]²⁷ the entire council stood at once and took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. [Now the Jews refused to go into the Roman governor’s residence to avoid ceremonial defilement

²⁶ Matt. 27:1–2. ²⁷ Jn. 18:28.

before eating the Passover meal. So Pilate came outside where they waited and asked them pointedly, “Tell me, what exactly is the accusation that you bring against this man? What has he done?”²⁸ They accused him with false testimony before the governor, saying, “This man tells us we’re not to pay our taxes to Caesar. And he proclaims himself to be Christ the King and Messiah. He’s a deceiver of our nation. [We wouldn’t be coming here to hand over this ‘criminal’ to you if he wasn’t guilty of some wrongdoing!”

Pilate said, “Very well, then you take him yourselves and go pass judgment on him according to your Jewish laws!”

But the Jewish leaders complained and said, “We don’t have legal authority to put anyone to death. *You should have him crucified!*” (This was to fulfill the words of Jesus when he predicted the manner of death that he would die.)

Upon hearing this, Pilate went back inside his palace and summoned Jesus.²⁹

[As Jesus stood in front of the Roman governor],³⁰ Pilate asked him, “Is this true? Are you their king and Messiah?”

[Jesus replied, “*Are you asking because you really want to know, or are you only asking this because others have said it about me?*”

Pilate responded, “Only a Jew would care about this; do I look like a Jew? It’s your own people and your religious leaders that have handed you over to me. So tell me, Jesus, what have you done wrong?”

Jesus looked at Pilate and said, “*The royal power of my kingdom realm doesn’t come from this world. If it did, then my followers would be fighting to the end to defend me from the Jewish leaders. My kingdom realm authority is not from this realm.*”

Then Pilate responded, “Oh, so then you are a king?”³¹

Jesus answered, “*It is true. [You have just spoken it. {I was born a King, and I have come into this world to prove what truth really is. And everyone who loves the truth will receive my words.*”

Pilate looked at Jesus and said, “What is truth?”³² Then he was slandered and accused by the chief priests and religious leaders, but he remained silent.³³

[So Pilate questioned him again. “Have you nothing to say? Don’t you hear these many allegations they’re making against you?” But Jesus offered no defense to any of the charges, much to the great astonishment of Pilate.]³⁴

[As silence filled the room, Pilate went back out to where the Jewish leaders were waiting and]³⁵ turned to the high priests and to the gathered crowd and said, “This man has committed no crime. [He’s not guilty.]³⁶ I find nothing wrong with him.”

But they yelled and demanded that Pilate do something, saying, “He has stirred up our nation, misleading people from the moment he began teaching in Galilee until he has come here to Jerusalem!”

JESUS BEFORE HEROD (Lk. 23:6–12)

When Pilate heard the word Galilee, he asked if Jesus was a Galilean, as he knew that Antipas, son of Herod, was the ruler over Galilee. When they told him yes, Pilate saw a way out of his problem. Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at that time, so Pilate sent Jesus to Antipas.

When Antipas saw Jesus, he was elated, for he had heard a great deal about his ministry and wanted Jesus to perform a miracle in front of him. Antipas questioned him at length, but Jesus wouldn’t even answer him.

All the while the high priests and religious leaders stood by, hatefully accusing Jesus of wrongdoing, so that Antipas and his soldiers treated him with scorn and mocking. Antipas put an elegant purple robe on Jesus and sent him back to Pilate. That day, Antipas, son of Herod, and Pilate healed the rift between themselves due to old hostilities and they became good friends.

32 Jn. 18:37–38. 33 Matt. 27:11–12. 34 Mk. 15:4–5.

35 Jn. 18:38. 36 Jn. 18:38.

JESUS SENTENCED TO DEATH (Lk. 23:13–25)

Pilate gathered the people together with the high priests and all the religious leaders of the nation and told them, “You have presented this man to me and charged him with stirring a rebellion among the people. But I say to you that I have examined him here in your presence and have put him on trial. My verdict is that none of the charges you have brought against him are true. I find no fault in him. And I sent him to Antipas, son of Herod, who also, after questioning him, has found him not guilty. Since he has done nothing deserving of death, I have decided to punish him with a severe flogging and release him.” For it was Pilate’s custom to honor the Jewish holiday by releasing a prisoner.

[Now, every year at Passover it was the custom of the governor to pardon a prisoner and release him to the people—anyone they wanted. And at that time, Pilate was holding in custody a notorious criminal named Jesus Barabbas. So as the crowds of people assembled outside of Pilate’s residence, he went out and offered them a choice. He asked them, “Who would you want me to release to you today, Jesus who is called Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Anointed One?” (Now, Pilate was fully aware that the religious leaders had handed Jesus over to him because of their bitter jealousy.)

Just then, as Pilate was presiding over the tribunal, his wife sent him an urgent message: “Don’t harm that holy man, for I suffered a horrible nightmare last night about him!”

Meanwhile, the chief priest and the religious leaders were inciting the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be freed and to have Jesus killed. So Pilate asked them again, “Which of the two men would you like me to release for you?”³⁷

When the crowd heard this, they went wild. Erupting with anger, they cried out, “No! Take this one away and release Barabbas!” For Barabbas had been thrown in prison for robbery and murder.

³⁷ Matt. 27:15–21.

Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, tried to convince them it was best to let Jesus go. [He asked them, “Then what do you want me to do with this one you call the king of the Jews?”]³⁸ But they cried out over and over, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

A third time, Pilate asked the crowd, “[“Why?”]³⁹ What evil crime has this man committed that I should have him crucified? I haven’t found one thing that warrants a death sentence! I will have him flogged severely and then release him.”

But the people and the high priests, shouting like a mob, screamed out at the top of their lungs, “No! Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Finally their shouts and screams succeeded. [When Pilate realized that a riot was about to break out and that it was useless to try to reason with the crowd, he sent for a basin of water. After washing his hands in front of the people, he said, “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. The responsibility for his death is now yours!”

And the crowd replied, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!”]⁴⁰

Pilate caved in to the crowd and ordered that the will of the people be done, [because he wanted to please the people].⁴¹ Then he released the guilty murderer Barabbas, as they had insisted, and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

38 Mk. 15:12. 39 Matt. 27:23. 40 Matt. 27:24–25. 41 Mk. 15:15.

Day 38

JESUS IS FLOGGED AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH (JN. 19:1–16)

[The soldiers took Jesus into the headquarters of the governor's compound and summoned a military unit of nearly six hundred men.]¹ Then Pilate ordered Jesus to be brutally beaten with a whip of leather straps embedded with metal. And the soldiers [stripped off his clothing and]² also wove thorn-branches into a [victor's]³ crown and set it on his head, and they placed a purple robe over his shoulders. Then, [after placing a reed staff in his right hand],⁴ one by one, they came in front of him to mock him by saying, "Hail, [your majesty],⁵ to the king of the Jews!" [Then they spat in his face and took the reed staff from his hand and hit him repeatedly on his head, *driving the crown of thorns deep into his brow.*]⁶ And one after the other, they repeatedly punched him in the face.

Once more Pilate went out and said to the Jewish officials, "I will bring him out once more so that you know that I've found nothing wrong with him." So when Jesus emerged, *bleeding*, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns on his head, Pilate said to them, "Look at him! Here is your man!"

No sooner did the high priests and the temple guards see Jesus that they all shouted in a frenzy, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

1 Mk. 15:16. 2 Matt. 27:28. 3 Mk. 15:17. 4 Matt. 27:29. 5 Mk. 15:18.
6 Matt. 27:30.

Pilate replied, “You take him then and nail him to a cross yourselves! I told you—he’s not guilty! I find no reason to condemn him.”

The Jewish leaders shouted back, “But we have the Law! And according to our Law, he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God!”

Then Pilate was greatly alarmed when he heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God! So he took Jesus back inside and said to him, “Where have you come from?” But once again, silence filled the room. Perplexed, Pilate said, “Are you going to play deaf? Don’t you know that I have the power to grant you your freedom or nail you to a tree?”

Jesus answered, “**You would have no power over me at all, unless it was given to you from above. This is why the one who betrayed me is guilty of an even greater sin.**”

From then on Pilate tried to find a way out of the situation and to set him free, but the Jewish authorities shouted him down: “If you let this man go, you’re no friend of Caesar! Anyone who declares himself a king is an enemy of the emperor!”

So when Pilate heard this threat, he relented and had Jesus, *who was torn and bleeding*, brought outside. Then he went up the elevated stone platform and took his seat on the judgment bench—which in Aramaic is called Gabbatha, or “The Bench.” And it was now almost noon. And it was the same day they were preparing to slay the Passover lambs.

Then Pilate said to the Jewish officials, “Look! Here is your king!”

But they screamed out, “Take him away! Take him away and crucify him!”

Pilate replied, “Shall I nail your king to a cross?”

The high priests answered, “We have no other king but Caesar!”

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them. So the soldiers seized him and [when they finished ridiculing him, they took off the purple robe, put his own clothes back on him, and]’ took him away to be crucified.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS (LK. 23:26–43)

As the guards led Jesus to be crucified, there was *an African man* in the crowd named Simon, from Libya. He had just arrived from a rural village [with his two sons, Alexander and Rufus],⁸ *to keep the Feast of the Passover*. The guards laid Jesus' cross on Simon's shoulders and forced him to walk behind Jesus and carry his cross.

Massive crowds gathered to follow Jesus, including a number of women, who were wailing with sorrow over him. Jesus turned to them and said, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me. You should be weeping for yourselves and your children. For the day is coming when it will not be the women with children who are blessed but the childless. Then you will say, ‘The barren women are the most fortunate! Those who have never given birth and never nursed a child—they are more fortunate than we are, for they will never see their children put to death!’ And the people will cry out for the mountains and hills to fall on top of them to hide them from all that is to come. For if this is what they do to the living Branch, what will they do with the dead ones?”*

Two criminals were led away with Jesus, and all three were to be executed together. When they came to the place that is known as “The Skull,” [which in Aramaic is Golgotha],⁹ [the soldiers offered him a mild painkiller, a drink of wine mixed with gall, but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.]¹⁰ Then the guards crucified Jesus, nailing him, [his hands and feet],¹¹ on the center cross between the two criminals. While they were nailing Jesus to the cross, he prayed over and over, *“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing.”*

The soldiers, after they crucified him, gambled over his clothing [by rolling dice to see who would win them. {They divided up his clothes into four shares, one for each of them. But his tunic was seamless, woven from the top to the bottom as a single garment. So the soldiers said to each other, “Don’t tear it—let’s throw dice to see who gets it!” The soldiers did all of this not knowing they fulfilled the Scripture that says, “They divided

8 Mk. 15:21. 9 Jn. 19:17. 10 Matt. 27:24. 11 Matt. 27:35.

my garments among them and gambled for my garment.”} ¹² It was nine o'clock in the morning when they finally crucified him.] ¹³ [And the soldiers stood there to watch what would happen and to keep guard over him.] ¹⁴

A great crowd gathered to watch what was happening. The religious leaders sneered at Jesus and mocked him, saying, “Look at this man! What kind of ‘chosen Messiah’ is this? He pretended to save others, but he can’t even save himself!”

The soldiers joined in the mockery by offering Jesus a drink of vinegar.

Over Jesus’ head on the cross was written an inscription in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic: “This man is [Jesus of Nazareth, King of Israel], ¹⁵ the king of all the Jews.” And all the soldiers laughed and scoffed at him, saying, “Hey! If you’re the king of Jews, why don’t you save yourself?”

[But the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “You must change the sign! Don’t let it say, ‘King of the Jews,’ but rather—‘he claimed to be the King of the Jews!’” Pilate responded, “What I have written will remain!”] ¹⁶

[Two criminals were also crucified with Jesus, one on each side of him. This fulfilled the Scripture that says:

He was considered to be a criminal.] ¹⁷

One of the criminals hanging on the cross next to Jesus kept ridiculing him, saying, “What kind of Messiah are you? Save yourself and save us from this death!”

The criminal hanging on the other cross rebuked the man, saying, “Don’t you fear God? You’re about to die! We deserve to be condemned, for we’re just being repaid for what we’ve done. But this man—he’s done nothing wrong!”

Then he said, “I beg of you, my Lord Jesus, show me grace and take me with you into your *everlasting* kingdom!”

12 Jn. 19:23–24. 13 Mk. 15:24–25. 14 Matt. 27:36.

15 Matt. 27:37. 16 Jn. 19:21–22. 17 Mk. 15:27–28.

Jesus responded, “I promise you—this very day you will enter paradise with me.”

[Those who passed by shook their heads and spitefully ridiculed him, saying, “Aha! You boasted that you could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Why don’t you save yourself now? {If you’re really God’s Son},¹⁸ just come down from the cross!”

Even the ruling priests and the religious scholars joined in the mockery and kept laughing among themselves, saying, “He saved others, but he can’t even save himself! Israel’s king, is he? Let the ‘Messiah,’ the ‘king of Israel,’ *pull out the nails and come down from the cross right now.* {He says he puts all his trust in God, so let’s see if it’s true, and see if God really wants to rescue his ‘favorite son’!}¹⁹ We’ll believe it when we see it!”²⁰

[Mary, Jesus’ mother, was standing next to his cross, along with Mary’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. So when Jesus looked down and saw the disciple he loved standing with her, he said, “Mother, look—John will be a son to you.” Then he said, “John, look—she will be a mother to you!” From that day on, John accepted Mary into his home *as one of his own family.*]²¹

THE DEATH OF THE SAVIOR (Lk. 23:44–49)

It was now only midday, yet the whole world became dark for three hours [beginning at noon]²² as the light of the sun faded away. [About three o’clock, Jesus shouted with a mighty voice in Aramaic, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”—that is, “My God, My God, {why have you deserted me},²³ why have you turned your back on me?”

Some who were standing near the cross *misunderstood* and said, “Listen! He’s calling for Elijah.” One bystander ran and got a sponge, soaked it with sour wine, then put it on a stick and held it up for Jesus to drink. But the rest said, “Leave him alone! Let’s see if Elijah comes to rescue him.”²⁴ And suddenly in the

18 Matt. 27:40. 19 Matt. 27:43. 20 Mk. 15:29–32. 21 Jn. 19:25–27.
22 Matt. 27:45. 23 Matt. 27:46. 24 Mk. 15:34–36.

temple the thick veil hanging in the Holy Place was ripped in two [from the top to the bottom. The earth shook violently, rocks were split apart, and graves were opened. Then many of the holy ones who had died were brought back to life and came out of their graves. And after Jesus' resurrection, they were plainly seen by many people walking in Jerusalem.]²⁵

[Jesus knew that his mission was accomplished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said: **"I am thirsty."**

A jar of sour wine was sitting nearby, so they soaked a sponge with it and put it on the stalk of hyssop and raised it to his lips. When he had sipped the sour wine, he said, **"It is finished, my bride!"**²⁶ Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, **"Father, I surrender my Spirit into your hands."** And he took his last breath and died.

When the Roman captain overseeing the crucifixion witnessed all that took place, he was awestruck and glorified God. Acknowledging what they had done, he said, "I have no doubt [this man was the Son of God];²⁷ we just killed the righteous one."

[The Jewish leaders did not want the bodies of the victims to remain on the cross through the next day, since it was the day of preparation for a very important Sabbath. So they asked Pilate's permission to have the victims' legs broken *to hasten their death* and their bodies taken down before sunset. So the soldiers broke the legs of the two men who were nailed there. But when they came to Jesus, they realized that he had already died, so they decided not to break his legs. But one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced Jesus' side, and blood and water gushed out.

(I, John, do testify to the certainty of what took place, and I write the truth so that you might also believe.) For all these things happened to fulfill the prophecies of the Scriptures:

"Not one of his bones will be broken,"
and, "They will gaze on the one they have pierced!"²⁸

The crowds that had gathered to observe this spectacle went back to their homes, overcome with deep sorrow and devastated by what they had witnessed. But standing off at a distance were some who truly knew Jesus, and the women who had followed him all the way from Galilee were keeping vigil. [Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jacob the younger and Joseph, and Salome. Many other women who had followed him to Jerusalem were there too.]²⁹

THE BURIAL OF JESUS (Lk. 24:50–56)

[Evening was fast approaching, and it was a preparation day before a Sabbath.]³⁰ There was also a member of the Jewish council named Joseph [who was a secret disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jewish authorities]³¹ from the village of Ramah, a good-hearted, honorable man who was eager for the appearing of God's kingdom realm. He had strongly disagreed with the decision of the council to crucify Jesus. He [courageously]³² came before Pilate and asked permission to take [custody of]³³ the body of Jesus *and give him a proper burial*. [Pilate was amazed to hear that Jesus was already dead, so he summoned the Roman officer, who confirmed it. After it was confirmed, Pilate consented to give the corpse to Joseph.]³⁴ [Now Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus privately at night, accompanied Joseph, and together they carried a significant amount of myrrh and aloes to the cross. Then they took Jesus' body]³⁵ from the cross and wrapped it in a winding sheet of linen [with the embalming spices according to the Jewish burial customs.]³⁶ And Joseph placed it in [his own]³⁷ new, unused tomb chiseled out of solid rock. [Then they rolled a large stone over the entrance to seal the tomb.]³⁸ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was fast approaching.

The women who had been companions of Jesus from the beginning saw all this take place and watched as the body was

29 Mk. 15:41. 30 Mk. 15:42. 31 Jn. 19:38. 32 Mk. 15:43.

33 Matt. 27:58. 34 Mk. 15:44–45. 35 Jn. 19:39–40. 36 Jn. 19:40.

37 Matt. 27:59. 38 Mk. 15:46.

laid in the tomb. Afterward they returned home and prepared fragrant spices and ointments and were planning to anoint his body after the Sabbath was completed, according to the commandments of the law.

[The next day, the day after Preparation Day for Passover, the chief priests and the Pharisees went together to Pilate. They said to him, “Our master, we remember that this imposter claimed that he would rise from the dead after three days. So please, order the tomb to be sealed until after the third day. Seal it so that his disciples can’t come and steal the corpse and tell people he rose from the dead. Then the last deception would be worse than the first!”

“I will send soldiers to guard the tomb,” Pilate replied. “Go with them and make the tomb as secure as possible.” So they left and sealed the stone, and Pilate’s soldiers secured the tomb.]³⁹

³⁹ *Matt. 27:62–66.*

Day 39

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS (LK. 24:1–10)

[After the Sabbath ended, at the first light of dawn on the first day of the week]¹ very early that Sunday morning, the women made their way to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. Among them were Mary Magdalene; [Mary the mother of Jacob; Salome];² Joanna; and Mary, Jesus' mother. [They had purchased aromatic embalming spices so that they might anoint his body. And they had been asking one another, "Who can roll away the heavy stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"]³ [Suddenly, the earth shook violently beneath their feet as the angel of the Lord Jehovah descended from heaven. Lightning flashed around him and his robe was dazzling white! The guards were stunned and terrified—lying motionless like dead men. Then the angel walked up to the tomb, rolled away the stone, and sat on top of it!]⁴ Arriving at the tomb they discovered that the huge stone covering the entrance had been rolled aside, so they went in to look. But the tomb was empty. The body of Jesus was gone!

They stood there, stunned and perplexed. Suddenly two men in dazzling white robes shining like lightning appeared above them. Terrified, the women fell to the ground on their faces.

The men in white said to them, "[Don't be afraid. I know that you're here looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.]"⁵ Why would you look for the living One in a tomb? He is not here, for he has risen! Have you forgotten what he said to you while

1 Matt. 28:1. 2 Mk. 16:1. 3 Mk. 16:2–3. 4 Matt. 28:2–4. 5 Mk. 16:6.

he was still in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man is destined to be handed over to sinful men to be nailed to a cross, and on the third day he will rise again?’ [Come inside the tomb and see the place where our Lord was lying. Then run and tell his disciples, {even Peter},⁶ that he has risen from the dead! I give you his message: ‘I am going ahead of you in Galilee and you will see me there.’”]⁷

All at once they remembered his words. Leaving the tomb, [they staggered out of it awestruck, with their minds swirling.]⁸ They went to break the news to the Eleven and to all the others of what they had seen and heard, [and their hearts were deep in wonder and filled with great joy.

Along the way, Jesus suddenly appeared in front of them and said, **“Rejoice!”** They were so overwhelmed by seeing him that they bowed down and grasped his feet in adoring worship.

Then Jesus said to them, **“Throw off all your fears. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will find me there.”**]⁹

THE GUARDS REPORT WHAT THEY WITNESSED (MATT. 28:11–15)

After the women left the tomb, a few of the guards went into Jerusalem and told the chief priests everything they had seen and heard. So the chief priests called a meeting with all the religious leaders and came up with a plan. They bribed the guards with a large sum of money and told them, “Tell everyone, ‘While we were asleep, his disciples came at night and stole his body!’ If Pilate finds out about this, don’t worry. We’ll make sure you don’t get blamed.” So they took the money and did as they were told. (That is why the story of the guards is still circulated among the Jews to this day.)

THE EMPTY TOMB (JN. 20:1–18)

[When the disciples heard the testimony of the women, it made no sense, and they were unable to believe what they heard.]¹⁰ Then Peter and the other disciple jumped up and ran [the entire distance]¹¹ to the tomb to go see for themselves. They started

6 Mk. 16:7. 7 Matt. 28:6–7. 8 Mk. 16:8. 9 Matt. 28:8–10.

10 Lk. 24:11. 11 Lk. 24:12.

out together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He didn't enter the tomb, but peeked in, and saw only the linen cloths lying there. Then Peter came behind him and went right into the tomb. He too noticed the linen cloths lying there, but the burial cloth that had been on Jesus' head had been rolled up and placed separate from the other cloths.

Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first went in, and after one look, he believed! [There was only the linen sheet lying there.]¹² For until then they hadn't understood the Scriptures that prophesied that he was destined to rise from the dead. Puzzled, Peter and the other disciple then left and went back to their homes, [wondering what it meant].¹³

Mary Magdalene arrived *back at the tomb*, broken and sobbing. She stooped to peer inside, and through her tears she saw two angels in dazzling white robes, sitting where Jesus' body had been laid—one at the head and one at the feet!

"Dear woman, why are you crying?" they asked.

Mary answered, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've laid him."

Then she turned around to leave, and there was Jesus standing in front of her, but she didn't realize that it was him!

He said to her, "**Dear woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?**"

Mary answered, thinking he was only the gardener, "Sir, if you have taken his body somewhere else, tell me, and I will go and . . ."

"**Mary,**" Jesus interrupted her.

Turning to face him, she said, "Rabboni!" (Aramaic for "my teacher")

Jesus cautioned her, "**Mary, don't hold on to me now, for I haven't yet ascended to God, my Father. And he's not only my Father and God, but now he's your Father and your God! Now go to my brothers and tell them what I've told you, that I am ascending to my Father—and your Father, to my God—and your God!**"

12 Lk. 24:12. 13 Lk. 24:12.

Then Mary Magdalene left to inform the disciples, [who were all emotionally devastated and weeping],¹⁴ of her encounter with Jesus. “I have seen the Lord!” she told them. And she gave them his message. [But even after hearing this, they didn’t believe her.]¹⁵

JESUS WALKS TO EMMAUS (Lk. 24:13–35)

Later that Sunday, two of Jesus’ disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a journey of about seventeen miles. They were in the midst of a discussion about all the events of the last few days when Jesus walked up and accompanied them in their journey. They were unaware that it was Jesus walking alongside them, for God prevented them from recognizing him.

Jesus said to them, “**You seem to be in a deep discussion about something. What are you talking about, so sad and gloomy?**”

They stopped, and the one named Cleopas answered, “Haven’t you heard? Are you the only one in Jerusalem unaware of the things that have happened over the last few days?”

Jesus asked, “**What things?**”

“The things about Jesus, the Man from Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a mighty prophet of God who performed miracles and wonders. His words were powerful and he had great favor with God and the people. But three days ago the high priest and the rulers of the people sentenced him to death and had him crucified. We all hoped that he was the one who would redeem and rescue Israel. Early this morning, some of the women informed us of something amazing. They said they went to the tomb and found it empty. They claimed two angels appeared and told them that Jesus is now alive. Some of us went to see for ourselves and found the tomb exactly like the women said. But no one has seen him.”

Jesus said to them, “**Why are you so thick-headed? Why do you find it so hard to believe every word the prophets have spoken? Wasn’t it necessary for Christ, the Messiah, to experience all these sufferings and then afterward to enter into his glory?**”

14 Mk. 16:10. 15 Mk. 16:11.

Then he carefully unveiled to them the revelation of himself throughout the Scripture. He started from the beginning and explained the writings of Moses and all the prophets, showing how they wrote of him and revealed the truth about himself.

As they approached the village, Jesus walked on ahead, telling them he was going on to a distant place. They urged him to remain there and pleaded, “Stay with us. It will be dark soon.” So Jesus went with them into the village.

Joining them at the table for supper, he took bread and blessed it and broke it, then gave it to them. All at once their eyes were opened and they realized it was Jesus! Then suddenly, in a flash, Jesus vanished from before their eyes!

Stunned, they looked at each other and said, “Why didn’t we recognize it was him? Didn’t our hearts burn with the flames of holy passion while we walked beside him? He unveiled for us such profound revelation from the Scriptures!”

They left at once and hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. When they found the Eleven and the other disciples all together, they overheard them saying, “It’s really true! The Lord has risen from the dead. He even appeared to Peter!” Then the two disciples told the others what had happened to them on the road to Emmaus and how Jesus had unveiled himself as he broke bread with them.

Day 40

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES (Lk. 24:36–49)

[That evening, the disciples gathered together. And because they were afraid of reprisals from the Jewish leaders, they had locked the doors to the place where they met.]¹ While they were still discussing all of this, Jesus suddenly manifested right in front of their eyes! Startled and terrified, the disciples were convinced they were seeing a ghost. Standing there among them he said, “Be at peace. I am the living God. Don’t be afraid. Why would you be so frightened? Don’t let doubt or fear enter your hearts, for I AM! Come and gaze upon my pierced hands and feet. See for yourselves, it is I, standing here alive. Touch me and know that my wounds are real. See that I have a body of flesh and bone.” He showed them his pierced hands and feet and let them touch his wounds—[they were overjoyed to see the Lord with their own eyes!]²

[Jesus repeated his greeting, “Peace to you!” And he told them, “Just as the Father has sent me, I’m now sending you.” Then, taking a deep breath, he blew on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. I send you to preach the forgiveness of sins—and people’s sins will be forgiven. But if you don’t proclaim the forgiveness of their sins, they will remain guilty.”]³

The disciples were ecstatic yet dumbfounded, unable to fully comprehend it.

Knowing that they were still wondering if he was real, Jesus said, “Here, let me show you. Give me something to eat.”

1 Jn. 20:19. 2 Jn. 20:20. 3 Jn. 20:21–23.

They handed him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And they watched him eat it.

Then he said to them, “Don’t you remember the words that I spoke to you when I was still with you? I told you that everything written about me would be fulfilled, including all the prophecies from the law of Moses through the Psalms and the writings of the prophets—that they would all find their fulfillment.”

He *supernaturally unlocked their understanding* to receive the revelation of the Scriptures, then said to them, “Everything that has happened fulfills what was prophesied of me. Christ, the Messiah, was destined to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. Now you must go into all the nations and preach repentance and forgiveness of sins so that they will turn to me. Start right here in Jerusalem. For you are my witnesses and have seen for yourselves all that has transpired. And I will send the fulfillment of the Father’s promise to you. So stay here in the city until the mighty power of heaven falls upon you and wraps around you.”

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS (JN. 20:24–31)

One of the twelve wasn’t present when Jesus appeared to them—it was Thomas, whose nickname was “the Twin.” So the disciples informed him, “We have seen the Lord with our own eyes!”

Still unconvinced, Thomas replied, “There’s no way I’m going to believe this unless I personally see the wounds of the nails in his hands, touch them with my finger, and put my hand into the wound of his side where he was pierced!”

Then eight days later, Thomas and all the others were in the house together. And even though all the doors were locked, Jesus suddenly stood before them! “Peace to you,” he said.

Then, looking into Thomas’ eyes, he said, “Put your finger here in the wounds of my hands. Here—put your hand into my wounded side and see for yourself. Thomas, don’t give in to your doubts any longer, just believe!”

Then the words spilled out of his heart—“You are my Lord, and you are my God!”

Jesus responded, “Thomas, now that you’ve seen me, you believe. But there are those who have never seen me with their

eyes but have believed in me with their hearts, and they will be blessed even more!”

Jesus went on to do many more miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not even included in this book. But all that is recorded here is so that you will fully believe that Jesus is the Anointed One, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you will experience eternal life by the power of his name!

JESUS APPEARS AT LAKE GALILEE (JN. 21:1–14)

Later, Jesus appeared once again to a group of his disciples by Lake Galilee. It happened one day while Peter, Thomas (the Twin), Nathanael (from Cana in Galilee), Jacob, John, and two other disciples were all together. Peter told them, “I’m going fishing.” And they all replied, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and fished through the night, but caught nothing.

Then at dawn, Jesus was standing there on the shore, but the disciples didn’t realize that it was him! He called out to them, saying, “**Hey guys! Did you catch any fish?**”

“Not a thing,” they replied.

Jesus shouted to them, “**Throw your net over the starboard side, and you’ll catch some!**” And so they did as he said, and they caught so many fish they couldn’t even pull in the net!

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Peter heard him say that, he quickly wrapped his outer garment around him, and because he was athletic, he dove right into the lake to go to Jesus! The other disciples then brought the boat to shore, dragging their catch of fish. They weren’t far from land, only about a hundred meters. And when they got to shore, they noticed a charcoal fire with some roasted fish and bread. Then Jesus said, “**Bring some of the fish you just caught.**”

So Peter waded into the water and helped pull the net to shore. It was full of many large fish, exactly one hundred and fifty-three, but even with so many fish, the net was not torn.

“**Come, let’s have some breakfast,**” Jesus said to them.

And not one of the disciples needed to ask who it was, because every one of them knew it was the Lord. Then Jesus came close to

them and served them the bread and the fish. This was the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection.

JESUS RESTORES PETER (JN. 21:15–23)

After they had breakfast, Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you burn with love for me more than these?”

Peter answered, “Yes, Lord! You know that I have great affection for you!”

“Then take care of my lambs,” Jesus said.

Jesus repeated his question the second time, “Simon, son of John, do you burn with love for me?”

Peter answered, “Yes, my Lord! You know that I have great affection for you!”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

Then Jesus asked him again, “Peter, son of John, do you have great affection for me?”

Peter was saddened by being asked the third time and said, “My Lord, you know everything. You know that I burn with love for you!”

Jesus replied, “Then feed my lambs! Peter, listen, when you were younger you made your own choices and you went where you pleased. But one day when you are old, others will tie you up and escort you where you would not choose to go—and you will spread out your arms.” (Jesus said this to Peter as a prophecy of what kind of death he would die, for the glory of God.) And then he said, “Peter, follow me!”

Then Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the disciple who sat close to Jesus at the Last Supper and had asked him, “Lord, who is the one that will betray you?”) So when Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, “What’s going to happen to him?”

Jesus replied, “If I decide to let him live until I return, what concern is that of yours? You must still keep on following me!”

So the rumor started to circulate among the believers that this disciple wasn’t going to die. But Jesus never said that, he only said, “If I let him live until I return, what concern is that of yours?”

THE GREAT COMMISSION (MATT. 28:16–20)

Meanwhile, the eleven disciples heard the wonderful news from the women and left for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. The moment they saw him, they worshiped him, but some still had lingering doubts.

Then Jesus came close to them and said, “**All the authority of the universe has been given to me. Now wherever you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And teach them to faithfully follow all that I have commanded you. And never forget that I am with you every day, even to the completion of this age.**”

[And he said to them, “**As you go into all the world, preach openly the wonderful news of the gospel to the entire human race! Whoever believes the good news and is baptized will be saved, and whoever does not believe the good news will be condemned. And these miracle signs will accompany those who believe: They will drive out demons in the power of my name. They will speak in tongues. They will be supernaturally protected from snakes and from drinking anything poisonous. And they will lay hands on the sick and heal them.**”]⁴

JOHN’S CONCLUSION (JN. 21:24–25)

I, John, am that disciple who has written these things to testify of the truth, and we know that what I’ve documented is accurate. Jesus did countless things that I haven’t included here. And if every one of his works were written down *and described one by one*, I suppose that the world itself wouldn’t have enough room to contain the books that would have to be written!

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS (LK. 24:50–53)

Jesus led his disciples out to Bethany. He lifted his hands over them and blessed them in his love. While he was still speaking out words of love and blessing, *he floated off the ground into the sky*, ascending into heaven before their very eyes [and sat down *at the place of honor* at the right hand of God!]⁵ And all they could do was worship him.

⁴ Mk. 16:15–18. ⁵ Mk. 16:19.

Overwhelmed and ecstatic with joy, they made their way back to Jerusalem. Every day they went to the temple, praising and worshiping God. [And the apostles went out announcing the good news everywhere, as the Lord himself consistently worked with them, validating the message they preached with miracle-signs that accompanied them!]⁶

⁶ *Mk. 16:20.*

YOUR PERSONAL INVITATION TO FOLLOW JESUS


We can all find ourselves in dark places, needing some light—light that brings direction, healing, vision, warmth, and hope. Jesus said, “I am light to the world and those who embrace me will experience life-giving light, and they will never walk in darkness” (John 8:12). Without the light and love of Jesus, this world is truly a dark place and we are lost forever.

Love unlocks mysteries. As we love Jesus, our hearts are unlocked to see more of his beauty and glory. When we stop defining ourselves by our failures, but rather as the ones whom Jesus loves, our hearts begin to open to the breathtaking discovery of the wonder of Jesus Christ.

All that is recorded in the Scriptures is there so that you will fully believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you will experience eternal life by the power of his name (see John 20:31).

If you want this light and love in your life, say a prayer like this—whether for the first time or to express again your passionate desire to follow Jesus:


Jesus, you are the light of the world. I want to follow you, passionately and wholeheartedly. But my sins have separated me from you. Thank you for your love for me. Thank you for paying the price for my sins, and I trust your finished work on the cross for my rescue. I turn away from the thoughts and deeds that have separated me from you. Forgive me and awaken me to love you with all my heart,



mind, soul, and strength. I believe God raised you from the dead, and I want that new life to flow through me each day and for eternity. God, I give you my life. Now fill me with your Spirit so that my life will honor you and I can fulfill your purpose for me. Amen.

You can be assured that what Jesus said about those who choose to follow him is true: “If you embrace my message and believe in the One who sent me, you will never face condemnation, for in me, you have already passed from the realm of death into the realm of eternal life!” (John 5:24). But there’s more! Not only are you declared “not guilty” by God because of Jesus, you are also considered his most intimate friend (John 15:15).

As you grow in your relationship with Jesus, continue to read the Bible, communicate with God through prayer, spend time with others who follow Jesus, and live out your faith daily and passionately. God bless you!




ABOUT THE PASSION TRANSLATION

The message of God's story is timeless; the Word of God doesn't change.

But the methods by which that story is communicated should be timely; the vessels that steward God's Word can and should change. One of those timely methods is Bible translation. Bible translations are both a gift and a problem. They give us the words God spoke through his servants, but words can be poor containers for revelation because they leak! The meanings of words change from one generation to the next. Meaning is influenced by culture, background, and many other details. Just imagine how differently the Hebrew authors of the Old Testament saw the world three thousand years ago from the way we see it today!

There is no such thing as a truly literal translation of the Bible, for there is not an equivalent language that perfectly conveys the meaning of the biblical text. It must be understood in its original cultural and linguistic settings. This problem is best addressed when we seek to transfer meaning, not merely words, from the original text to the receptor language.

The purpose of The Passion Translation is to reintroduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader. It doesn't merely convey the literal meaning of words. It expresses God's passion for people and his world by translating the original, life-changing message of God's Word for modern readers.



You will notice at times we've italicized certain words or phrases. These highlighted portions are not in the original Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic manuscripts but are implied from the context. We've made these implications explicit for the sake of narrative clarity and to better convey the meaning of God's Word. This is a common practice by mainstream translations.

We've also chosen to translate certain names in their original Hebrew or Greek form to better convey their cultural meaning and significance. For instance, some translations of the Bible have substituted Jacob with James and Judah with Jude. Both Greek and Aramaic leave these Hebrew names in their original form. Therefore, this translation uses those cultural names.

God longs to have his Word expressed in every language in a way that would unlock the passion of his heart. Our goal is to trigger inside every English-speaking reader an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible. This is a heart-level translation, from the passion of God's heart to the passion of your heart.

We pray this version of God's Word will kindle in you a burning desire for him and his heart, while impacting the church for years to come.

Please visit ThePassionTranslation.com for more information.







ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Dr. Brian Simmons is known as a passionate lover of God. After a dramatic conversion to Christ, Brian knew that God was calling him to go to the unreached people of the world and present the gospel of God's grace to all who would listen.

Brian and his wife, Candice, along with their three children, spent nearly eight years in the tropical rain forest of the Darien Province of Panama. He was a church planter, translator, and consultant, and was involved in the Paya-Kuna New Testament translation project.

Dr. Simmons studied linguistics and Bible translation principles with New Tribes Mission. After their ministry in the jungle, Brian and Candice were instrumental in planting a thriving church in New England (USA) and now travel full-time as speakers and Bible teachers. They have been happily married since 1971 and regularly boast about their children and eight grandchildren.





Follow The Passion Translation at:

[Facebook.com/passiontranslation](https://www.facebook.com/passiontranslation)

[Twitter.com/tPtBible](https://twitter.com/tPtBible)

[Instagram.com/passiontranslation](https://www.instagram.com/passiontranslation)

For more information please visit:

ThePassionTranslation.com



thePassionTranslation.com