

The Concise Bible

*God's Word and Good News
to All People*

The Bible Distribution League

THE CONCISE BIBLE

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Preface

The entire contents of this book, The Concise Bible, are excerpts from the Bible; that is, the text of this book is the Bible itself in an abbreviated edition. It has been compiled with the needs of those who are unfamiliar with the Bible in view, and to introduce in an easy-to-read format an outline of the Bible message to those who desire to better understand the main points of the Christian beliefs.

The central theme of the Bible is Jesus, whom Christians accept as the promised Messiah, or Christ; and the mystery of the coming kingdom of God. In order to truly understand this message, one must, as Jesus said, read with a child-like and humble heart. If one will read God's word as though searching for a hidden treasure, then, for certain one will find true in one's own life those words from the Bible; "You have no need that anyone teach you."

After you have finished reading this book, we would like to urge you to find a copy of the Bible itself, and read it.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16

About the Bible

The Bible is made up of two books called The Old Testament and The New Testament. This word, testament means a declaration or contract, or in some cases, a will. As used here, it means the contract or promise to which God has bound himself in his dealings with mankind.

The contract of salvation that God has given us is based upon the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; it is a promise that God has saved us through Jesus and made us heirs of his Kingdom of Heaven. Believers in Christ are confident that the sins of mankind have been taken away forever through the death of Jesus on the cross—that Jesus, the Son of God, who was born on this earth about 2000 years ago, took upon himself, in man's place and as his substitute, the punishment deserved by sinful men. This means that our sins are forgiven, and that we can believe the promise of God, the wonderful news that we have received everlasting life from him. It is the good news of this promise that is the heart of the Bible message. The contract written before Christ is called The Old Testament and the contract written after Christ is called The New Testament.

The Old Testament, centered around the Jewish nation, was authored by many writers between 1500 B.C. and 400 B.C., and consists of 39 books containing their history, laws, prophecies, poetry and songs. The message of God's new kingdom and of the coming Christ are repeated in many prophecies.

The New Testament explains the facts, how these prophecies of Christ were fulfilled in Jesus, and teaches about his salvation. It was written by Jesus' disciples between 30 A.D. and 90 A.D., and begins with the four gospels—short histories of the life of Jesus—including also 21 letters to Christians, etc., for a total of 27 books.

The Jewish people accept only the Old Testament as the Bible, the Word of God, which they call the Law and the Prophets. Christians, however, believe that both the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God.

First of all, you should know this: no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:20, 21



Ruins of An Old Synagogue in Chorazin, Israel

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The Walls of Jerusalem

Chapter 1

In the Beginning

The Bible tells us how this world, astounding in its complexity and life, began, how man was created and why, how mankind has rebelled against their Creator and ignores him, and of God's awful curse of Death because of men's sin against him. It is because of our sin against God, the Bible tells us, that we live, from the day we are born, with the doom of death hanging over us. We have no hope, no real and lasting joy and peace—only death awaits us. Whether we are rich or poor, strong or weak, slave or free, sick or healthy, soon we must die, and then, the Bible tells us, we must stand before our Creator and tell him why we ignored him and his righteous laws. God, not man, will judge us, according to his laws, not ours.

No religion, no philosophy, no man in the history of the world has shown us how to be saved from this horrible curse—except the Bible.



The Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and He called the darkness “night.” Evening came, and then morning: the first day.

Then God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.” So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.” Evening came, and then morning: the second day.

Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land “earth,” and He called the gathering of the water “seas.” And God saw that it was good.



After Its Kind

Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Evening came, and then morning: the third day.

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years. They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars. God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. Evening came, and then morning: the fourth day.

The Origin of Species

Then God said, “Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”



So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So God blessed them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” Evening came, and then morning: the fifth day.

Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

The Beginning of Mankind

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

So God created man in His own image;
He created him in the image of God;
He created them male and female.



God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you, for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it. I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and then morning: the sixth day.

So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. By the seventh day, God completed His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it He rested from His work of creation.

These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation at the time that the Lord¹ God made the earth and the heavens.

¹ Lord: *Yahweh (Jehovah)* in Hebrew; the name God uses for himself.



Deceived by the Devil

No shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. But water would come out of the ground and water the entire surface of the land. Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He placed the man He had formed. The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the midst of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

Now the serpent² was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God

² Throughout the Bible the devil (also *Satan*) is often called a serpent. (eg. Rev. 12:9)

really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.' "

"No! You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the man³ and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

³ man: *Adam* in Hebrew, sounds like the Hebrew word for ground (*adamah*).

And he said, “I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

Then He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I had commanded you not to eat from?”

Then the man replied, “The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

So the Lord God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?”

And the woman said, “It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.”

The Curse of Sin: Death

He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains;
you will bear children in anguish.
Your desire will be for your husband,
yet he will dominate you.

And He said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife’s voice and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.
You will eat from it by means of painful labor
all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow
until you return to the ground,
since you were taken from it.
For you are dust,
and you will return to dust.”

Adam named his wife Eve⁴ because she was the mother of all the living. The Lord God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

⁴ Eve: *Mother of the living* in Hebrew.



En-gedi, Israel

Chapter 2

“I Will Destroy the Earth”

When the violence and sin of man became so unbearable that God could no longer look upon it, he decided to destroy everything that breathed. Even today we can see buried in the rocks all over the world—on the highest mountains and in the deepest ravines, the fossils and remains of the animals that were destroyed in that terrible judgment that God sent on the earth.

God has promised that the next judgment will be a destruction by fire. In the New Testament in 2nd Peter we find these words: “God’s day of judgment will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a great roar, the elements will melt in the heat and the fire, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up.”

Noah and the Ark

When mankind began to multiply on the earth, the Lord saw that man's wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the Lord said, "I will wipe off the face of the earth: man, whom I created, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them."

Noah, however, found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God. And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth. Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

"Make yourself an ark of gofer wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside. This is how you are to



make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within 18 inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

“Understand that I am bringing a deluge—floodwaters on the earth to destroy all flesh under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will die. But I will establish My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives. You are also to bring into the ark two of every living thing of all flesh, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of everything—from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from every animal that crawls on the ground according to its kind—will come to you so that you can keep them alive. Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.” And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

Then the Lord said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before Me in this generation. Seven days from now I will make it rain on the earth 40 days and 40 nights, and I will wipe off the face of the earth every living thing I have made.”



So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives entered the ark because of the waters of the deluge. Two of each, male and female, entered the ark with Noah, just as God had commanded him. Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered just as God had commanded him. Then the Lord shut him in.

The Great Flood

Seven days later the waters of the deluge came on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the sources of the watery depths burst open, the floodgates of the sky were opened, and the rain fell on the earth 40 days and 40 nights.

The deluge continued 40 days on the earth; the waters increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth. The waters surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. Then the waters surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. The mountains were covered as the waters surged above them more than 20 feet. All flesh perished—creatures that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and all creatures that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. He wiped out every



living thing that was on the surface of the ground, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And the waters surged on the earth 150 days.

God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside. The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped. The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the waters had decreased significantly. The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

The waters continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible. After 40 days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made, and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the waters had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth's surface had gone down, but the dove found no resting place for her foot. She returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface



of the whole earth. He reached out and brought her into the ark to himself.

So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again. When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in her beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth's surface had gone down.

After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but she did not return to him again. In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the ark's cover and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

Then God spoke to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring out every living thing of all flesh that is with you—birds, livestock, creatures that crawl on the ground—and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, came out. All wildlife, all livestock, every bird, and every creature that crawls on the earth came out of the ark by their groups.



The Blessing of God

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, He said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, even though man’s inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
summer and winter, and day and night
will not cease.”

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority.

“Understand that I am confirming My covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark.

I confirm My covenant with you that never again will all flesh be wiped out by the waters of a deluge; there will never again be a deluge to destroy the earth.”

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: I have placed My bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh: water will never again become a deluge to destroy all flesh. The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh on earth.”



Judean Wilderness



The Jordan River

Chapter 3

A New Promise

After the flood, Noah lived for many years. Gradually the earth again became populated with men, but as they increased they once more became sinful and rebellious toward God. They began to make idols to worship instead of God, and after a few hundred years the world had again fallen into darkness and was full of sin.

Then once more God began to send warnings through prophets that he would punish sinful men again. These prophets who brought God's message to repent were hated and persecuted, and not a few were murdered. But God, who loves men, continued to send these prophets to the world, generation after generation.



These are the words of the prophet and poet, Isaiah, who lived about 760~698 B.C. He was persecuted, and finally martyred by being sawn in half.

The vision¹ concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Why Continue in Evil?

Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth,
for the Lord has spoken:
“I have raised children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against Me.
The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s feeding-trough,
but [my people] do not know;
My people do not understand.”
Oh—sinful nation,
people weighed down with iniquity,
brood of evildoers,
depraved children!

¹ vision: A supernatural revelation received from the Spirit of God, during which the prophet hears words and sees scenes not then visible on earth.

They have abandoned the Lord;
they have despised the Holy One;
they have turned their backs on Him.

Why do you want more beatings?
Why do you keep on rebelling?

The whole head is hurt,
and the whole heart is sick.

From the sole of the foot even to the head,
no spot is uninjured—
wounds, welts, and festering sores
not cleansed, bandaged,
or soothed with oil.

“Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves.
Remove your evil deeds from My sight.
Stop doing evil.

Learn to do what is good.
Seek justice.

Correct the oppressor.
Defend the rights of the fatherless.
Plead the widow’s cause.



“Come, let us discuss this,”
says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they will be as white as snow;
though they are as red as crimson,
they will be like wool.

If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land.
It is I who sweep away your transgressions
for My own sake
and remember your sins no more.

Woe to those who rise early in the morning
in pursuit of beer,
who linger into the evening,
inflamed by wine.

At their feasts they have lyre, harp,
tambourine, flute, and wine.

They do not perceive the Lord’s actions,
and they do not see the work of His hands.

Woe to those who say:
“Let Him hurry up and do His work quickly

so that we can see it!
Let the plan of the Holy One of Israel take place
so that we can know it!"

Woe to the Wicked

Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who substitute darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who substitute bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.

Woe to those who are wise in their own opinion
and clever in their own sight.

Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
who are fearless at mixing beer,
who acquit the guilty for a bribe
and deprive the innocent of justice.

The Lord also says:

Because the [women] are haughty,
walking with heads held high



and seductive eyes,
going along with prancing steps,
jingling their ankle bracelets,
the Lord will put scabs on the heads
of the [women],
and the Lord will shave their foreheads bare.

On that day the Lord will strip their finery: ankle bracelets,
headbands, crescents, pendants, bracelets, veils, headdresses,
ankle jewelry, sashes, perfume bottles, amulets, signet rings, nose
rings, festive robes, capes, cloaks, purses, garments, linen clothes,
turbans, and veils.

Instead of perfume there will be a stench;
instead of a belt, a rope;
instead of beautifully styled hair, baldness;
instead of fine clothes, sackcloth;
instead of beauty, branding.

Woe to the wicked—it will go badly for them,
for what they have done will be done to them.
Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes straw
and as dry grass shrivels in the flame,
so their roots will become like something rotten

and their blossoms will blow away like dust,
for they have rejected
the instruction of the Lord of Hosts,
and they have despised
the word of the Holy One.

“Therefore [Hell] enlarges its throat
and opens wide its enormous jaws,
and down into it go the dignitaries, the masses,
the crowds, and the carousing people!”

“As they go, they will see the dead bodies
of the men who have rebelled against Me;
for their maggots will never die,
their fire will never go out,
and they will be a horror to all mankind.”

The Eternal God

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been declared to you
from the beginning?
Have you not considered



the foundations of the earth?
God is enthroned above the circle of the earth;
its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.
He stretches out the heavens like thin cloth
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.
He reduces princes to nothing
and makes the judges of the earth to be irrational.
They are barely planted, barely sown,
their stem hardly takes root in the ground
when He blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind carries them away like stubble.
“Who will you compare Me to,
or who is My equal?” asks the Holy One.
Look up and see:
who created these?
He brings out the starry host by number;
He calls all of them by name.
Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Yahweh is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the whole earth.



He never grows faint or weary;
there is no limit to His understanding.
He gives strength to the weary
and strengthens the powerless.

Worthless Idols

All who make idols are nothing,
and what they treasure does not profit.
Their witnesses do not see or know anything,
so they will be put to shame.
Who makes a god or casts a metal image
for no profit?
Look, all its worshipers will be put to shame,
and the craftsmen are humans.
They all will assemble and stand;
they all will be startled and put to shame.
The ironworker labors over the coals,
shapes the idol with hammers,
and works it with his strong arm.
Also he grows hungry and his strength fails;
he doesn't drink water and is faint.



The woodworker stretches out a measuring line,
 he outlines it with a stylus;
he shapes it with chisels
 and outlines it with a compass.
He makes it according to a human likeness,
 like a beautiful person,
 to dwell in a temple.
It serves as fuel for man.
 He takes some of it and warms himself;
 also he kindles a fire and bakes bread;
he even makes it into a god and worships it;
 he makes it an idol and bows down to it.
He burns half of it in a fire,
 and he roasts meat on that half.
He eats the roast and is satisfied.
 He warms himself and says, "Ah!
 I am warm, I see the blaze."
He makes a god or his idol with the rest of it.
 He bows down to it and worships;
 He prays to it, "Save me, for you are my god."
Such people do not comprehend
 and cannot understand,

for He has shut their eyes so they cannot see,
and their minds so they cannot understand.
No one reflects,
no one has the perception or insight to say,
“I burned half of it in the fire,
I also baked bread on its coals,
I roasted meat and ate.
I will make something detestable with the rest of it,
and I will bow down to a block of wood.”
He feeds on ashes.
His deceived mind has led him astray,
and he cannot deliver himself,
or say, “Isn’t there a lie in my right hand?”

God’s Comfort

“I am the Lord, and there is no other;
there is no God but Me.
I will strengthen you,
though you do not know Me,
so that all may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
that there is no one but Me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other.
I form light and create darkness,
I make success and create disaster;
I, the Lord, do all these things.
I made the earth,
and created man on it.
It was My hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their [starry] host.
Pay attention to Me, My people,
and listen to Me, My nation;
for instruction will come from Me,
and My justice for a light to the nations.
I will bring it about quickly.
My righteousness is near,
My salvation appears,
and My arms will bring justice to the nations.
The coastlands will put their hope in Me,
and they will look to My strength.
Look up to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,

and its inhabitants will die in like manner.
But My salvation will last forever,
and My righteousness will never be shattered.

Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,
the people in whose heart is My instruction:
do not fear disgrace by men,
and do not be shattered by their taunts.
For the moth will devour them like a garment,
and the worm will eat them like wool.
But My righteousness will last forever,
and My salvation for all generations.

I—I am the One who comforts you.
Who are you that you should fear man who dies,
or a son of man who is like grass?
But you have forgotten the Lord, your Maker,
who stretched out the heavens
and laid the foundations of the earth.
You are in constant dread all day long
because of the fury of the oppressor,
who has set himself to destroy.
But where is the fury of the oppressor?"

The Resurrection Morning

Strengthen the weak hands,
steady the shaking knees!

Say to the faint-hearted:

“Be strong; do not fear!

Here is your God; vengeance is coming.

God’s retribution is coming; He will save you.”

The wilderness and the dry land will be glad;
the desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose.

It will blossom abundantly
and will also rejoice with joy and singing.

Your dead will live; their bodies will rise.

Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust!

For you will be covered with the morning dew,
and the earth will bring forth the departed spirits.

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then the lame will leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy,
for water will gush in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;



the parched ground will become a pool of water,
and the thirsty land springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals, in their lairs,
there will be grass, reeds, and papyrus.

A road will be there and a way;
it will be called the Holy Way.

The unclean will not travel on it,
but it will be for him who walks that path.
Even the fool will not go astray.

But the redeemed will walk on it,
and the ransomed of the Lord will return
and come with singing,
crowned with unending joy.

Joy and gladness will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee.



Damascus Gate, Jerusalem

Chapter 4

The Messiah Is Coming!

God, through the mouths of the prophets, has promised us that a day is coming when he will establish a Kingdom of Righteousness, over which he will rule himself. He also promised that someday he will cleanse men from evil and bring them salvation from sin.

The prophets promised more than this. They revealed that God would send a man to this world who would, first, be a Savior from sin, and then, later, would come again as a king and a judge. The name which they gave to this coming Savior, King, Judge was “Messiah”¹, and the prophecies concerning him were given long before the birth of Jesus, the “Christ”.

¹ This word in Hebrew means *God's Anointed One* or *God's chosen King*. The same word is translated *Christ* in Greek.

Prophecies of Isaiah, continued.

“Immanuel”²

“This is My Servant; I strengthen Him,
 this is My Chosen One; I delight in Him.
I have put My Spirit on Him;
 He will bring justice to the nations.
He will not cry out or shout
 or make His voice heard in the streets.
He will not break a bruised reed,
 and He will not put out a smoldering wick;
He will faithfully bring justice.
 He will not grow weak or be discouraged
until He has established justice on earth.
 The islands will wait for His instruction.”

This is what God the Lord says—
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people on it
 and life to those who walk on it?
“I, the Lord, have called you

² Immanuel: *God with us* in Hebrew.

for a righteous purpose,
and I will hold you by your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
a covenant for the people
and a light to the nations,
in order to open blind eyes,
to bring out prisoners from the dungeon,
and those sitting in darkness from the prison house.”

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
The dominion will be vast,
and its prosperity will never end.
He will reign on the throne of David³
and over his kingdom,

³ David: Israel's second king (1010~971 B.C.). This righteous king obeyed God and was loved by God. It was promised to him that the Messiah would come from his lineage. He was himself a prophet, and also a poet.

to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this.

A Righteous Judge

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him—
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a Spirit of counsel and strength,
a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.
His delight will be in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge
by what He sees with His eyes,
He will not execute justice
by what He hears with His ears,
but He will judge the poor righteously
and execute justice for the oppressed of the land.
He will strike the land
with discipline from His mouth,
and He will kill the wicked
with a command from His lips.
Righteousness and faithfulness



will be a belt around His waist.
The land will be as full
of the knowledge of the Lord
as the sea is filled with water.

“See, My servant will act wisely;
He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.
Just as many were appalled at You—
His appearance was so disfigured
that He did not look like a man,
and His form did not resemble a human being—
so He will sprinkle many nations.
Kings will shut their mouths because of Him,
For they will see what had not been told them,
and they will understand what they had not heard.”

He Will Take Away Sin

Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
He grew up before Him like a young plant
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no form or splendor that we should look at Him,



no appearance that we should desire Him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.
He was like one people turned away from;
He was despised, and we didn't value Him.

Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses,
and He carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded Him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on Him,
and we are healed by His wounds.
We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the Lord has punished Him
for the iniquity of us all.

His Resurrection

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet He did not open His mouth.



Like a lamb led to the slaughter
and like a sheep silent before her shearers,
He did not open His mouth.
He was taken away because of oppression and judgment;
and who considered His fate?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
He was struck because of My people's rebellion.
They made His grave with the wicked,
and with a rich man at His death,
although He had done no violence
and had not spoken deceitfully.
Yet the Lord was pleased to crush Him,
and He made Him [suffer].
When You make Him a restitution offering,
He will see His [descendants], He will prolong His days,
and the will of the Lord will succeed by His hand.
He will see it out of His anguish,
and will be satisfied with His knowledge.
My righteous servant will justify many,
and He will carry their iniquities.
Therefore I will give Him the many as a portion,
and He will receive the mighty as spoil,



because He submitted Himself to death,
and was counted among the rebels;
yet He bore the sin of many
and interceded for the rebels.
This is what the Lord says
to one who is despised,
to one abhorred by people,
to a servant of rulers:
“Kings will see [you] and stand up,
and princes will bow down.”

God's Invitation to Life

“Come, everyone who is thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you without money,
come, buy, and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost!
Why do you spend money on what is not food,
and your wages on what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,



and you will enjoy the choicest of foods.
Pay attention and come to Me;
listen, so that you will live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
the promises assured to [King] David.”
Seek the Lord while He may be found;
call to Him while He is near.
Let the wicked one abandon his way,
and the sinful one his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord,
so He may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for He will freely forgive.

These are the words of the prophet Daniel, who lived about 620~520 B.C. He was a Jewish captive in Babylon, and later a prime minister in both Babylon and Persia.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream with visions in his mind as he was lying in his bed. He wrote down the dream, and here is the summary of his account.

The Last Day of Judgment

As I kept watching,
 thrones were set in place,
 and the Ancient of Days took His seat.
His clothing was white like snow,
 and the hair of His head like whitest wool.
His throne was flaming fire;
 its wheels were blazing fire.
A river of fire was flowing,
 coming out from His presence.
Thousands upon thousands served Him;
 ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was convened,
 and the books were opened.
I continued watching in the night visions,
 and I saw One like a son of man⁴
 coming with the clouds of heaven.
He approached the Ancient of Days
 and was escorted before Him.
He was given authority to rule,

⁴ Jesus, calling himself the *Son of Man*, referred to this prophecy about himself when he stood trial before Jewish Supreme Court. See page 139.



and glory, and a kingdom;
so that those of every people,
nation, and language
should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that will not pass away,
and His kingdom is one
that will not be destroyed.

The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under
all of heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the
Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all
rulers will serve and obey Him.

Many of those who sleep in the dust
of the earth will awake,
some to eternal life,
and some to shame and eternal contempt.
Those who are wise will shine
like the bright expanse of the heavens,
and those who lead many to righteousness,
like the stars forever and ever.

A Message to the World from the King Of Persia

King Darius⁵ wrote to those of every people, nation, and language who live in all his kingdom: “May your prosperity abound. I issue a decree that in all my royal dominion, people must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel:

For He is the living God,
and He endures forever;
His kingdom will never be destroyed,
and His dominion has no end.
He rescues and delivers;
He performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth.”

The following are the words of the prophet Zechariah, who prophesied about 540~510 B.C.

A Kingdom of Peace

Rejoice greatly, [people of] Zion!
Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem!

⁵ Darius: King of Persia, about 535 B.C.



See, your King is coming to you;
He is righteous and victorious,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

I will cut off the chariots from Ephraim
and the horses from Jerusalem.

The bow of war will be removed,
and He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His dominion will extend from sea to sea,
from the Euphrates River
to the ends of the earth.

The Lord their God will save them on that day
as the flock of His people;
for they are like jewels in a crown,
sparkling over His land.

How lovely and beautiful they will be!

“On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of [King] David and for the residents of Jerusalem, to wash away sin and impurity. On that day—the declaration of the Lord of Hosts—I will erase the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered. I will remove the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.”

The following are the prophecies of King David, who reigned about 1010~971 B.C.

The Messiah Comes from David's Dynasty

The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me,
His word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel spoke;

“The one who rules the people with justice,
who rules in the fear of God,
is like the morning light when the sun rises
on a cloudless morning,
the glisten of rain on sprouting grass.”

Is it not true my house is with God?

For He has established an everlasting covenant with me,
ordered and secured in every detail.

“When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me.



“My hand will always be with him,
and My arm will strengthen him.
The enemy will not afflict him;
no wicked man will oppress him.
I will crush his foes before him
and strike those who hate him.
My faithfulness and love will be with him,
and through My name
he will be exalted.
He will call to Me, ‘You are my Father,
my God, the rock of my salvation.’
I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as heaven lasts.”

*The following are the words of Malachi, the prophet,
who lived about 400 years before the birth of Christ.*

The Day of the Lord

“See, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to



His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire—see, He is coming— says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears?

“I will come to you in judgment, and I will be ready to witness against sorcerers and adulterers; against those who swear falsely; against those who oppress the widow and the fatherless, and cheat the wage earner; and against those who deny justice to the foreigner. They do not fear Me,” says the Lord of Hosts.

“Because I, Yahweh, have not changed. Since the days of your fathers, you have turned from My statutes; you have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Hosts.

You have said: “It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping His requirements and walking mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? So now we consider the arrogant to be fortunate. Not only do those who commit wickedness prosper, they even test God and escape.”

At that time those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. The Lord took notice and listened. So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared Yahweh and had high regard for His name.



“They will be Mine,” says the Lord of Hosts, “a special possession on the day I am preparing. I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son. So you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

“For indeed, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness will become like stubble. The coming day will consume them,” says the Lord of Hosts, “not leaving them root or branches. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on that day,” says the Lord of Hosts.



Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus

Chapter 5

The Savior, Jesus

The astounding message of the Bible is that the Creator of the universe became a man, a man like us, because he loved us and wanted to save us from the awful results of our sin. He himself, the glorious king, the mighty Creator, the holy God, came to this miserable wicked world and became the representative man, the substitute for our sins. He came to take away the sin of the world by dying for mankind. With nails through his hands that were pounded by men, with the spit and blood on his face, he took upon himself the just punishment for the sins of mankind.

God Became a Man

In the beginning was the Word¹,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

All things were created through Him,
and apart from Him not one thing was created
that has been created.

Life was in Him,
and that life was the light of men.

That light shines in the darkness,
yet the darkness did not overcome it.

He was in the world,
and the world was created through Him,
yet the world did not recognize Him.

He came to His own,
and His own people did not receive Him.

But to all who did receive Him,

¹ Word: This Greek word *Logos*, here translated *Word*, is difficult to translate into English. The Greek philosophers used it to mean the *Divine Principle*, or *Mind*, that rules the universe. Other loose translations are *logic*, *reason*, *meaning*, and *language*. John, Jesus' disciple, is here saying emphatically that Jesus (the Christ) is the God who created the universe and all things in it.

He gave them the right to be children of God,
to those who believe in His name,
The Word became flesh
and took up residence among us.
We observed His glory,
the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

An Angel Foretells Jesus' Birth

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ², the Son of God.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you." But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. Then the angel told her:

Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.

² Christ: The Greek word for *Messiah* (Hebrew). It means *God's anointed one*, or *God's chosen king*. Since Jesus is now almost universally acknowledged to be the Christ promised in the ancient Jewish prophesies, this word has come to be a part of his name.

Now listen:

You will conceive and give birth to a son,
and you will call His name JESUS³.

He will be great

and will be called the Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give Him
the throne of His father David.

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
and His kingdom will have no end.

Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?”

The angel replied to her:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the holy One to be born
will be called the Son of God.

For nothing will be impossible with God.

“I am the Lord’s servant,” said Mary. “May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel left her.

After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was

³ This means *God saves* in Hebrew.



discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

See, the virgin will become pregnant
and give birth to a son,
and they will name Him Immanuel⁴,
which is translated “God is with us.”

When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus.

⁴ See note 2 on page 38.



The Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus⁵ that the whole empire should be registered. This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough—because there was no room for them at the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was

⁵ Augustus: The second Roman Emperor or Caesar (30 B.C.~A.D. 14).



born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors!

When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told.

The Visit of the Magi

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King



Herod⁶, wise men⁷ from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. So he assembled all the chief priests⁸ and scribes⁹ of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of Judah:
because out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd My people Israel.”¹⁰

Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them

⁶ Herod: This is *Herod the Great*, a cruel king who ruled, with authority from Rome, in Judea at the time of Christ's birth.

⁷ wise men: Astrologers, probably from Persia, and perhaps familiar with the prophesies of Daniel who foretold the time of the Messiah's appearance (see Dan. 9:25).

⁸ Jewish leaders who were responsible for the Temple in Jerusalem.

⁹ A professional group in Judaism that copied the law of Moses and taught it and interpreted it to the people, often in legal cases. They were influential Bible scholars of those days and most of them were Pharisees.

¹⁰ This prophesy is found in Micah 5:2.

the exact time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship Him."

After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen in the east! It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

The Flight into Egypt

After they were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy Him." So he got up, took the child and His mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called My Son.

Herod Slaughters the Infants

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the male children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah¹¹ the prophet was fulfilled:

A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
and she refused to be consoled,
because they were no more.

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Get up! Take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, because those who sought the child’s life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and His mother, and entered the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that He will be called a Nazarene. The boy grew up and became strong, filled with

¹¹ Jeremiah: A prophet who lived 650~580 B.C. This prophesy is found in Jer. 31:15.



wisdom, and God's grace was on Him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Every year His parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival¹². When He was 12 years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival. After those days were over, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but His parents did not know it. Assuming He was in the traveling party, they went a day's journey. Then they began looking for Him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for Him. After three days, they found Him in the temple complex¹³ sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all those who heard Him were astounded at His understanding and His answers. When His parents saw Him, they were astonished, and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You."

"Why were you searching for Me?" He asked them. "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what He said to them.

¹² Passover Festival: One of the three great annual Jewish festivals. The Jews sacrificed and feasted on a lamb during this festival. See note 1 on page 132.

¹³ temple complex: This refers to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem where the Jews worshiped the God of heaven and earth.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

The Witness of John the Baptist

As He began His ministry, Jesus was about 30 years old.

In those days John the Baptist¹⁴ came, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!”

John himself had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were flocking to him, and they were baptized¹⁵ by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

This is John’s testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

He did not refuse to answer, but he declared: “I am not the

¹⁴ John the Baptist: The last and greatest Jewish prophet, who announced the appearance of the Messiah. He was beheaded by Herod Antipas. Not the same John as the disciple of Jesus who wrote the Gospel with that name.

¹⁵ A *baptism* is a ceremony signifying repentance for sin, faith in God, and the beginning of a new life.



Messiah.”

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to take off His sandals.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the One I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who has surpassed me, because He existed before me.’ I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God!”

Jesus’ Baptism

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. But John tried to stop Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to me?”

Jesus answered him, “Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him to be baptized.

After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him. And there came a voice from heaven:



This is My beloved Son.
I take delight in Him!

The Temptation in the Wilderness

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit¹⁶ into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil¹⁷. After He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry. Then the tempter approached Him and said, “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

But He answered, “It is written¹⁸:

Man must not live on bread alone
but on every word that comes
from the mouth of God.”

Then the Devil took Him to the holy city, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

He will give His angels orders concerning you and,
they will support you with their hands
so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone.”

¹⁶ The Spirit: A name for the Holy Spirit of God. The *Spirit* is God himself.

¹⁷ The *Devil* is Satan, the prince of demons.

¹⁸ Jesus meant, it is written in the Jewish Scriptures, what is today called the *Old Testament*.

Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God."

Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. And he said to Him, "I will give You all these things if You will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written:

Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only Him."

Then the Devil left Him, and immediately angels came and began to serve Him.

The Lamb of God

From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"

Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb¹⁹ of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁹ The Jews of Jesus' day believed that in order to be cleansed from sin and escape the righteous anger of God, they must sacrifice a lamb to atone for their sin. John called Jesus the *Lamb of God* because he knew that Jesus was destined to die as an atonement for the sins of all mankind.



They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?”

“Come and you’ll see,” He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about 10 in the morning.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means “Anointed One”), and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means “Rock”).

Philip and Nathanael Become Disciples

The next day He decided to leave for Galilee. Jesus found Philip and told him, “Follow Me!”

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!”

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him.

“Come and see,” Philip answered.



Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said about him, “Here is a true Israelite; no deceit is in him.”

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered.

“Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe only because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” Then He said, “I assure you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man²⁰.”

Then Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread throughout the entire vicinity. He was teaching in their synagogues, being acclaimed by everyone.

Four Fishermen Follow Jesus

As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. “Follow Me,” He told them, “and I will make you fish for people!” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

²⁰ Jesus often referred to himself as the *Son of Man*. See note 4 on page 46.

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

Preaching and Healing

Jesus was going all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Then the news about Him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to Him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

When He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. Then He began to teach them, saying:

The Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn,
because they will be comforted.
Blessed are the gentle,
because they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
because they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
because they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
because they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
because they will be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness,
because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets²¹ who were before you.

²¹ This refers to those men who had received revelations from God, and who spoke in his name.

“Woe to You”

“But woe to you who are rich,
because you have received your comfort.
Woe to you who are full now,
because you will be hungry.
Woe to you who are laughing now,
because you will mourn and weep.
Woe to you
when all people speak well of you,
because this is the way their ancestors
used to treat the false prophets²².

Love and Mercy

“But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don’t hold back your shirt either. Give to everyone who asks from you, and from one who takes away your things, don’t ask for them back. Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them. If you love those

²² Men who claimed to have revelations from God and who misled people by speaking lies in God’s name were called *false prophets*. They often “prophesied” for praise or for money.



who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Salt of the Earth; Light of the World

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.



God Looks at the Heart

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give to the poor, don’t sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When You Pray

“When you pray, don’t babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.



“Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,

Your name be honored as holy.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power

and the glory forever. Amen²³.

“For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don’t forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing.

Treasure in Heaven

“Don’t collect for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust

²³ The word *Amen*, meaning *truly* or *certainly*, is often used in prayer.



destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of both God and of money.

"This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: they don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his life-span by worrying?

Seek the Kingdom of God

"And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon²⁴ in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? So don't worry, saying,

²⁴ A son of King David, *Solomon* was a very great king of Israel who ruled from 971~932 B.C. His reign at the dawn of the kingdom of Israel is called the *golden age* of Jewish history.



‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

“Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What man among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them—this is the Law and the Prophets²⁵.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

²⁵ Jesus is referring to the Jewish laws, their special revelation of the teachings and the will of God, generally summed up in Moses’ Ten Commandments.

Beware of False Teachers

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. You’ll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.

False Believers

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’

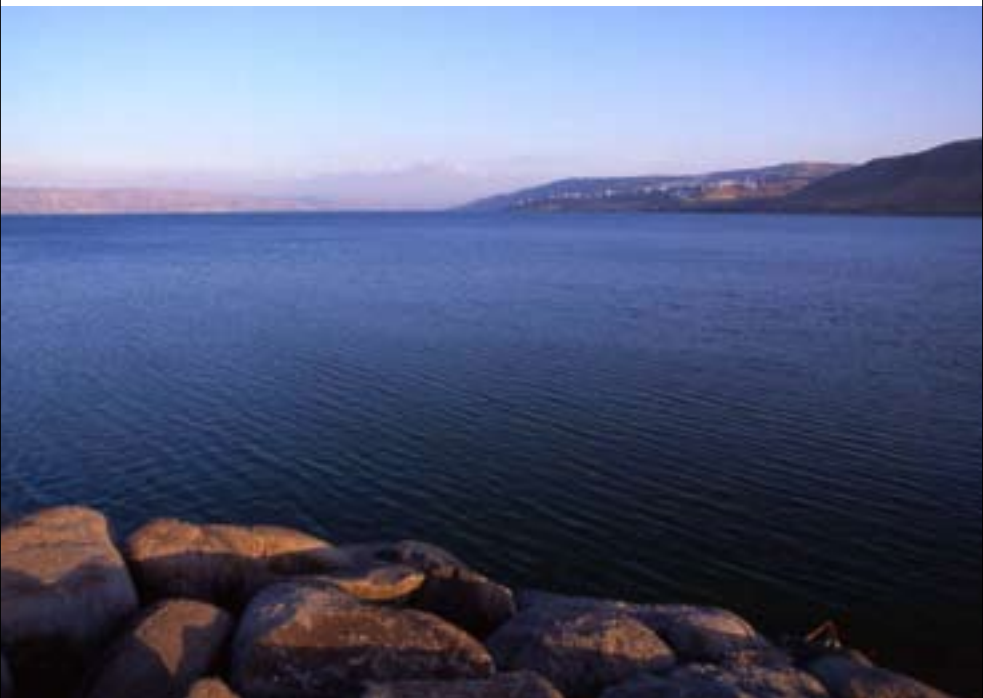
Not Talk, Merely, but Obedience

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and



acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. And its collapse was great!"

When Jesus had finished this sermon, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, because He was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.



The Lake of Galilee

Chapter 6

Wonderful Words; Mighty Deeds

To this very day, the words of Jesus pierce the hearts of mankind because of their righteousness, humility and purity. But Jesus did not just speak beautiful words. He did not say to his disciples, "Follow my teachings;" He said, "Follow me!" In the same way, believers in Christ should show in their lives an example of righteousness, love, and purity, not covetousness for money and material possessions, not love of praise and honor from men, not a desire to control other peoples' lives with power and authority. Jesus is our example.



Authority to Forgive Sins

When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. Right away a man with a serious skin disease came up and knelt before Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Reaching out His hand He touched him, saying, “I am willing; be made clean.” Immediately his disease was healed.

When He entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that He was at home. So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and He was speaking the message to them. Then they came to Him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying.

Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

But some of the scribes¹ were sitting there, thinking to themselves: “Why does He speak like this? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

¹ scribes: A professional group in Judaism that copied the law of Moses and taught it and interpreted it to the people, often in legal cases. They were influential Bible scholars of those days and most of them were Pharisees.



Right away Jesus understood in His spirit that they were reasoning like this within themselves and said to them, “Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your stretcher, and walk?’ But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” He told the paralytic, “I tell you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.”

Immediately he got up, picked up the stretcher, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

“My Mother, My Brothers”

Jesus departed with His disciples to the sea, and a great multitude followed from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon. The great multitude came to Him because they heard about everything He was doing. Then He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him, so the crowd would not crush Him. Since He had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward Him to touch Him.

Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat. When His family heard this, they set out to restrain Him, because they said, “He’s out of His mind.”



Then His mother and His brothers came, and standing outside, they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him and told Him, “Look, Your mother, Your brothers, and Your sisters are outside asking for You.”

He replied to them, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” And looking about at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! Whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother.”

Calming the Storm

On that day, when evening had come, He told them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they left the crowd and took Him along since He was already in the boat. And other boats were with Him. A fierce windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him up and said to Him, “Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”

He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still!” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then He said to them, “Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?”



And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

Healing at Galilee’s Shore

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and beached the boat. As they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized Him. They hurried throughout that vicinity and began to carry the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He would go, into villages, towns, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him that they might touch just the tassel of His robe. And everyone who touched it was made well.

Jesus saw the huge crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then He began to teach them many things.

One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at His feet and kept begging Him, “My little daughter is at death’s door. Come and lay Your hands on her so she can get well and live.”



“Your Faith Has Healed You”

So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd was following and pressing against Him. A woman suffering from bleeding for 12 years had endured much under many doctors. She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse. Having heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His robe. For she said, “If I can just touch His robes, I’ll be made well!” Instantly her flow of blood ceased, and she sensed in her body that she was cured of her affliction.

At once Jesus realized in Himself that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My robes?”

His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing against You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ”

So He was looking around to see who had done this. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came with fear and trembling, fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. “Daughter,” He said to her, “your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be free from your affliction.”



Jairus' Daughter Raised from the Dead

While He was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher any more?"

But when Jesus overheard what was said, He told the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid. Only believe." He did not let anyone accompany Him except Peter, James, and John, James' brother. They came to the leader's house, and He saw a commotion—people weeping and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

They started laughing at Him, but He put them all outside. He took the child's father, mother, and those who were with Him, and entered the place where the child was. Then He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl got up and began to walk. (She was 12 years old.) At this they were utterly astounded. Then He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this and said that she should be given something to eat.



The Kingdom of Heaven, and Hell

Jesus said, “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

“I assure you: An hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

“Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of judgment.

“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom everything that causes sin and those guilty of lawlessness. They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Anyone who has ears should listen!

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of



fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had, and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea. It collected every kind of fish, and when it was full, they dragged it ashore, sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw out the worthless ones. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, and throw them into the blazing furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The Rich Young Man

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call Me good?” Jesus asked him. “No one is good but One—God. You know the commandments:

- Do not murder;
- do not commit adultery;
- do not steal;
- do not bear false witness;
- do not defraud;

honor your father and mother.”

He said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth.”

Then, looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, “You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” But he was stunned at this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

“Losing All for Me”

Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” But the disciples were astonished at His words. Again Jesus said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

So they were even more astonished, saying to one another, “Then who can be saved?”

Looking at them, Jesus said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God.”

Peter began to tell Him, “Look, we have left everything and followed You.”



“I assure you,” Jesus said, “there is no one who has left house, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children, or fields because of Me and the gospel, who will not receive 100 times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. They were astonished, but those who followed Him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, He began to tell them the things that would happen to Him.

“Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death. Then they will hand Him over to the Gentiles², and they will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him, and He will rise after three days.”

They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

² Jesus is referring to the Romans, whom the Jews called *Gentiles*, a word that implied ignorance of the true God.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples

Summoning His 12 disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.

“Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves. Because people will hand you over to [the local councils] and flog you in their synagogues, beware of them. You will even be brought before governors and kings because of Me, to bear witness to them and to the nations. But when they hand you over, don’t worry about how or what you should speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, because you are not speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is speaking through you.

“Don’t Fear Men”

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will even rise up against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be delivered. When they persecute you in one town, escape to another. For I assure you: You will not have covered the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.



“Don’t fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Aren’t two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Don’t be afraid therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows.

“Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven.

Not Peace, but a Sword

“Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to turn

a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and a man’s enemies will be
the members of his household.

“The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not



worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross³ and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Anyone finding his life will lose it, and anyone losing his life because of Me will find it.

The Reward of Those Who Welcome Jesus

"The one who welcomes you welcomes Me, and the one who welcomes Me welcomes Him who sent Me. Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he's righteous will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives just a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple—I assure you: He will never lose his reward!"

Dying for the Gospel

While He was praying in private and His disciples were with Him, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

They answered, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back."

³ In the time of Jesus, a man sentenced to die was forced to carry a heavy cross to the place of execution where he would be crucified. Thus, the word cross meant the death sentence.



“But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “God’s Messiah!”

But He strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.”

Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it. What is a man benefited if he gains the whole world, yet loses or forfeits himself?”

Children and the Kingdom of God

Some people were bringing little children to Him so He might touch them, but His disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me. Don’t stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you: Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” After taking them in His arms, He laid His hands on them and blessed them.



Blind Bartimaeus

They came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!” Many people told him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”

Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; He’s calling for you.” He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

“My Teacher,” the blind man told Him, “I want to see!”

“Go your way,” Jesus told him. “Your faith has healed you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Him on the road.

Jesus and Nicodemus

There was a man from the Pharisees⁴ named Nicodemus, a ruler

⁴ A conservative sect of the Jewish religion that was very strict. The scribes and teachers belonging to this sect were highly respected among the common people and taught the ways of God in many of the Jewish meeting places.



of the Jews. This man came to Him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him.”

Jesus replied, “I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

“But how can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked Him. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”

Jesus answered, “I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus.

“Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these things?” Jesus replied. “I assure you: We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, but you do not accept Our testimony. If I have told you about things that happen on earth and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about things of heaven?

God Loves the World

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Anyone who believes in Him is not judged, but anyone who does not believe is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.

“This, then, is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

God's Son Came from Heaven

After this, Jesus and His disciples went to the Judean countryside, where He spent time with them and baptized. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were coming and being baptized.



Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the One you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is flocking to Him."

John responded, "No one can receive a single thing unless it's given to him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of Him.' He must increase, but I must decrease.

"The One who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The One who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what He has seen and heard, yet no one accepts His testimony. The one who has accepted His testimony has affirmed that God is true. For God sent Him, and He speaks God's words, since He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands. The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."



The Judean Hills

Chapter 7

Rejected

Jesus said, "The world hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. They will treat you this way because of me, for they do not know the One who sent me."

So it is certainly true that all through the centuries since Jesus left, Christians have been persecuted in many places. This is the mark of true Christianity. The Bible tells Christians to endure patiently, and wait for the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, Jesus is our example.

The Traditions of Men

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Him. They observed that some of His disciples were eating their bread with unclean—that is, unwashed—hands. (For the Pharisees, in fact all the Jews, will not eat unless they wash their hands ritually, keeping the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they have washed. And there are many other customs they have received and keep, like the washing of cups, jugs, copper utensils, and dining couches.) Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why don’t Your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ritually unclean hands?”

He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

These people honor Me with their lips,
but their heart is far from Me.
They worship Me in vain,
teaching as doctrines the commands of men.

What Defiles a Man

“Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men.”

Summoning the crowd again, He told them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him. If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!”

When He went into the house away from the crowd, the disciples asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, “Are you also as lacking in understanding? Don’t you realize that nothing going into a man from the outside can defile him? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into the stomach and is eliminated.” (As a result, He made all foods clean.) Then He said, “What comes out of a person—that defiles him. For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, lewdness, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a person.”



Do Not Be Called “Reverend” or “Teacher”

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples: “The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses. Therefore do whatever they tell you and observe it. But don’t do what they do, because they don’t practice what they teach. They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves aren’t willing to lift a finger to move them. They do everything to be observed by others: They enlarge their phylacteries¹ and lengthen their tassels. They love the place of honor at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Teacher’² by people.

“But as for you, do not be called ‘Teacher,’ because you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father³, because you have one Father, who is in heaven. And do not be called masters⁴ either, because you have one Master, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever

¹ phylacteries: Leather pouches attached to the clothing, which contained small portions of Scripture. This clothing was worn, especially at times of prayer, as an act of piety.

² Teacher: Or *Rabbi*.

³ Jesus did not mean, of course, that a child cannot call his parent *father*. His plain meaning was that we should not use the word to honor a man of religion.

⁴ Here again, Jesus was clearly not referring to secular, but rather, religious teachers. The word used here could also be translated *leader*.

exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Woe to the Religious Leaders

“But woe to you, scribes⁵ and Pharisees, hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven from people. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and make long prayers just for show. This is why you will receive a harsher punishment.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence! Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so the outside of it may also become clean.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers,

⁵ scribes: See note 9 on page 62.



we wouldn't have taken part with them in shedding the prophets' blood.' You therefore testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' sins!

"Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell? This is why I am sending you prophets, sages, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and hound from town to town."

A Plot Against Jesus

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to trap Him by what He said.

And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test Him: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments."

In these circumstances, a crowd of many thousands came



together, so that they were trampling on one another. He began to say to His disciples first: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing covered that won’t be uncovered, nothing hidden that won’t be made known.

But the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

When Jesus became aware of this, He withdrew from there. Huge crowds followed Him, and He healed them all. He warned them not to make Him known, so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

Here is My Servant whom I have chosen,
My beloved in whom My soul delights;
I will put My Spirit on Him,
and He will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not argue or shout,
and no one will hear His voice in the streets.
He will not break a bruised reed,
and He will not put out a smoldering wick,
until He has led justice to victory.
The nations will put their hope in His name.



The Rich Man and the Poor Man

Jesus said, “There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate. He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man’s table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham⁶’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hell⁷, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. ‘Father Abraham!’ he called out, ‘Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!’

“ ‘Son,’ Abraham said, ‘remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.’

“ ‘Father,’ he said, ‘then I beg you to send him to my father’s house— because I have five brothers—to warn them, so they won’t

⁶ Abraham: The first forefather of the Jewish nation. He is often referred to as an example to those who believe God.

⁷ Hell: Or *Hades*



also come to this place of torment.’

“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’

“ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said. ‘But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

“But he told him, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: “Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector⁸. The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this: ‘God, I thank You that I’m not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast⁹ twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’

“But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his

⁸ tax collector: A man appointed by the Roman government to collect taxes from the Jewish people. Such a man was hated and regarded by the Jews as a traitor and sinner because he not only collected tax for the hated Roman foreign imperialists, but also often made himself wealthy by squeezing out more money than actually required, for his own pocket.

⁹ To *fast* is to abstain from food for a set period of time, usually for religious purposes.



eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner!' I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Humble Yourself Like a Child

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Then He called a child to Him and had him stand among them. "I assure you," He said, "unless you are converted and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one child like this in My name welcomes Me.

"But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!"



The Unbelief of Jesus' Brothers

The Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, so His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go to Judea so Your disciples can see Your works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he's seeking public recognition. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." (For not even His brothers believed in Him.)

Jesus told them, "My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. The world cannot hate you, but it does hate Me because I testify about it—that its deeds are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves. I'm not going up to the festival yet, because My time has not yet fully come." After He had said these things, He stayed in Galilee.

Jesus at a Jewish Festival

After His brothers had gone up to the festival, then He also went up, not openly but secretly. The Jews were looking for Him at the festival and saying, "Where is He?" And there was a lot of discussion about Him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He's deceiving the

people.” Still, nobody was talking publicly about Him because they feared the Jews.

When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple complex and began to teach. Then the Jews were amazed and said, “How does He know the Scriptures, since He hasn’t been trained?”

Jesus answered them, “My teaching isn’t Mine but is from the One who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own.

“My Teaching Is Not My Own”

“The one who believes in Me believes not in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And the one who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me would not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My words and doesn’t keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects Me and doesn’t accept My sayings has this as his judge: the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not



spoken on My own, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a command as to what I should say and what I should speak. I know that His command is eternal life. So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

Is This the Messiah?

Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Isn’t this the man they want to kill? Yet, look! He’s speaking publicly and they’re saying nothing to Him. Can it be true that the authorities know He is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where He is from.”

As He was teaching in the temple complex, Jesus cried out, “You know Me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on My own, but the One who sent Me is true. You don’t know Him; I know Him because I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

However, many from the crowd believed in Him and said, “When the Messiah comes, He won’t perform more signs than this man has done, will He?”

When some from the crowd heard these words, they said, “This really is the Prophet!” Others said, “This is the Messiah!” But



some said, “Surely the Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee, does He? Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Messiah comes from David’s offspring and from the town of Bethlehem, where David once lived?” So a division occurred among the crowd because of Him.

The Unbelief of the Leaders

The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple police to arrest Him.

Then they tried to seize Him. Yet no one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come.

Then the temple police came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why haven’t you brought Him?”

The police answered, “No man ever spoke like this!”

Then the Pharisees responded to them: “Are you fooled too? Have any of the rulers believed in Him? Or any of the Pharisees? But this crowd, which doesn’t know the law, is accursed!”

Nicodemus—the one who came to Him previously, being one of them—said to them, “Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he’s doing, does it?”



“You aren’t from Galilee too, are you?” they replied. “Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”

Signs of the End of the World

As Jesus left and was going out of the temple complex, His disciples came up and called His attention to the temple buildings. Then He replied to them, “Don’t you see all these things? I assure you: Not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down!”

While He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached Him privately and said, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?”

Then Jesus replied to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will deceive many. You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these events are the beginning of birth pains.



“Then they will hand you over for persecution, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of My name. Then many will take offense, betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be delivered. This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come.

Great Suffering

“For those will be days of tribulation, the kind that hasn’t been from the beginning of the world, which God created, until now and never will be again! Unless the Lord limited those days, no one would survive. But He limited those days because of the elect, whom He chose.

“Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah! Look—there!’ do not believe it! For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. And you must watch! I have told you everything in advance.



“But in those days, after that tribulation:
The sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not shed its light;
the stars will be falling from the sky,
and the celestial powers will be shaken.

The Second Coming of the Son of Man

“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

“Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—except the Father. Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming.

“As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away. So this is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be.

He Will Judge All Peoples

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry
and you gave Me something to eat;
I was thirsty
and you gave Me something to drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was sick and you took care of Me;
I was in prison and you visited Me.’

“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or

without clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?’

“And the King will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’ Then He will also say to those on the left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!

For I was hungry
and you gave Me nothing to eat;
I was thirsty
and you gave Me nothing to drink;
I was a stranger
and you didn’t take Me in;
I was naked
and you didn’t clothe Me,
sick and in prison
and you didn’t take care of Me.’

“Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?’



“Then He will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.’

“And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The Death of Lazarus of Bethany

Now a man was sick, Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. So the sisters sent a message to Him: “Lord, the one You love is sick.”

Jesus said to the disciples, “Let’s go to Judea again.”

When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem (about two miles away). Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary remained seated in the house.

Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died. Yet even now I know that whatever

You ask from God, God will give You.”

“Your brother will rise again,” Jesus told her.

Martha said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she told Him, “I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

Jesus Weeps

Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”

As soon as she heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him. Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met Him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.



When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!”

When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was angry in His spirit and deeply moved. “Where have you put him?” He asked.

“Lord,” they told Him, “come and see.”

Jesus wept.

So the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Couldn’t He who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. “Remove the stone,” Jesus said.

Martha, the dead man’s sister, told Him, “Lord, he already stinks. It’s been four days.”

Jesus said to her, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed you



would see the glory of God?”

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me.” After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him and let him go.”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He did believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin¹⁰ and said, “What are we going to do since this man does many signs? If we let Him continue in this way, everybody will believe in Him! Then the Romans will come and remove both our place and our nation.”

¹⁰ The Supreme Court, or the Senate, of the Jewish nation, which was recognized by the Imperial Roman Government as a legal governing body, though subservient to Rome and limited in authority. It was made up of 70 men, priests, elders, and scribes from the Jewish sects of the Pharisees and the Saducees. The Jewish High Priest was the head of this Senate.

The Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple complex: "What do you think? He won't come to the festival, will He?" The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it so they could arrest Him.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for Him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

Then a large crowd of the Jews learned He was there. They came not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus the one He had raised from the dead. Therefore the chief priests decided to also kill Lazarus, because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

Jesus Welcomed into Jerusalem

The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took



palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: Fear no more, Daughter Zion; look! your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.

His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Meanwhile the crowd, which had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. This is also why the crowd met Him, because they heard He had done this sign.

Then the Pharisees said to one another, “You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look—the world has gone after Him!”

Judas Betrays Jesus

The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Him to death, because they were afraid of the people.

Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was numbered



among the Twelve. He went away and discussed with the chief priests and temple police how he could hand Him over to them. They were glad and agreed to give him silver. So he accepted the offer and started looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them when the crowd was not present.

Jesus Is Rejected

Even though Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him. But this was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said:

Lord, who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said:

He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so that they would not see with their eyes
or understand with their hearts,
and be converted,
and I would heal them.

Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke about Him.

Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue. For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.



The Via Dolorosa (The Way of Sorrow), Jerusalem.

Chapter 8

For the Sins of Mankind

Groaning, twisting with pain, naked, bones out of joint and nails through his hands and feet, with spit and blood running down his face, a crown of thorns pressed down on his head, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords took upon himself the responsibility for the sins of the men he had created. Because he died, we live; because he suffered, we are forgiven; by his stripes we are healed. No other solution to the terrible problem of sin can be found in this world. This is the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven—a narrow gate, the Bible tells us, and there are very few who find it! No wonder that Christians love their King!



The Last Supper

On the first day of Unleavened Bread¹, when they sacrifice the Passover lamb, His disciples asked Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare the Passover so You may eat it?”

So He sent two of His disciples and told them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him. Wherever he enters, tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is the guest room for Me to eat the Passover with My disciples?”’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.” So the disciples went out, entered the city, and found it just as He had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, He arrived with the Twelve.

Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

¹ Also called the *Passover*. This festival celebrated the deliverance by God of the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Scripture relates how the Angel of Destruction sent by God to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptian people and their animals *passed over* the homes of the Israelites. During this festival the Jews slaughtered, roasted and ate a lamb together with unleavened bread (bread baked without yeast). Jesus was killed during this festival, and Christians regarded Jesus himself as the sacrificial lamb, meaning that God has forgiven (passed over) the sins of those whose trust is in Jesus. See note 19 on page 69.

While they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, "I assure you: One of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me!"

They began to be distressed and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?"

He said to them, "It is one of the Twelve—the one who is dipping bread with Me in the bowl. For the Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

The disciples started looking at one another—uncertain which one He was speaking about. One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was He was talking about. So he leaned back against Jesus and asked Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus replied, "He's the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it." When He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son.

After receiving the piece of bread, he went out immediately. And it was night.



The Way, the Truth, the Life

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is My body.”

Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, and so they all drank from it.

“Your heart must not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way where I am going.”

“Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where You’re going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn’t see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. The one who doesn’t love Me will not keep My words. The word that you hear is not Mine but is from the Father who sent Me.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

“I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come.

The Hate and Persecution of the World

“If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it



hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of My name, because they don't know the One who sent Me.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates Me also hates My Father. If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not have sin. Now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: They hated Me for no reason."

Jesus Prophecies Peter's Failure

After singing psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will run away, because it is written:



I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.

But after I have been resurrected, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Peter told Him, "Even if everyone runs away, I will certainly not!"

"I assure you," Jesus said to him, "today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times!"

But he kept insisting, "If I have to die with You, I will never deny You!" And they all said the same thing.

Arrested

After Jesus had said these things, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and He and His disciples went into it.

Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with His disciples. So Judas took a company of soldiers and some temple police from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.



He came near Jesus to kiss Him, but Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear.

Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in place because all who take up a sword will perish by a sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels? How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?” And touching his ear, He healed him.

At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture Me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple complex, and you didn’t arrest Me. But all this has happened so that the prophetic Scriptures would be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted Him and ran away.

The Trial at the Sanhedrin

Those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had convened.



Meanwhile, Peter was following Him at a distance right to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and was sitting with the temple police to see the outcome.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin² were looking for false testimony against Jesus so they could put Him to death. But they could not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. Finally, two who came forward stated, "This man said, 'I can demolish God's sanctuary and rebuild it in three days.' "

The high priest then stood up and said to Him, "Don't You have an answer to what these men are testifying against You?" But Jesus kept silent. Then the high priest said to Him, "By the living God I place You under oath: tell us if You are the Messiah, the Son of God!"

"You have said it," Jesus told him. "But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man³ seated at the right hand of the [Mighty One] and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Look, now you've heard the blasphemy! What is your decision?"

² This court, the supreme Jewish authority, had the power to punish offenders against Jewish law even with the death sentence. However, the death sentence required the approval of the Roman Governor. See note 10 on page 125.

³ See note 4 on page 46.



They answered, "He deserves death!" Then they spit in His face and beat Him; others slapped Him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who hit You?"

Peter Denies Jesus

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant approached him and she said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean too."

But he denied it in front of everyone: "I don't know what you're talking about!"

When he had gone out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene!"

And again he denied it with an oath, "I don't know the man!"

After a little while those standing there approached and said to Peter, "You certainly are one of them, since even your accent gives you away."

Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, "I do not know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then the Lord turned and looked at Peter. So Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.



Standing Before Pilate⁴

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. After tying Him up, they led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate, the governor.

Then Pilate came out to them and said, “What charge do you bring against this man?”

They answered him, “If this man weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have handed Him over to you.”

So Pilate told them, “Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law.”

“It’s not legal for us to put anyone to death,” the Jews declared.

Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about Me?”

“I’m not a Jew, am I?” Pilate replied. “Your own nation and the chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?”

“My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus. “If My kingdom

⁴ Pilate: Roman Governor of Judea from A.D. 26~36. Death sentences were subject to his approval or veto.



were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. As it is, My kingdom does not have its origin here."

"You are a king then?" Pilate asked.

"You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice."

"What is truth?" said Pilate.

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging Him."

Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and threw a purple robe around Him. And they repeatedly came up to Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and were slapping His face.

Pilate went outside again and said to them, "Look, I'm bringing Him outside to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging Him."

Pilate Tries to Save Jesus

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent



word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of Him!"

Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

When the chief priests and the temple police saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate responded, "Take Him and crucify Him yourselves, for I find no grounds for charging Him."

"We have a law," the Jews replied to him, "and according to that law He must die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus did not give him an answer. So Pilate said to Him, "You're not talking to me? Don't You know that I have the authority to release You and the authority to crucify You?"

"You would have no authority over Me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above. This is why the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin."

From that moment Pilate made every effort to release Him. But the Jews shouted, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!"



The Death Sentence

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge's bench in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Hebrew *Gabbatha*). It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about six in the morning. Then he told the Jews, "Here is your king!"

But they shouted, "Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your king?"

"We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves!"

All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

So then, because of them, he handed Him over to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

Therefore they took Jesus away. Carrying His own cross, He went out to what is called Skull Place, which in Hebrew is called



Golgotha. There they crucified Him and two others with Him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

Pilate also had a sign lettered and put on the cross. The inscription was:

JESUS THE NAZARENE
THE KING OF THE JEWS

Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’ ”

Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.”

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided His clothes and cast lots.

Those who passed by were yelling insults at Him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Ha! The One who would demolish the sanctuary and build it in three days, save Yourself by coming down from the cross!” In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking Him to one another and saying, “He saved others;



He cannot save Himself! Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with Him were taunting Him.

The soldiers also mocked Him. They came offering Him sour wine and said, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”

The Thief on the Cross

Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at Him: “Aren’t You the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!”

But the other answered, rebuking him: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!”

And Jesus said to him, “I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Jesus’ Death

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land. At about three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a



loud voice, “Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling for Elijah⁵!”

Jesus shouted again with a loud voice, “It is finished!” Then bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked and the rocks were split. When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “This man really was God’s Son!”

Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to Him were there, looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

His Burial

When it was already evening, because it was preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking

⁵ Elijah: One of the greatest Old Testament prophets.



forward to the kingdom of God, came and boldly went in to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised that He was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether He had already died. When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph. After he bought some fine linen, he took Him down and wrapped Him in the linen. Then he placed Him in a tomb cut out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Now Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching where He was placed.

The Sealed Grave and the Roman Guard

The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive, He said, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come, steal Him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' Then the last deception will be worse than the first."

"You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." Then they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard.



Garden Tomb, Jerusalem



An Olive Garden at Gethsemane, Jerusalem

Chapter 9

Back from Death

The power, the glory, the hope of the Christian message is the Resurrection of Jesus. And though many men ignore it, no one, unless he is hopelessly ignorant, can deny this astounding truth. It is the center of world history; it has turned the world upside down. In fact, this is the very message that Christians are telling, and should tell, to the world. Jesus rose from the dead! And because he, our representative, rose, we also will rise and enter the eternal, glorious Kingdom of Heaven! This is the powerful, and the only, answer to the awful curse of Death that hangs over all mankind. There is no other hope, no other victory over death in all the world.



The Resurrection Morning

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his robe was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken from fear of him that they became like dead men.

But the angel told the women, “Don’t be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead. In fact, He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there.’ Listen, I have told you.”

So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. “He is not here, but He has been resurrected! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?’” And they remembered His words.



Jesus Appears to the Women

So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell His disciples the news. Just then Jesus met them and said, “Good morning!” They came up, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him. Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see Me there.”

Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths. So he went home, amazed at what had happened.

The Guards and the Jewish Priests

As they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, “Say this, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.’ If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took



the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

On the Road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them. But they were prevented from recognizing Him. Then He asked them, “What is this dispute that you’re having with each other as you are walking?” And they stopped walking and looked discouraged.

The one named Cleopas answered Him, “Are You the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”

“What things?” He asked them.

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a Prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. But



we were hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it's the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb, and when they didn't find His body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see Him."

He said to them, "How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

They came near the village where they were going, and He gave the impression that He was going farther. But they urged Him: "Stay with us, because it's almost evening, and now the day is almost over." So He went in to stay with them.

It was as He reclined at the table with them that He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. So they said to each other, "Weren't our hearts ablaze



within us while He was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?" That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, who said, "The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they began to describe what had happened on the road and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

And as they were saying these things, Jesus Himself stood among them. He said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. "Why are you troubled?" He asked them. "And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet. But while they still could not believe because of their joy and were amazed, He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and He took it and ate in their presence.

Then He told them, "These are My words that I spoke to you



while I was still with you—that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses¹, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

“Go Into All the World”

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He also said to them, “This is what is written: the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” After saying this, He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

¹ This, together with the books of the prophets and the psalms, were all parts of the Jewish Scriptures—today’s Old Testament.



“Those Who Believe Without Seeing”

But one of the Twelve, Thomas (called “Twin”), was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!”

After eight days His disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace to you!”

Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and observe My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don’t be an unbeliever, but a believer.”

Thomas responded to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Those who believe without seeing are blessed.”

Jesus Is Taken Up into Heaven

After Jesus had suffered, He also presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40



days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Then He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. He was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

While He was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven.”

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away².

And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the accompanying signs.

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.



Golden Gate, Jerusalem

Chapter 10

The Time Is Near

After Jesus was taken up into heaven, a violent persecution broke out against those who believed in him. Jesus' disciple, John, because he taught that Jesus is the Christ and preached God's message, was exiled to the Isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. There God revealed to him in a vision the things that would happen in the earth in later days. These words, down through the ages since then, have been a source of joy and encouragement to those who suffer and are persecuted because of their faith in Jesus. Here we are promised that God will reward those who obey him, and that there will certainly be a new earth where there is no more suffering and sorrow. These words from God are called "The Revelation of John".

Jesus Is Coming Again

The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave Him to show His [servants] what must quickly take place. He sent it and signified it through His angel to His [servant] John, who testified to God's word and to the testimony about Jesus Christ, in all he saw. Blessed is the one who reads and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near!

To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see Him,
including those who pierced Him.
And all the families of the earth
will mourn over Him.
This is certain. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the One who is, who was, and who is coming, the Almighty."

The Appearance of the Son of Man

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation, kingdom,



and perseverance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of God's word and the testimony about Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day¹, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write on a scroll what you see."

I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. When I turned I saw seven gold lampstands, and among the lampstands was One like the Son of Man, dressed in a long robe, and with a gold sash wrapped around His chest. His head and hair were white like wool—white as snow, His eyes like a fiery flame, His feet like fine bronze fired in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of cascading waters. In His right hand He had seven stars; from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was shining like the sun at midday.

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. He laid His right hand on me, and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hell². Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this.

"Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the victor the right to eat from the tree

¹ Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection.

² Hell: Or *Hades*



of life, which is in the paradise of God, and the victor will never be harmed by the second death.

“In the same way, the victor will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and before His angels.”

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Originator of God’s creation says: “You say, ‘I’m rich; I have become wealthy, and need nothing,’ and you don’t know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be committed and repent. Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me. The victor: I will give him the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I also won the victory and sat down with My Father on His throne.

“Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The Throne in Heaven

After this I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. The first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said,



“Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Immediately I was in the Spirit, and there in heaven a throne was set. One was seated on the throne, and the One seated looked like jasper and carnelian stone. A rainbow that looked like an emerald surrounded the throne. Around that throne were 24 thrones, and on the thrones sat 24 elders dressed in white clothes, with gold crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and thunder. Burning before the throne were seven fiery torches, which are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne was something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal.

The 24 elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, worship the One who lives forever and ever, cast their crowns before the throne, and say:

Our Lord and God,
You are worthy to receive
glory and honor and power,
because You have created all things,
and because of Your will
they exist and were created.



Heaven and Earth are Shaken

Then a violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the entire moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; the sky separated like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

The Great Throng Clothed in White Robes

After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God,



who is seated on the throne,
and to the Lamb!

All the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and strength,
be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Then one of the elders asked me, "Who are these people robed in white, and where did they come from?"

I said to him, "Sir, you know."

Then he told me:

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.
They washed their robes and made them white
in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,
and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary.
The One seated on the throne will shelter them:
no longer will they hunger; no longer will they thirst;
no longer will the sun strike them, or any heat.

Because the Lamb who is at the center of the throne
will shepherd them;
He will guide them to springs of living waters,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Angels Sound the Trumpets

Then I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God; seven trumpets were given to them. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire, mixed with blood, were hurled to the earth. So a third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain ablaze with fire was hurled into the sea. So a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from heaven. It fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood, and a third of the waters became wormwood. So, many of the people died from the



waters, because they had been made bitter.

The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day was without light, and the night as well.

I looked, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid-heaven, saying in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to those who live on the earth, because of the remaining trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to sound!”

The Fifth Trumpet

The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth. The key to the shaft of the abyss³ was given to him. He opened the shaft of the abyss, and smoke came up out of the shaft like smoke from a great furnace so that the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. Then out of the smoke locusts came to the earth, and power was given to them like the power that scorpions have on the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green plant, or any tree, but only people who do not have God’s seal on their foreheads. They were not permitted to kill them, but were to torment them

for five months; their torment is like the torment caused by a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days people will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will flee from them.

The first woe has passed. There are still two more woes to come after this.

The Sixth Trumpet

The sixth angel blew his trumpet. From the four horns of the gold altar that is before God, I heard a voice say to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates.” So the four angels who were prepared for the hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of the human race. The number of mounted troops was 200 million; I heard their number. This is how I saw the horses in my vision: The horsemen had breastplates that were fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow. The heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and from their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. A third of the human race was killed by these three plagues—by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur that came from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, because their

³ abyss: The entrance to Hell—the heart of the earth.



tails, like snakes, have heads, and they inflict injury with them.

The rest of the people, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands to stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which are not able to see, hear, or walk. And they did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, his legs were like fiery pillars, and he had a little scroll opened in his hand. He put his right foot on the sea, his left on the land. Then the angel that I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. He swore an oath by the One who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it: "There will no longer be an interval of time, but in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he will blow his trumpet, then God's hidden plan will be completed, as He announced to His servants the prophets."

The Seventh Trumpet

The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord and of His Messiah,
and He will reign forever and ever!

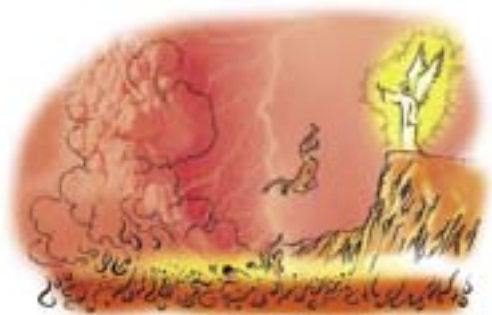
The 24 elders, who were seated before God on their thrones,
fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

We thank You, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was,
because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.
The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come.
The time has come for the dead to be judged,
and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets,
to the sacred ones⁴, and to those who fear Your name,
both small and great,
and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.

The Final Judgment

Then I saw a great white throne and One seated on it. Earth
and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for
them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before
the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened,
which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to

⁴ the sacred ones: Or *the saints*.



their works by what was written in the books.

Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone [whose name was] not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

All Things New

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea existed no longer. I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

Then I heard a loud voice from the throne:

Look! God's dwelling is with men,
and He will live with them.

They will be His people,
and God Himself will be with them and be their God.
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Death will exist no longer;
grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer,
because the previous things have passed away.



Then the One seated on the throne said, “Look! I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the thirsty from the spring of living water as a gift. The victor will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem

Then one of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me: “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” He then carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, arrayed with God’s glory. Her radiance was like a very precious stone, like a jasper stone, bright as crystal. The city had a massive high wall, with 12 gates. Twelve angels were at the gates. The 12 gates are 12 pearls; each individual gate was made of a single pearl. The broad street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.



I did not see a sanctuary in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its sanctuary. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because God's glory illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Each day its gates will never close because it will never be night there. They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. Nothing profane will ever enter it: no one who does what is vile or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life.

The River of Life

Then he showed me the river of living water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the broad street of the city. On both sides of the river was the tree of life bearing 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Night will no longer exist, and people will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.

Then the angel said to me, "These words are faithful and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must quickly take place."

The Time Is Near

"Look, I am coming quickly! Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic words of this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow [servant] with you, your brothers the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." He also said to me, "Don't seal the prophetic words of this book, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous go on in unrighteousness; let the filthy go on being made filthy; let the righteous go on in righteousness; and let the holy go on being made holy."

O Lord Jesus, Come Quickly

"Look! I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to repay each person according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to attest these things to you for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright Morning Star.”

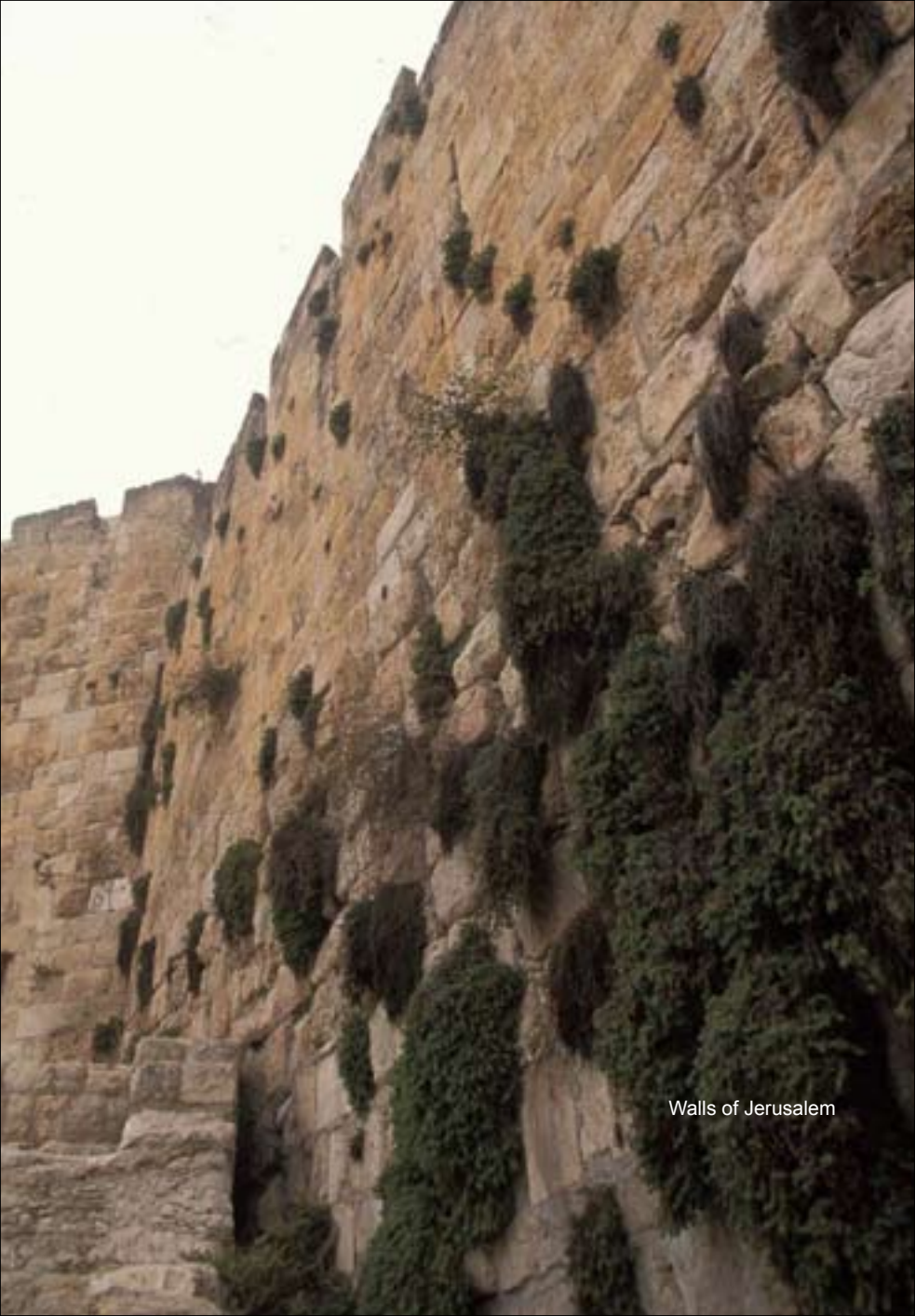
Both the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Anyone who hears should say, “Come!” And the one who is thirsty should come. Whoever desires should take the living water as a gift.

I testify to everyone who hears the prophetic words of this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this prophetic book, God will take away his share of the tree of life and the holy city, written in this book.

He who testifies about these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.”

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.



Walls of Jerusalem

Chapter 11

The World's End; A New Hope

During the last part of the first century A.D., Jesus' disciples and many who believed in him carried his message (which they called "the gospel," or "the good news") to the whole known world. Jesus' disciples wrote many letters to the new believers in Jesus living in different parts of the world, in order to encourage them and strengthen their faith. God's word, given to men through these letters from Jesus' disciples, has been passed down to us in 21 different letters. In this book, from chapters 11 through 14, we will give excerpts from these letters.



Excerpts from Peter's Letter

The Time of the End

Dear friends, this is now the second letter I've written you; in both, I awaken your pure understanding with a reminder, so that you can remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets, and the commandment of our Lord and Savior given through your apostles.

First, be aware of this: scoffers will come in the last days to scoff, following their own lusts, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep¹, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation." They willfully ignore this: long ago the heavens and the earth existed out of water and through water by the word of God. Through these the world of that time perished when it was flooded by water. But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years like one day. The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

¹ *fall asleep*: a term used in reference to those who have died.



The Day of the Lord

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be on fire and be dissolved, and the elements will melt with the heat. But based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.

Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found in peace without spot or blemish before Him. Also, regard the patience of our Lord as an opportunity for salvation.

Excerpts from Paul's Letters

Our Eternal Hope

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who



have no hope. Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you by a revelation from the Lord: We who are still alive at the Lord's coming will certainly have no advantage over those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

God's Retribution

About the times and the seasons: brothers, you do not need anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. When they say, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful angels, taking vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the

gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of everlasting destruction, away from the Lord's presence and from His glorious strength.

The Coming of the Antichrist

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: we ask you, brothers, not to be easily upset in mind or troubled, either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter as if from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness² is revealed, the son of destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's sanctuary, publicizing that he himself is God.

Don't you remember that when I was still with you I told you about this? And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; but the one now restraining will do so until he is out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and will

² Christians call this man the *Antichrist*. The Bible prophecies that this man will unite the world into one world government just before the end of the world.



bring him to nothing with the brightness of His coming.

The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders, and with every unrighteous deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth in order to be saved. For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe what is false, so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but enjoyed unrighteousness.

But you, brothers, are not in the dark, so that this day would overtake you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We're not of the night or of darkness. So then, we must not sleep, like the rest, but we must stay awake and be sober.

Resurrected With New Bodies

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come?" Foolish one! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow—you are not sowing the future body, but only a seed, perhaps of



wheat or another grain. But God gives it a body as He wants, and to each of the seeds its own body. Not all flesh is the same flesh; there is one flesh for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is different from that of the earthly ones. There is a splendor of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars; for star differs from star in splendor. So it is with the resurrection of the dead:

Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption;
sown in dishonor, raised in glory;
sown in weakness, raised in power;
sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body.
If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Some Will Not Die

Brothers, I tell you this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and corruption cannot inherit incorruption. Listen! I am telling you a mystery:

We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.
For the trumpet will sound,
and the dead will be raised incorruptible,

and we will be changed.

Because this corruptible must be clothed with incorruptibility,
and this mortal must be clothed with immortality.

Now when this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility,
and this mortal is clothed with immortality,
then the saying that is written will take place:

Death has been swallowed up in victory.

O Death, where is your victory?

O Death, where is your sting?

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always
excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord
is not in vain.

Excerpts from Jude's Letter

False Christians

But you, dear friends, remember the words foretold by the
apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; they told you, "In the end time

there will be scoffers walking according to their own ungodly desires.” These people create divisions and are merely natural, not having the Spirit, wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!

And Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied about them:

Look! The Lord comes with thousands of His holy ones
to execute judgment on all, and to convict them
of all their ungodly deeds that they have done in an ungodly way,
and of all the harsh things ungodly sinners
have said against Him.

These people are discontented grumblers, walking according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage.

But you, dear friends, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.



From Paul's Letter to Timothy

Men Will Turn Away From God

But know this: difficult times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of religion but denying its power. Avoid these people!

Learn to Be Patient

But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Evil people and imposters will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing those from whom you learned.



Ruins of Chorazin in Upper Galilee, Israel



Mt. Tabor, Galilee

Chapter 12

Salvation through Christ

The Christian's faith differs from all the religions in the world in this way: Religions, and religious teachers, teach men the precepts they must follow in order to be happy in this world and/or the world to come; and they urge men to discipline themselves to follow those teachings. Christians, however, believe that all men already know the teachings they should follow; so they not only do not need more teaching, but are so hopelessly bad that they neither can, nor want to, follow God's laws.

Because of mankind's utter depravity and hopeless sinfulness, God himself sent Jesus to take away sin for men, and as their representative, in their stead.

Jesus did this on the cross. There, while being rejected and mocked by men, he became also, as the embodiment and personification of man's sin, the object of God's wrath and judgment against mankind.

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So now the problem of sin—all sin—is gone. God counts ungodly men righteous! God wants us to simply believe this and be happy about it. More than that, God has promised that whoever believes in Jesus and trusts God's word concerning the forgiveness of our sins because of Jesus' death—to this man he will give his Spirit. That is, his Spirit will come into those who believe, and they will become new men—born anew into his kingdom—with different hearts, with both the strength and desire to be righteous.

This is the gospel—the good news—that is the subject of the following chapter, excerpts from the writings of Jesus' disciple, Paul.



The Power of the Gospel

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes. For in it God's righteousness is revealed out of faith into faith, just as it is written: The one who becomes righteous by faith, will live¹.

For to those who are perishing the message of the cross² is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God's power. For it is written:

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the understanding of the experts.

Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of the message preached. Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom, because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

¹ Or *The righteous will live by faith.*

² The good news that God has granted forgiveness of sins to mankind because of the atoning death of Jesus, God's Son, on the cross.

The Source of Sin

God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

Therefore God delivered them over in the cravings of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.



The Corruption of Mankind

This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual intercourse for what is unnatural. The males in the same way also left natural sexual intercourse with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty for their perversion.

And because they did not think it worthwhile to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do what is morally wrong. They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, disputes, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Although they know full well God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

Don't Take God's Warnings Lightly!

Therefore, anyone of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. Do you really think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed. He will repay each one according to his works: eternal life to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth, but are obeying unrighteousness; affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. There is no favoritism with God.

No One Is Righteous

There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands,
there is no one who seeks God.

All have turned away,
together they have become useless;
there is no one who does good,
there is not even one.

Their throat is an open grave;
they deceive with their tongues.

Vipers' venom is under their lips.

Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood;
ruin and wretchedness are in their paths,
and the path of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed, which is God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.



The Righteousness that Comes by Believing

God presented Him as an offering of atonement³ through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed [by mankind]. This righteousness will be credited to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Also through Him, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

God's Grace Toward Us

For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been

³ an offering of atonement: Or a propitiation.

reconciled, will we be saved by His life! And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Turn Away From Lust

Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. What the law could not do since it was weakened by our flesh, God did. He condemned the sin in our flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours, and as a sin offering, in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to our [fleshly desires] but according to the Spirit.

Those who live according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those whose lives are according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. Those whose lives are in the flesh are unable to please God.



The Working of the Holy Spirit in Us

You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.

For if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the [lusts] of the body, you will live. All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "*Abba*, Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Our Hope

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.



Now in this hope we were saved, yet hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mind-set, because He intercedes for his sacred ones⁴ according to the will of God.

The Future Glory

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.

The Unshakable Love of God

What then are we to say about these things?

If God is for us, who is against us?

He did not even spare His own Son,

⁴ his sacred ones: Or *his holy people*, or *his saints*.



but offered Him up for us all;
how will He not also with Him grant us everything?
Who can bring an accusation against God's elect?
God is the One who justifies.
Who is the one who condemns?
Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised;
He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.
Who can separate us from the love of Christ?
Can affliction or anguish or persecution
or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
As it is written:
Because of You we are being put to death all day long;
we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.
No, in all these things we are more than victorious
through Him who loved us.
For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing
will have the power to separate us
from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Kidron Valley, Jerusalem



Salvation through Christ



Lake Galilee and Tiberius City

Chapter 13

To Those Who Believe In The Lord Jesus

In the Bible we find that to be a Christian does not mean to belong to some religious organization or to follow some leader or eloquent teacher. In fact we were strongly warned by Jesus to avoid such things. When we read the letters to Christians which were written by the Apostles, we find that they urge us to live holy lives in obedience to God's word, to abstain from the lusts and temptations of this world, to endure hardship and even persecution, to live with the joyful hope of eternal life in God's soon coming Kingdom, and above all, to love and help our brothers and sisters who also believe in Jesus.



Letters from Jesus' Disciples

True Worship

Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

In Everyday Life

Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. Share with God's people¹ in their needs; pursue hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Be in agreement with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

¹ God's people: Or *his sacred ones*, or *his saints*.

Overcome Evil

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone. Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord. But

If your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.

Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

Christ Is Supreme

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

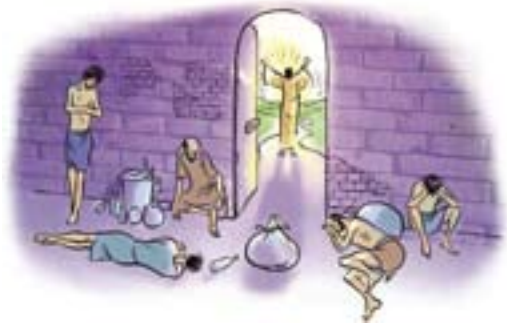
He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation;
because by Him everything was created,
in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—



all things have been created through Him and for Him.
He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.
He is also the head of the body, the church;
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that He might come to have first place in everything.

Christ's Example

Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus,
who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be used for His own advantage.
Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave,
taking on the likeness of men.
And when He had come as a man in His external form,
He humbled Himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—even to death on a cross.
For this reason God also highly exalted Him
and gave Him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—
of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.



Put Away the Old Life-style

So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God. When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient, and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.



A New Person; A New Hope

Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. Above all, put on love—the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful. Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and don't become bitter against them.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord.



Eternal Things Are Unseen Now

Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world, and not based on Christ. For in Him the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily, and you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

We Long For Heaven

For we know that if our earthly house, a tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And, in fact, we groan in this one, longing to put on our house from heaven, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we who are in this tent groan, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but



clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life. And the One who prepared us for this very thing is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

We Live by Faith

Therefore, though we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—yet we are confident and satisfied to be out of the body and at home with the Lord. Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or bad.

We Live For Christ

Knowing, then, the fear of the Lord, we persuade people. We are completely open before God, and I hope we are completely open to your consciences as well.

For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died. And He died for all so



that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.

We Are Christ's Ambassadors

From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him like that. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.



Shore of Lake Galilee

Chapter 14

Love

The true mark of a Christian is not knowledge, not eloquence, not power or prosperity, not a high position or honor among other Christians. The true mark of a Christian is that he loves his brothers and sisters fervently and from the heart. In the First Letter of John, chapter three, verse twenty-three, we find these words: "Now this is God's command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us." In this short chapter we find a true definition of love – something we cannot find anywhere else in all the literature of the world. Whoever has this sort of love is a true Christian.

From the Gospel of John

Some Words of Jesus

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

“I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My command: love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.”

From the Letters of Jesus’ Disciples

Love

If I speak the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love,
I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy,
and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have all faith, so that I can move mountains,



but do not have love, I am nothing.
And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor,
and if I give my body to be burned¹,
but do not have love, I gain nothing.
Love is patient; love is kind. Love does not envy;
is not boastful; is not conceited;
does not act improperly; is not selfish;
is not provoked; does not keep a record of wrongs;
finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth;
bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never ends.

But as for prophecies, they will come to an end;
as for languages, they will cease;
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
But when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end.
When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I put aside childish things.
For now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face.

¹ This means to suffer martyrdom.

Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.
Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love.
But the greatest of these is love.
Pursue love.

Love Comes from God

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.

This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit. And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.



No Fear in Love

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; for we are as He is in this world. There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because He first loved us.

If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And we have this command from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother.

Christ Is the Love of God

My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous One. He Himself is the

propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.

Do Not Love the Things in This World

Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God’s will remains forever.

Overcome This World

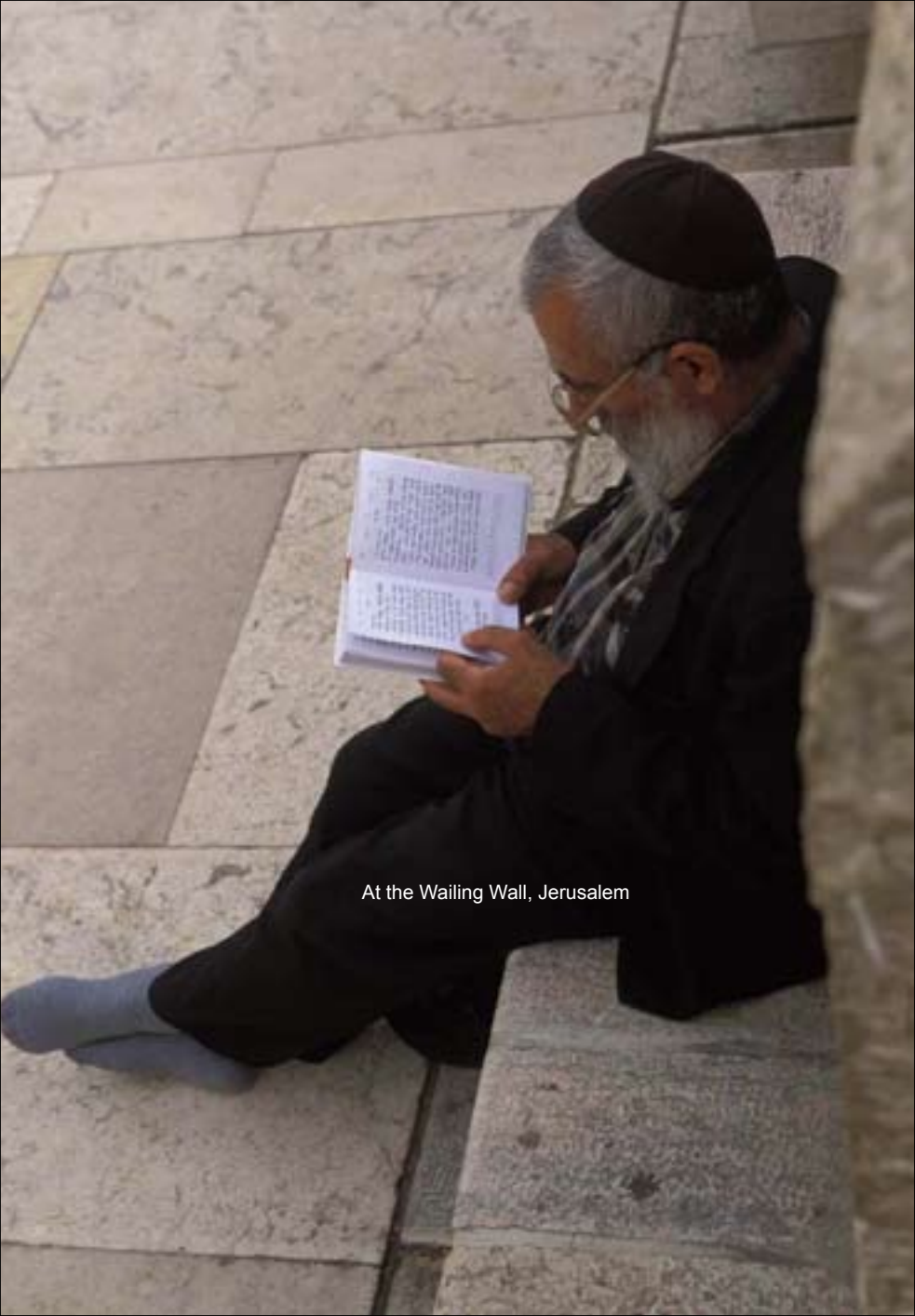
Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God², and everyone who loves the parent also loves his child.

² That is, has received the Spirit of God.



This is how we know that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands. For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden, because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.



At the Wailing Wall, Jerusalem

Chapter 15

A Fountain of Wisdom

We are told in the Bible that God gave King Solomon (reigned over Israel c. 1070-1030 B.C.) wisdom and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater, the Bible says, "than the wisdom of all the men of the East; he was wiser than any other man. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom." In this short chapter we give a few of Solomon's proverbs taken from the Bible. These proverbs, written 3000 years ago, are still quoted often in the world of today.



*This is a Collection of Ancient Proverbs from the
Proverbs of Solomon¹ and Ecclesiastes*

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth:

Whoever listens to me will live securely
and be free from the fear of danger.

The fear of the Lord
is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction,
and don't reject your mother's teaching,

The Lord gives wisdom;
from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own understanding;
think about Him in all your ways,
and He will guide you on the right paths.

Don't consider yourself to be wise;
fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

¹ Most of these proverbs were recorded by Solomon, king of Israel from 971~932 B.C.
See note 24 on page 78.



Do not despise the Lord's instruction, my son,
and do not loathe His discipline;
for the Lord disciplines the one He loves,
just as a father, the son he delights in.

Happy is a man who finds wisdom
and who acquires understanding,
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left, riches and honor.

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
shining brighter and brighter until midday.
But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom;
they don't know what makes them stumble.

Guard your heart above all else,
for it is the source of life.

A man's ways are before the Lord's eyes,
and He considers all his paths.

A wicked man's iniquities entrap him;
he is entangled in the ropes of his own sin.
He will die because there is no instruction,
and be lost because of his great stupidity.



Six things the Lord hates;
in fact, seven are detestable to Him:
arrogant eyes, a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that plots wicked schemes,
feet eager to run to evil,
a lying witness who gives false testimony,
and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.

The one who commits adultery lacks sense;
whoever does so destroys himself.
He will get a beating and dishonor,
and his disgrace will never be removed.

Accept my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than pure gold.
For wisdom is better than precious stones,
and nothing desirable can compare with it.

Don't rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you;
rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.
A wise heart accepts commands,
but foolish lips will be destroyed.

Hatred stirs up conflicts,
but love covers all offenses.

The one who follows instruction is on the path to life,
but the one who rejects correction goes astray.

When there are many words, sin is unavoidable,
but the one who controls his lips is wise.

When pride comes, disgrace follows,
but with humility comes wisdom.

When the wicked dies,
his expectation comes to nothing,
and hope placed in wealth vanishes.

A gossip goes around revealing a secret,
but the trustworthy keeps a confidence.

Without guidance, people fall,
but with many counselors there is deliverance.

A kind man benefits himself,
but a cruel man brings disaster on himself.



A beautiful woman who rejects good sense
is like a gold ring in a pig's snout.

One person gives freely,
yet gains more;
another withholds what is right,
only to become poor.

A fool's way is right in his own eyes,
but whoever listens to counsel is wise.

There is one who speaks rashly,
like a piercing sword;
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue, only a moment.

The one who walks with the wise will become wise,
but a companion of fools will suffer harm.

The one who will not use the rod hates his son,
but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently.

A mocker seeks wisdom and doesn't find it,
but knowledge comes easily to the perceptive.



There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.

The inexperienced believe anything,
but the sensible watch their steps.

There is profit in all hard work,
but endless talk leads only to poverty.

A patient person shows great understanding,
but a quick-tempered one promotes foolishness.

A tranquil heart is life to the body,
but jealousy is rottenness to the bones.

The one who oppresses the poor insults their Maker,
but one who is kind to the needy honors Him.

Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a disgrace to any people.

A gentle answer turns away anger,
but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere,
observing the wicked and the good.



A man takes joy in giving an answer;
and a timely word—how good that is!

The fear of the Lord is wisdom's instruction,
and humility comes before honor.

A man's heart plans his way,
but the Lord determines his steps.

A rebuke cuts into a perceptive person
more than a hundred lashes into a fool.

Even a fool is considered wise when he keeps silent,
discerning, when he seals his lips.

A fool does not delight in understanding,
but only wants to show off his opinions.

The one who gives an answer before he listens—
this is foolishness and disgrace for him.

A person with great anger bears the penalty;
if you rescue him, you'll have to do it again.

It is honorable for a man to resolve a dispute,
but any fool can get himself into a quarrel.



Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure;
I am cleansed from my sin"?

All the ways of a man seem right to him,
but the Lord evaluates the motives.

A sensible person sees danger and takes cover,
but the inexperienced keep going and are punished.

Teach a youth about the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Foolishness is tangled up in the heart of a youth;
the rod of discipline will drive it away from him.

Don't make friends with an angry man,
and don't be a companion of a hot-tempered man,
or you will learn his ways
and entangle yourself in a snare.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has conflicts? Who has complaints?
Who has wounds for no reason? Who has red eyes?
Those who linger over wine,
those who go looking for mixed wine.



A wise warrior is better than a strong one,
and a man of knowledge than one of strength;
Though a righteous man falls seven times,
he will get up,
but the wicked will stumble into ruin.

Don't say, "I'll do to him what he did to me;
I'll repay the man for what he has done."

A ruler can be persuaded through patience,
and a gentle tongue can break a bone.

Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house;
otherwise, he'll get sick of you and hate you.

Don't answer a fool according to his foolishness,
or you'll be like him yourself.

As a dog returns to its vomit,
so a fool repeats his foolishness.

In his own eyes, a slacker is wiser
than seven men who can answer sensibly.

A passerby who meddles in a quarrel that's not his
is like one who grabs a dog by the ears.



Like a madman who throws flaming darts and deadly arrows,
so is the man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I was only joking!"

A lying tongue hates those it crushes,
and a flattering mouth causes ruin.

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth—
a stranger, and not your own lips.

Fury is cruel, and anger is a flood,
but who can withstand jealousy?

An endless dripping on a rainy day
and a nagging wife are alike.

Iron sharpens iron,
and one man sharpens another.

Hell² and Destruction³ are never satisfied,
and people's eyes are never satisfied.

Silver is tested in a crucible, gold in a smelter,
and a man, by the praise he receives.

² Hell: Or *Sheol*

³ Destruction: Or *Abaddon*

The wicked flee when no one is pursuing [them],
but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

The one who conceals his sins
will not prosper,
but whoever confesses and renounces them
will find mercy.

One who rebukes a person will later find more favor
than one who flatters with his tongue.

One who becomes stiff-necked,
after many reprimands
will be broken suddenly—
and without a remedy.

A rod of correction imparts wisdom,
but a youth left to himself
is a disgrace to his mother.

A person's pride will humble him,
but a humble spirit will gain honor.

The fear of man is a snare,
but the one who trusts in the Lord is protected.



Two are better than one
because they have a good reward for their efforts.
For if either falls, his companion can lift him up;
but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.
And if somebody overpowers one person, two can resist him.
A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

The one who loves money is never satisfied with money,
and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income.

It is better to go to a house of mourning
than to go to a house of feasting,
since that is the end of all mankind,
and the living should take it to heart.

Grief is better than laughter,
for when a face is sad, a heart may be glad.

It is better to listen to rebuke from a wise person
than to listen to the song of fools.

For like the crackling of burning thorns under the pot,
so is the laughter of the fool.

And I find more bitter than death the woman who is a trap,
her heart a net, and her hands chains.



The one who pleases God will escape her,
but the sinner will be captured by her.

Because the sentence against a criminal act is not carried out quickly,
therefore the heart of people is filled with
the desire to commit crime.

However, it will not go well with the wicked,
and they will not lengthen their days like a shadow,
for they are not reverent before God.

Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
but one sinner can destroy much good.

Dead flies make a perfumer's oil ferment and stink;
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

What does a man get with all his work and all his efforts
that he labors with under the sun?

For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful;
even at night, his mind does not rest.
This too is futile.

When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is:
fear God and keep His commands,
 because this is for all humanity.
For God will bring every act to judgment,
 including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.



Upper Jordan River

Chapter 16

Songs And Prayers

The Psalms in the Bible were originally written to be sung. Here God is teaching us that we should sing to him at all times, when we are sad, when we are happy, when we are sick, when we have failed and sinned, when we are in the midst of trials, when we are persecuted, when we are thankful and full of joy for his blessings, when we are rich, and when we are poor and in need. Christians are unique among all people for their singing to God. The Psalms also teach us how to pray and what to pray. They are the prayers that Christians have prayed to their "Father in Heaven" throughout the ages. Many of them were written about 3000 years ago.



*From the Psalms of King David*¹

Two Paths

(Psalm 1)

How happy is the man
 who does not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path of sinners,
 or join a group of mockers!
Instead, his delight is in the Lord's instruction,
 and he meditates on it day and night.
He is like a tree planted beside streams of water
 that bears its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.
The wicked are not like this;
 instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not survive the judgment,
 and sinners will not be in the community of the righteous.
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

¹ Most of the 150 psalms were written by *King David*, who reigned over Israel from 1010~971 B.C. From ancient time these psalms have been sung as prayers and praises to God by Christians and Jews. Jesus himself often quoted from these psalms. Here we record parts of 10 psalms. See note 3 on page 39.

A Meditation on God

(Psalm 115:1-8, 11, 13-18)

Not to us, Lord, not to us,
but to Your name give glory
because of Your faithful love, because of Your truth.

Why should the nations say,
“Where is their God?”

Our God is in heaven
and does whatever He pleases.

Their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.

They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.

They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.

They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk.

They cannot make a sound with their throats.
Those who make them are just like them,
as are all who trust in them.



You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and shield.

He will bless those who fear the Lord—
small and great alike.

May the Lord add to your numbers,
both yours and your children's.

May you be blessed by the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

The heavens are the Lord's,
but the earth He has given to the human race.

It is not the dead who praise the Lord,
nor any of those descending into the silence of death.

But we will praise the Lord,
both now and forever.

Hallelujah!

The Works of God; The Words of God

(Psalm 19)

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.

Day after day they pour out speech;
 night after night they communicate knowledge.
There is no speech; there are no words;
 their voice is not heard.
Their message has gone out to all the earth,
 and their words to the ends of the inhabited world.
In the heavens He has pitched a tent for the sun.
 It is like a groom coming from the bridal chamber;
 it rejoices like an athlete running a course.
It rises from one end of the heavens
 and circles to their other end;
 nothing is hidden from its heat.
The instruction of the Lord is perfect,
 reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy,
 making the inexperienced wise.
The precepts of the Lord are right,
 making the heart glad;
the commandment of the Lord is radiant,
 making the eyes light up.



The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are reliable
and altogether righteous.
They are more desirable than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey—
than honey dripping from the comb.
In addition, Your servant² is warned by them;
there is great reward in keeping them.
Who perceives his unintentional sins?
Cleanse me from my hidden faults.²
Moreover, keep Your servant from willful sins;
do not let them rule over me.
Then I will be innocent,
and cleansed from blatant rebellion.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to You,
Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

² Here the Psalmist is talking to God.



The Lord Is My Shepherd

(Psalm 23)

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.

He lets me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

He renews my life;

He leads me along the right paths
for His name's sake.

Even when I go through the darkest valley,

I fear no danger,

for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

as long as I live.

A Prayer of Repentance

(Psalm 51:1-14)

Be gracious to me, God,
 according to Your faithful love;
according to Your abundant compassion,
 blot out my rebellion.

Wash away my guilt,
 and cleanse me from my sin.

For I am conscious of my rebellion,
 and my sin is always before me.

Against You—You alone—I have sinned
 and done this evil in Your sight.

So You are right when You pass sentence;
 You are blameless when You judge.

Indeed, I was guilty when I was born;
 I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

Surely You desire integrity in the inner self,
 and You teach me wisdom deep within.

Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
 wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.



Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones You have crushed rejoice.

Turn Your face away from my sins
and blot out all my guilt.

God, create a clean heart for me
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not banish me from Your presence
or take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore the joy of Your salvation to me,
and give me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways,
and sinners will return to You.

Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God,
the God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness.

A Song at Daybreak

(Psalm 103)

My soul, praise the Lord,
and all that is within me, praise His holy name.



My soul, praise the Lord,
and do not forget all His benefits.
He forgives all your sin;
He heals all your diseases.
He redeems your life from the Pit;
He crowns you with faithful love and compassion.
He satisfies you with goodness;
your youth is renewed like the eagle.
The Lord executes acts of righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
He revealed His ways to Moses,
His deeds to the people of Israel.
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger and full of faithful love.
He will not always accuse us
or be angry forever.
He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve
or repaid us according to our offenses.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is His faithful love
toward those who fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west,
so far has He removed
our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.
For He knows what we are made of,
remembering that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass—
he blooms like a flower of the field;
when the wind passes over it, it vanishes,
and its place is no longer known.

But from eternity to eternity
the Lord's faithful love is toward those who fear Him,
and His righteousness toward the grandchildren
of those who keep His covenant,
who remember to observe His instructions.

The Lord has established His throne in heaven,
and His kingdom rules over all.

Praise the Lord,
all His angels of great strength,



who do His word,
obedient to His command.
Praise the Lord, all His armies,
His servants who do His will.
Praise the Lord, all His works
in all the places where He rules.
My soul, praise the Lord!

The Precious Word of God

(Psalms 119:1-8)

How happy are those whose way is blameless,
who live according to the law of the Lord!
Happy are those who keep His decrees
and seek Him with all their heart.
They do nothing wrong;
they follow His ways.
You have commanded that Your precepts
be diligently kept.
If only my ways were committed
to keeping Your statutes!



Then I would not be ashamed
when I think about all Your commands.
I will praise You with a sincere heart
when I learn Your righteous judgments.
I will keep Your statutes;
never abandon me.

A Young Person's Prayer

(Psalm 119:9-16)

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping Your word.
I have sought You with all my heart;
don't let me wander from Your commands.
I have treasured Your word in my heart
so that I may not sin against You.
Lord, may You be praised;
teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I proclaim
all the judgments from Your mouth.
I rejoice in the way revealed by Your decrees
as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on Your precepts
and think about Your ways.
I will delight in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.

The Omniscient, Almighty God

(Psalm 139)

Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
 You understand my thoughts from far away.
You observe my travels and my rest;
 You are aware of all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue,
 You know all about it, Lord.
You have encircled me;
 You have placed Your hand on me.
This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me.
 It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.
Where can I go to escape Your Spirit?
 Where can I flee from Your presence?
If I go up to heaven, You are there;



if I make my bed in Hell³, You are there.
If I live at the eastern horizon
or settle at the western limits,
even there Your hand will lead me;
Your right hand will hold on to me.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me,
and the light around me will become night"—
even the darkness is not dark to You.
The night shines like the day;
darkness and light are alike to You.
For it was You who created my inward parts;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I will praise You,
because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made.
Your works are wonderful,
and I know this very well.
My bones were not hidden from You
when I was made in secret,
when I was formed in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw me when I was formless;
all my days were written in Your book and planned

³ Hell: Or *Sheol*



before a single one of them began.
God, how difficult Your thoughts are
for me to comprehend;
how vast their sum is!
If I counted them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand;
when I wake up, I am still with You.
God, if only You would kill the wicked—
you bloodthirsty men, stay away from me—
who invoke You deceitfully.
Your enemies swear by You falsely.
Lord, don't I hate those who hate You,
and detest those who rebel against You?
I hate them with extreme hatred;
I consider them my enemies.
Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my concerns.
See if there is any offensive way in me;
lead me in the everlasting way.

Praise to God, My King

(Psalm 145)

I exalt You, my God the King,
and praise Your name forever and ever.

I will praise You every day;
I will honor Your name forever and ever.

Yahweh is great and is highly praised;
His greatness is unsearchable.

One generation will declare Your works to the next
and will proclaim Your mighty acts.

I will speak of Your glorious splendor
and Your wonderful works.

They will proclaim the power of Your awe-inspiring works,
and I will declare Your greatness.

They will give a testimony of Your great goodness
and will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and great in faithful love.

The Lord is good to everyone;
His compassion rests on all He has made.

All You have made will praise You, Lord;
the godly will bless You.
They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom
and will declare Your might,
informing all people of Your mighty acts
and of the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;
Your rule is for all generations.
The Lord is faithful
in all His words and gracious in all His actions.
The Lord helps all who fall;
He raises up all who are oppressed.
All eyes look to You,
and You give them their food in due time.
You open Your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is righteous in all His ways
and gracious in all His acts.
The Lord is near all who call out to Him,
all who call out to Him with integrity.
He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him;



He hears their cry for help and saves them.
The Lord guards all those who love Him,
but He destroys all the wicked.

My mouth will declare the Lord's praise;
let every living thing
praise His holy name forever and ever.

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Jordan River



Jerusalem in the Time of Christ

0 100 200 300 400 500 =





Upper Galilee, seen from Mt. Tabor