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Matthew

Chapter 1

¹This is the record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, the descendant of King David and of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and of his brothers. ³Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. ⁴Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. ⁵Salmon and his wife Rahab, a non-Jewish woman, were the parents of Boaz. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth, another non-Jewish woman. Obed was the father of Jesse. ⁶Jesse was the father of King David. David became the father of Solomon; Solomon's mother was the wife of Uriah. ⁷Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa. ⁸Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Uzziah. ⁹Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah. ¹¹Josiah was the grandfather of Jechoniah and Jechoniah's brothers. They lived at the time when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon.

¹²After the Babylonians exiled the Israelites to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was an ancestor of Zerubbabel. ¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. ¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. ¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. ¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband, and Mary was Jesus' mother. Jesus is the one who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷The list of Jesus' ancestors is as follows: Fourteen of them from the time when Abraham lived to the time when King David lived. There were another fourteen from the time when David lived until the time when the Israelites went away to Babylon, and then yet another fourteen from then until the time when the Messiah was born.

¹⁸This is the account of what happened just before Jesus the Messiah was born. Mary, his mother, had promised to marry Joseph, but before they lived together as husband and wife, they found out that she was expecting a child by the Holy Spirit's power. ¹⁹Now Joseph, who was to be her husband, was a man who obeyed God's commands, so he decided not to marry her. But he did not want to shame her in front of other people. So he decided to quietly drop his plans to marry her. ²⁰While he was seriously considering this, an angel whom the Lord sent surprised him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of King David, do not be afraid to marry Mary. For what has been conceived in her is there by the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son. Since it is he who will save his people from their sins, name him 'Jesus.'" ²²All this happened to make come true what the Lord told the prophet Isaiah to write long ago. Isaiah wrote, ²³"Listen, a virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.

They will call him Immanuel"—

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph got up from sleep, he did what the angel had commanded him to do. He began to live with Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not sleep with her until she had given birth to a son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Chapter 2

¹Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in the province of Judea during the time that King Herod the Great ruled there. Some time after Jesus was born, some men from very far away to the east who studied the stars came to the

city of Jerusalem. ²They asked people, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen a star in the east that shows us he has been born, so we have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard about what those men were asking, he became very worried. Many of the people in Jerusalem also became worried. ⁴Then Herod called together all the ruling priests and teachers of the Jewish laws. He asked them where the prophets had predicted that the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, "He will be born in the town of Bethlehem, here in the province of Judea, because the prophet Micah wrote long ago, ⁶You who live in Bethlehem in the land of Judah, your town is certainly very important, because a man from your town will become a ruler. He will guide my people who live in Israel."

⁷Then King Herod secretly called those men who studied the stars. He asked them exactly when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he said to them, "Go to Bethlehem and inquire thoroughly where the infant is. When you have found him, come back and report to me so that I, myself, can go there and worship him, too."

⁹After the men heard the king's request, they went toward the town of Bethlehem. To their surprise, the star that they had seen while they were in the eastern country went ahead of them again until it stood above the house where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly and followed it. ¹¹They found the house, entered it, and saw the child and his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure boxes and they gave him gold, expensive frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²Then God warned them in a dream not to return to King Herod. So they left for their country, but instead of traveling back on the same road, they went on a different road.

¹³After the men who studied the stars left Bethlehem, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee into the country of Egypt. Stay there until I tell you that you should leave, because King Herod is about to send soldiers to look for the child so that they can kill him." ¹⁴So Joseph got up that same night; he took the child and his mother, and they fled into Egypt. ¹⁵They stayed there until King Herod died, and then they left Egypt again. In this way, what God had told the prophet Hosea to write came true,

"I have called my son to come out of Egypt."

¹⁶Before King Herod died, he realized that those men had tricked him, and he became furious. Because he thought that Jesus was still near Bethlehem, Herod sent soldiers there to kill all the boy babies two years old and younger. Herod calculated how old the baby was, according to what the men who studied the stars told him about when the star first appeared. ¹⁷When Herod did this, what the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago came true, when he wrote about Bethlehem near the town of Ramah:

¹⁸Women in Ramah were weeping and wailing loudly.

Rachel, the ancestor of those women, was weeping for their dead children.

People tried to comfort her, but they could not, because all the children were dead.

¹⁹After Herod died and while Joseph and his family were still in Egypt, an angel that the Lord had sent appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said to Joseph, ²⁰"Get up and take the child and his mother and go back to the country of Israel to live, because the people who were trying to kill the child have died." ²¹So Joseph took the child and his mother, and they went back to Israel.

²²When Joseph heard that Archelaus now ruled in the province of Judea instead of his father, King Herod the Great, he was afraid to go there. Then God instructed Joseph in a dream what to do, so Joseph, Mary, and the baby went to the district of Galilee. ²³They went to the town of Nazareth to live there. The result was that what the prophets had said long ago came true: "People will say that he is from Nazareth."

Chapter 3

¹While Jesus was still in the town of Nazareth, John, whom the people called the Baptizer, went to a desolate place in the province of Judea. He was preaching to the people who came there. He kept saying, ²"You must stop sinning, because God's rule from heaven is near, and he will reject you if you do not stop sinning." ³When John began preaching, then came true what Isaiah the prophet had said long ago. He said,

"In the wilderness people hear someone shouting to anyone who comes,

'Get ready to receive the Lord when he comes!

Get everything ready for him!'"

⁴John wore rough clothing made from camel's hair. As the prophet Elijah had done so long ago, he wore a leather belt around his waist. His food was only grasshoppers and honey that he found in the wilderness. ⁵People who lived in the city of Jerusalem, many people who lived in other places in the district of Judea, and many others who lived near the Jordan River came to John to hear him preach. ⁶After they heard him, they openly confessed their sins, and then he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷But John saw that many Pharisees and Sadducees were coming for him to baptize them. He said to them, "You people are the children of poisonous snakes! No one warned you that one day God will punish everyone who sins, did they? Do not think that you can escape from him! ⁸If you truly stop sinning, then do right things to show it. ⁹I know that God promised to be with Abraham's descendants. But do not say to yourselves, 'Since we are descendants of our ancestor Abraham, God will not punish us even though we have sinned.' No! I tell you that he can change these stones here into descendants of Abraham! ¹⁰God is ready right now to punish you, just like a man who starts to chop away the roots of a fruit tree that does not give good fruit. He will chop down every tree like that and throw it into the fire."

¹¹"As for me, I am not very important, because I baptize you only with water. I do it when people are sorry for having sinned. But someone else will come soon who will do very powerful things. He is so much greater than I, that I do not even deserve to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. ¹²He is holding his winnowing fork, ready to separate the good grain from the bad chaff. He is ready to clear out all the bad chaff from where he has threshed the grain. He will take the righteous people home, as a farmer puts his wheat into his storehouse; but he will burn the wicked people, like one burns the chaff, in a fire that never goes out."

¹³During that time, Jesus went from the district of Galilee to the Jordan River, where John was. He did this so John could baptize him. ¹⁴When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John refused; he said, "I need you to baptize me! But you are not a sinner, so why do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus said to him, "Baptize me now, because in this way we two will do everything that God requires." Then John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶After that, Jesus immediately came up out of the water. Just then, it was as though the sky was opened, and Jesus saw God's Spirit coming down and sitting on him, in the form of a dove. ¹⁷Then God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son. I love him, and I am very pleased with him."

Chapter 4

¹Then God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for the devil to tempt him. ²After he had not eaten food day and night for forty days, he was hungry. ³Satan, the tempter, came to him and said, "If you are really the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread for yourself!" ⁴But Jesus said to him, "No! I will not do this, because God has said in the scriptures, 'For people to truly live, they must have more than food; they must listen to every word that God has spoken.'" ⁵Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the city that was especially for God. He set him on the

highest part of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are truly the Son of God, jump down to the ground. You will, of course, not be hurt, because God has said in the scriptures,

'God will command his angels to protect you.

They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling,

and they will keep you from even hitting your foot on a stone.'" ⁷But Jesus said, "No! I will not jump down, because God has also said in the scriptures, 'Do not try to make the Lord your God prove who he is.'" ⁸Then the devil took him on top of a very high mountain. There he showed him all the nations in the world and the magnificent things in those nations. ⁹Then he said to him, "I will let you rule all these nations and give you the magnificent things in them if you bow down and worship me." ¹⁰But Jesus said to him, "No, I will not worship you, Satan, so go away! God has said in the scriptures, 'It is to the Lord your God whom you must bow down, and you must worship only him!'" ¹¹Then the devil went away, and at that moment, angels came to Jesus and took care of him.

¹²While Jesus was in the province of Judea, John the Baptizer's disciples came and told him that King Herod had put John in prison. So Jesus returned to the district of Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. ¹³Then he left Nazareth and went to the city of Capernaum in order to live there. Capernaum is located beside the Sea of Galilee in the region that formerly belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴He went there so that these words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago might come true:

¹⁵"The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,

regions by the road going to the Sea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River,

regions in Galilee, home of many non-Israelites!

¹⁶Those people do not know God, as if they were in darkness,

but they will learn the truth, as if a bright light had shone on them.

Yes, they have been very afraid of dying,

But a brilliant light has shone upon them!"

¹⁷At that time, while Jesus was in the city of Capernaum, he began to preach to the people, "The rule of God from heaven is near, and he will judge you when he rules. So stop sinning!"

¹⁸One day while Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon, who was later called Peter, and Andrew, his younger brother. They were casting their fishing net into the water because they caught and sold fish.

¹⁹Jesus said to them, "Come with me and I will teach you how to gather people to become my disciples. I will make your work fishing for people." ²⁰They immediately left the work that they were doing and went with him.

²¹As the three of them walked on from there, Jesus saw two other men, James and John, the younger brother of James. They were in their boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their fishing nets. Jesus told them that they should leave their work and go with him. ²²Immediately they also left their boat and their father and went with Jesus.

²³Jesus led those four men throughout all of the district of Galilee. He was teaching the people in the synagogues. He was preaching the good news about how God is ruling. He was also healing all the people who were sick.

²⁴When people who lived in other parts of the district of Syria heard what he was doing, they brought to him people who suffered from illnesses, people who suffered from many kinds of diseases, people who suffered from severe pains, people who were controlled by demons, people who were epileptics, and people who were paralyzed. And Jesus healed them. ²⁵Then large crowds started to go with him. They were people from Galilee, from the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from other parts of the province of Judea, and from areas east of the Jordan River.

Chapter 5

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mount. He sat down there and taught his followers. They came near to him to listen to him. ²Then he began to teach them by saying,

³“God is pleased with people who admit that they need him;
he will agree to rule over them from heaven.

⁴God is pleased with people who mourn because of this sinful world;
he will encourage them.

⁵God is pleased with people who are humble;
they will inherit the earth that God will make new.

⁶God is pleased with people who desire to live righteously just as someone might wish to eat and drink;
he will make them able to live righteously.

⁷God is pleased with people who act mercifully toward others;
he will act mercifully toward them.

⁸God is pleased with people who try to do only that which pleases him;
some day they will be where God is and will see him.

⁹God is pleased with people who help other people to live peacefully;
he will regard them as his own children.

¹⁰God is pleased with people who live righteously; he is honored when their righteous lives are the reason why evil people insult and treat them badly.
God rules over these righteous people from heaven.

¹¹God is pleased with you when other people insult you, and he is honored when they do evil things to you and when they tell lies about you, saying that you are evil. ¹²When that happens, rejoice and be glad, because God will give you a great reward in heaven. Remember, that is how they persecuted the prophets who lived long ago.

¹³What salt does for food, this is what you will do for the world. But if salt loses its power, no one can make it good again. People just throw it out and walk over it. ¹⁴What light does for people in the dark, this is what you will do for the world. All people will see you, just as they see a city built on a hillside. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it can give light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶Similarly, you need to do what is right in such a way that other people can see what you do. When they see it, they will praise your Father who is in heaven.”

¹⁷“You should not suppose that I have come to you in order to do away with the laws that God gave Moses or what the prophets wrote. Instead, I came to cause to happen what those things said would happen. ¹⁸This is a true saying: God may remove the heaven and the earth, but God will not remove anything from those laws, not even the smallest details or a tiny dot used to end a sentence, until God makes everything he put in the law happen, just as he said it would. ¹⁹Because that is true, if you break the commands that are the least important, and you teach others to do so, you will be the least important person under God’s rule from heaven. But if you keep all those commands and teach others to obey God as you are obeying him, you will become very important in God’s rule

from heaven. ²⁰I tell you that you must obey those laws better than the teachers of the law, and you must do what is right from your heart. And you must do better than the Pharisees or you will never come under the rule of God from heaven.

²¹"Others have told you what God said to our ancestors, 'You must not kill anyone,' and, 'If you kill anyone, the members of a governing council might sentence you.' ²²But I tell you that if you are angry with anyone, God himself will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are worthless,' a governing council will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are a fool,' God will throw you into the fire in hell. ²³So when you take your gift for God to the altar, if you remember that you have offended someone, ²⁴leave your gift by the altar, and first go to the person you have offended. Tell that person that you are sorry for what you have done, and ask that person to forgive you. Then go back and offer your gift to God. ²⁵If a fellow citizen takes you to court in order to accuse you of doing something wrong, come to an agreement quickly with that person, while you are still walking with that person to court. Do that while there still is time so that he will not take you to the judge, because the judge might say you are guilty and hand you over to the prison guard, and the prison guard will put you in prison. ²⁶Keep this in mind: If you go to prison, you will never get out because you will never be able to pay all that the judge says that you owe. So remember also to be at peace with your brothers."

²⁷"You have heard that God said to our ancestors, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸But what I say to you is this: If a man even just looks at a woman desiring to sleep with her, God considers that he has already committed adultery with her in his mind. ²⁹If you want to sin because you have looked at certain things, then stop looking at them. Even if you have to destroy both of your eyes, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to be blind and stop sinning, than for God to throw you into hell while you can still see. ³⁰And if one of your hands causes you to sin, stop using your hand. Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to lose a part of your body than for God to throw your whole body into hell."

³¹"God has said in the scriptures, 'If a man is divorcing his wife, he should write a document on which he states that he is divorcing her.' ³²But now listen to what I say to you: A man may divorce his wife only if she has committed adultery. If a man divorces his wife for any other reason, she commits adultery if she marries someone else. And the man who marries her also commits adultery."

³³"You have also heard that long ago people were told, 'You should never swear an oath by making up a lie! Instead, you should make your promises as you would if the Lord himself were standing before you.' ³⁴But now I will say to you something more: Do not swear an oath for any reason! Do not ask the place where God lives in heaven to guarantee what you promised. That is where his great seat of power is and from where he rules over all things. ³⁵And do not swear any oath on the promise that the earth would witness it. Do not do this, because the earth is where God rests his feet. Never swear an oath by the city of Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is the city that belongs to God, our great King.

³⁶Also, do not promise that you will do something and then say that they should cut off your head if you do not do it. How could you promise something so important, when you are not even able to change the color of one hair on your head. ³⁷If you talk about doing something, just say 'Yes, I will do it,' or 'No, I will not do it.' If you say anything more than that, it is Satan, the Evil One, who has suggested that you talk this way."

³⁸"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'If someone harms one of your eyes, then they should harm one of that person's eyes. And if someone harms one of your teeth, then they should harm one of that person's teeth.' ³⁹But now listen to what I say to you: Far from taking revenge on someone who harms you, do not even try to stop him. Instead, if someone insults you by striking you on one cheek, turn your other cheek toward that person so he can strike it also. ⁴⁰If someone wants to sue you in a court to get your tunic, let that person have both it and your outer garment, too, which is even of more worth to you. ⁴¹And if a Roman soldier forces you to go with him one mile and carry his gear, carry it for two miles. ⁴²Also, if someone asks you for something, give it to him. If someone asks you to lend him something, go ahead and lend it to him."

⁴³"You have heard that God said to our ancestors, 'Love your fellow Israelites and hate foreigners, for they are your enemies.' ⁴⁴But now listen to what I say to you: Love your enemies as well as your friends, and pray for those who cause you to suffer. ⁴⁵Do this in order to be like God, your Father who is in heaven. He acts kindly to all people. For example, he causes the sun to shine equally on wicked people and on good people, and he sends rain both on people who obey his law and on people who do not. ⁴⁶If you love only the people who love you, do not expect God to reward you at all! Even people who do terrible things, such as tax collectors, love those who love them. You must act better than they do! ⁴⁷Yes, and if you greet only your friends and ask God to bless them, you are not acting any better than other people. Even non-Jews, who do not obey God's law, do the same thing! ⁴⁸So you must be completely faithful to God your Father in heaven, just as he is completely faithful to you."

Chapter 6

¹"Make certain that when you do good deeds you are not doing them so people will see what you do. If that is your reason for doing what is good, God, your Father who is in heaven, will not give you any reward. ²So whenever you give something to the poor, do not make other people notice it as if playing a trumpet. That is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the main roads in order that people might praise them. Certainly, I want you to understand that is the only reward the hypocrites will receive! ³Instead of doing as they do, when you give something to the poor, do not let other people know what you are doing. ⁴In that way, you will be giving to the poor secretly. As a result God, your Father who observes you while no one else sees you, will reward you.

⁵"Also when you pray, do not do what the hypocrites do. They like to stand in the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to pray, in order that other people will see them and think highly of them. Certainly, I want you to understand that is the only reward they will get. ⁶But as for you, when you pray, go into your private room and close the door in order to pray to God, your Father, whom no one can see. Your Father observes you and will reward you. ⁷When you pray, do not repeat words many times as the people who do not know God do when they pray. They think that if they use many words, their gods will listen to them and give them what they ask for. ⁸Do not repeat words as they do, because God your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹So pray things like this:

'Our Father, you who are in heaven,

May everyone honor you.

¹⁰May you rule over everyone and everything completely.

May everything happen on earth just as you desire,

just as it happens in heaven.

¹¹Give us each day the food that we need for that day.

¹²Forgive us our sins in the same way that we forgive the people who have sinned against us.

¹³Do not let us do wrong things when we are tempted,

and rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.'

¹⁴Forgive the people who sin against you, because, if you do, God, your Father who is in heaven, will forgive your sins. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive other people, neither will your Father forgive your sins.

¹⁶When you keep from eating food in order to please God, do not look sad as the hypocrites look. They make their faces appear sad in order that people will see that they are not eating food. Keep in mind that is the only reward those people will get! ¹⁷Instead, each of you, when you keep from eating food, should comb your hair and wash your face as usual, ¹⁸in order that other people will not notice that you are fasting. But God, your Father, whom no

one can see, will observe that you are not eating food. He sees you even though no one else sees you, and he will reward you.

¹⁹Do not selfishly accumulate large quantities of money and material goods for yourselves on this earth, because the earth is where everything perishes—where moths ruin clothing, rust destroys metals, and thieves steal what belongs to other people. ²⁰Instead, do deeds that will please God so that you store up treasures in heaven. Nothing perishes in heaven. In heaven no moths can ruin clothing, there is no rust, and there are no thieves who could steal. ²¹Remember that whatever is most important to you, that is what you will be thinking about.

²²“Your eyes are like a lamp for your body, because they enable you to see things. So if you see things as God sees them, it will be as if your whole body were full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, you are not able to see things well. And if that continues, the time will come when you will not be able to see at all. You will be in complete darkness. Similarly, if you continue to be greedy, you will be in spiritual darkness. If all that your eyes can see and your mind can think about involves your greedily desiring material possessions, all that you do will be evil.”

²⁴“No one is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. Similarly, you cannot worship God and money at the same time.”

²⁵That is why I tell you that you should not worry about things that you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat and things to drink, or enough clothes to wear. The way you conduct your lives is much more important than those things. ²⁶Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops or gather produce into barns. They always have food to eat because God, your Father who is in heaven, provides food for them. And you are certainly worth a lot more than birds! So you can be assured that God will supply what you need! ²⁷None of you can, just by worrying, add years to your life. You cannot add even one minute to your life! So you should not worry about things you need.

²⁸You should also not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Think about the way flowers grow in the fields. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. ²⁹But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, his clothes were not as beautiful as one of those flowers. ³⁰God makes the wild plants very beautiful, but they grow in the field for only a short time. One day they grow, and the next day people will throw them into an oven to burn them. But you are more important to God than wild plants are, and you live much longer. So trust in God, you who have so little faith! ³¹So do not worry and say, ‘Will we have anything to eat?’ or ‘Will we have anything to drink?’ or ‘Will we have clothes to wear?’ ³²Those who do not know God are always worrying about things like that. But God, your Father who is in heaven, knows that you need all those things. ³³Instead, make it the most important thing that God should rule over the entire world and that everyone should do what he requires. If you do that, he will give you all the things that you need. ³⁴So do not be worried about what will happen to you the next day, because when that day comes, you will have enough to be concerned about. So do not worry ahead of time.”

Chapter 7

¹Do not talk about how sinfully others have acted, in order that God will not say how sinfully you have acted. ²If you condemn other people, God will condemn you. To the same extent that you condemn others, you will be condemned. ³None of you should be concerned about someone else’s small faults! That would be like noticing a speck of straw in that person’s eye. But you should be concerned about your own big faults because you do not notice a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴You should not say to other people about their minor faults, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye!’ while you still have a wooden plank in your own eye. ⁵If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first remove the plank out of your own eye before trying to get the speck out of someone else’s eye.”

⁶“You do not give things that belong to God to dogs that would attack you. And you do not throw valuable pearls in front of hogs, because they would just walk on them. In the same way, do not tell wonderful things about God to people who you know will do evil things to you in return.

⁷“Keep asking God for what you need, and keep expecting him to give it to you. ⁸For everyone who asks God for something, and who expects him to give it to him, will receive it.

⁹If your son asked you for bread, no one among you would give him a stone, would he? ¹⁰If your son asked you for a fish, certainly no one among you would give him a snake. ¹¹You know how to give good things to your children, even though you are evil. So God, your Father who is in heaven, will even more certainly give good things to those who ask him.

¹²So in whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them, because that is the meaning of God’s law and of everything that the prophets wrote long ago.

¹³⁻¹⁴“Going to live forever with God in heaven is difficult; it is like a difficult road that you should take. There is another road, one that most people take. That road is wide; they walk on until they reach a wide gate, but when they go through it, they will die. So I am telling you to take the difficult road and enter the narrow gate to live forever with God in heaven.”

¹⁵Watch out for people who come to you and say falsely that they are telling you what God has said. They are like wolves that have covered themselves with sheepskins to appear harmless but will attack you. ¹⁶By seeing the fruit that plants produce you know what kind of plants they are. Thornbushes cannot produce grapes and thistles cannot produce figs, so no one thinks of picking grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. ¹⁷Here is another example: All good fruit trees produce good fruit, but all rotten trees produce worthless fruit. ¹⁸No good fruit tree is able to produce worthless fruit, and no rotten tree is able to produce good fruit. ¹⁹Workers chop down and burn up all the trees that do not produce good fruit. ²⁰By seeing what plants produce, you know what kind of plants they are. Similarly, when you see what the people who come to you do, you will know if they truly produce good or not.

²¹Even though many people habitually call me Lord, pretending that they have my authority, God will not agree to rule from heaven over some of them, because they do not do what he desires. My Father will agree to rule over only those who do what he wants. ²²On the day that God judges everyone, many people will say to me, ‘Lord, we spoke God’s message as your representatives! As your representatives we drove out demons from people! And as your representatives, many times we performed mighty deeds!’ ²³Then I will publicly say to them, ‘I have never admitted that you belonged to me. Go away from me, you who do what is evil!’”

²⁴So then, anyone who hears what I say and does what I command will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵Even though the rain came down and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it did not fall down because it had been built on solid rock. ²⁶On the other hand, anyone who hears what I say but does not obey me will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷When the rain fell, and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it crashed down and broke completely apart because it was built on sand. So you should obey what I have told you.”

²⁸When Jesus finished teaching all those things, the crowds who had heard him were amazed by how he taught.

²⁹He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught.

Chapter 8

¹When Jesus went down from the hillside, large crowds followed him. ²After Jesus left the crowds, a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before him. He said to Jesus, “Lord, please heal me, because I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to.” ³Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said to him, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately the man was healed from his sickness. ⁴Then Jesus said to

him, "Make sure that now you do not report about my healing you to anyone other than the priest. Then go to the temple in Jerusalem and give the offering that Moses commanded so people will know about it."

⁵When Jesus went to the city of Capernaum, a Roman officer who commanded one hundred soldiers came to him. He begged Jesus to help him. ⁶He said to him, "Lord, my servant is lying in bed at home and is paralyzed, and he has severe pain." ⁷Jesus said to him, "I will go to your house and heal him." ⁸But the officer said to him, "I am not worthy for you to come into my house. Instead, just say that my servant is healed, and he will be healed. ⁹It is the same way with me. I am a soldier; I have to obey my commanders, and I also have soldiers that I command. When I say to one of them 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled. He said to the crowd that was walking with him, "Listen to this: I have never before found anyone who trusts in me as much this non-Jewish man. Not even in Israel, where I would expect people to believe in me, have I found anyone who trusts so much in me! ¹¹I tell you truly that many other non-Jewish people will believe in me also, and they will come from distant countries, including those far to the east and far to the west, and they will sit down to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when God will rule from heaven over everything completely. ¹²But as for the Jews whom God intended to rule—he will throw them into hell, where there is total darkness. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will have severe pain." ¹³Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home. What you believed will happen." Then the officer went home and found out that his servant had become well at the exact time that Jesus told him that he would heal him.

¹⁴When Jesus and some of his disciples went to the home of Peter, Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law. She was lying on a bed because she had a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and immediately she no longer had a fever. Then she got up and served them some food.

¹⁶That evening when the Sabbath ended, the crowd brought to Jesus many people whom demons controlled, and other people who were sick. He made the demons leave just by speaking to them, and he healed all the people who were sick. ¹⁷When he did this, he made come true what the prophet Isaiah had written, 'He freed people from being sick, and he made them well.'

¹⁸Jesus saw the crowd around him he told his disciples to take him by boat to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹As they were walking toward the boat, a man who taught the Jewish laws came to him and said, "Teacher, I will go with you wherever you go." ²⁰Jesus answered him, "Foxes have holes in the ground in which to live, and birds have nests, but even though I am the Son of Man, I do not have a home where I can sleep." ²¹Another man who was one of Jesus' disciples said to him, "Lord, permit me first to go home. After my father dies I will bury him, and then I will come with you." ²²But Jesus said to him, "Come with me now. The people who are as good as dead, let them wait for their own people to die."

²³Then Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Suddenly strong winds blew on the water, and very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵They went and woke him up, and said to him, "Lord, rescue us! We are about to drown!" ²⁶He said to them, "You should not be terrified! You do not believe very much that I can rescue you." Then he got up and rebuked the wind and told the waves to calm down. Immediately the wind stopped blowing and the water became calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, and they said to each other, "This man is certainly an extraordinary person! All things are under his control! Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

²⁸When they came to the east side of the lake, they arrived in the region where the Gadarenes lived. Then two men whom demons controlled came out of the burial caves where they were living. Because they were extremely violent and attacked people, no one dared to travel on the road there. ²⁹Suddenly they shouted to Jesus, "You are the Son of God! Because you have nothing in common with us, leave us alone! Have you come here to torture us before the time God has appointed to punish us?" ³⁰There was a large herd of pigs grazing not far away. ³¹So the demons begged Jesus and said, "You are going to drive us out of these men, so send us into those pigs!" ³²Jesus said to them, "If that is what you want, go!" So the demons left the men and entered the pigs. Suddenly the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the water and drowned. ³³The men who were tending the pigs

became afraid and ran into the town and reported everything that had happened, including what had happened to the two men whom demons had controlled. ³⁴Then it seemed as if all the people who lived in that town went to meet Jesus. When they saw him and the two men whom demons had controlled, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

Chapter 9

¹Jesus and his disciples got into the boat. They sailed over the lake and went to Capernaum, the city where he was staying. ²Some people brought to him a man who was paralyzed and who was lying on a sleeping pad. When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the paralyzed man, he said to him, "Young man, be encouraged! I forgive your sins." ³Some of the men who taught the Jewish laws said among themselves, "This man thinks he is God; he cannot forgive sins!" ⁴Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said, "You should not think evil thoughts! ⁵What is easier, to tell him that his sins are forgiven or to tell him to get up and walk? ⁶So I am going to do something in order that you may know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!" ⁷Immediately the man got up, picked up his sleeping pad, and went home! ⁸When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck. They praised God for giving such authority to people.

⁹As Jesus was going away from there, he saw a man named Matthew. He was sitting at a table where he collected taxes for the Roman government. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" So Matthew got up and went with him. ¹⁰Jesus and his disciples sat down in a house for a meal. While they were eating, many tax collectors and other persons came and ate with them. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw that, they went up to the disciples and said, "It is disgusting that your teacher eats and associates with tax collectors and other people like them." ¹²Jesus heard what they said, so he told them this parable: "It is people who are sick who need a doctor, not people who are well. ¹³You need to learn what these words that God said mean: 'I want you to act mercifully to people and not just to offer sacrifices.' Keep in mind that I came to you, not to invite people who think that they are righteous to turn away from their sinful lives and come to me, but to invite people who know they are sinners."

¹⁴Then the disciples of John the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked him, "We and the Pharisees often abstain from food because we want to please God, but your disciples do not do that. Why do they not?" ¹⁵Jesus answered, "When the bridegroom is with his friends when he gets married, those people do not mourn, do they? No, because they are not sad at that time. But when the bridegroom has to leave them, they will abstain from food, because they will be sad.

¹⁶People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment to mend a hole. If they did that, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and tear the garment, and the hole would become bigger. ¹⁷Neither does anyone pour fresh grape juice into old skin bags to store it. If anyone did that, those skin bags would tear when the juice became wine. The bags would be ruined, and the wine would be spilled on the ground. Instead, people put new wine into new skin bags, and the bags will stretch when the wine ferments. In this way, both the wine and the bags will be safe."

¹⁸While Jesus was saying that, a leader in the city came and bowed down before him. Then he said, "My daughter has just now died! But if you come and lay your hand on her, she will live again!" ¹⁹So Jesus got up, and he and the disciples went with the man. ²⁰Then a woman who had been suffering constant bleeding for twelve years came near Jesus. She came behind him and touched the edge of his garment. ²¹She was saying to herself, "If I just touch his garment, I will be healed." ²²Then Jesus turned around to see who had touched him. And when he saw the woman, he said to her, "Be encouraged, dear woman. Because you believed that I could heal you, I have healed you." The woman was healed at that very moment.

²³Jesus came to the man's house and saw the flute players playing funeral music; there were also many mourners who were wailing loudly because the girl had died. ²⁴He said to them, "Go away and stop this funeral music and wailing, because the girl is not dead! She is just sleeping!" The people laughed at him, because they knew that she

was dead. ²⁵But Jesus told them to get out of the house. Then he went into the room where the girl was lying. He took hold of her hand and she became alive again and got up. ²⁶And the people of that whole region heard about it.

²⁷As Jesus went away from there, two blind men followed him and shouted, "Have mercy on us and heal us, you Descendant of King David!" ²⁸Jesus went into the house, and then the blind men went in, too. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord!" ²⁹Then he touched their eyes and he said to them, "Because you believe that I can heal your eyes, I am healing them right now!" ³⁰And they were able to see! Then Jesus told them sternly, "Be sure that you do not tell anybody what I have done for you!" ³¹But they went out and spread the news in that whole region.

³²Just when those two men were leaving, some people brought to Jesus a man who was unable to speak because a demon controlled him. ³³After Jesus had driven out the demon, the man began to speak! The crowds saw this and they were astonished and said, "Never before have we seen anything as marvelous as this happen in Israel!" ³⁴But the Pharisees said, "It is Satan, who rules the demons, who enables this man to drive out demons from people."

³⁵Then Jesus and his disciples went through many of the cities and towns in the district of Galilee. He was teaching in the synagogues and preaching the good news about how God will rule from heaven. He also was healing the people who had various diseases and illnesses. ³⁶When he saw the crowds of people, he pitied them because they were upset and worried. They were like sheep that do not have a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples: "The people who are ready to receive my message are like a field where the crops are ready to harvest. But there are not many people who go to gather the crops. ³⁸So pray and ask the Lord God to send many more people to gather in his crops."

Chapter 10

¹Jesus told his twelve disciples to come to him. Then he gave them the power to drive out evil spirits that controlled people. He also enabled them to heal people who had all kinds diseases or who were sick in all kinds of ways.

²Here is a list of the twelve disciples, whom he called apostles. They were Simon, to whom he gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, the younger brother of James; ³Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who was disloyal to Jesus and pointed him out to the authorities so they could arrest him.

⁵When Jesus was about to send his twelve apostles to tell the good news to people in various places, he gave them these instructions: "Do not go where the non-Jews live or into the towns where the Samaritans live. ⁶Instead, go to the people of Israel; they are like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd. ⁷When you go to them, proclaim to them that God will soon rule from heaven. ⁸Heal sick people, cause dead people to become alive, heal people with leprosy and bring them back into society, and cause demons to leave those whom they control. Do not charge any money for helping people, because God did not charge you anything for helping you. ⁹Do not take any money with you, ¹⁰nor a bag for what belongs to you. Do not take an extra tunic, nor sandals in addition to what you are wearing, nor a walking stick. Every worker deserves to get pay from the people for whom he works, so you deserve to receive food from the people to whom you go. ¹¹In any town or village that you enter, find a person who wants you to stay in his home. ¹²As you go into that house, call upon God to do good to the people who live there. Stay in that home until you leave that town or village. ¹³If the people who live in that house receive you well, God will indeed do good to them. But if they do not receive you well, then your prayer will not help them, and God will not do them good. ¹⁴If the people who live in any house or town do not welcome you, nor listen to your message, leave that place. As you leave, shake off the dust from your feet. By doing that, you will warn them that God will reject them as they rejected what you said. ¹⁵Note this carefully: At the time when God judges all people, he will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. But if the people of any city reject you, God will punish them even more severely.

¹⁶“Take note: When I send you out, you will be as defenseless as sheep, among people who are as dangerous as wolves. So be careful like snakes are careful and be harmless to them like pigeons are harmless. ¹⁷Also, be on guard against such people, because they will arrest you and take you to the members of the governing councils to put you on trial. They will whip you in their synagogues. ¹⁸And because you belong to me, they will take you before governors and kings in order that they may put you on trial and punish you. But you will testify to those rulers and to other non-Jews about me. ¹⁹When those people arrest you, do not be worried about what you will say to them, because the words that you should say will come to you. ²⁰It is not that you will decide what to say. Instead, you will say what the Spirit of your heavenly Father tells you to say. ²¹They will take you to the authorities to die because you believe in me. For example, people will do that to their brothers, and fathers will do that to their children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ²²Many people will hate you because you trust in me. But anyone who faithfully trusts in me until they die, those people God will save. ²³When people in one city cause you to suffer, escape to another city. Note this: I, the Son of Man, will certainly return to earth before you have finished going from one town to another town throughout Israel and telling people about me.

²⁴A disciple should not expect to be greater than his teacher, and servants are not superior to their master. ²⁵You do not expect that people will treat a student better than they treat his teacher, or that they will treat a servant better than they treat his master. Similarly, because I am your teacher and master, you can expect that people will mistreat you, because they have mistreated me. I am like the ruler of a household, whom they call Satan. If they act that badly toward me, how do you think they will act toward you?”

²⁶“Do not be afraid of those people. Everything that is covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. ²⁷So, instead of being afraid, what I say to you secretly as people do at night, tell it publicly as people do during the daytime. What I say to you privately as people do when they whisper to you, proclaim it publicly. ²⁸Do not be afraid of people who are able to kill your body but are not able to destroy your soul. Instead, fear God, because he is able to destroy both your body and your soul in hell. ²⁹Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy two of them for only one small coin. But when any sparrow falls to the ground and dies, God, your heavenly Father, knows it, because he knows everything. ³⁰He knows everything about you, too. He even knows how many hairs you have on your head! ³¹God values you much more than he values sparrows. So, do not be afraid of people who threaten to kill you! ³²If people are willing to tell others that they belong to me, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven that they belong to me. ³³But if they are afraid to say in front of others that they belong to me, I will tell my Father, who is in heaven, that they are not mine.”

³⁴“Do not think that I came to earth to cause people to live together in peace. Because I have come, some of those who follow me will die. ³⁵Because I came to earth, people who do not believe in me will be against those who do believe in me. For example, some sons will oppose their fathers, some daughters will oppose their mothers, and some daughters-in-law will oppose their mothers-in-law. ³⁶This shows that sometimes a person’s enemies will be members of his own household. ³⁷People who love their fathers or mothers more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. And people who love their sons or daughters more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁸If you are not ready to die because you belong to me, then you are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁹People who deny that they believe in me in order to escape dying will not live with God eternally, but people who are willing to lose their lives because they trust in me will live with God eternally.”

⁴⁰“God considers that everyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and he considers that everyone who welcomes me welcomes him, the one who sent me. ⁴¹Those who welcome someone because they know that person is a prophet—they will receive the same reward that prophets receive from God. Likewise, those who welcome a person because they know that person is righteous—they will receive the reward that righteous people receive from God. ⁴²Note this: Suppose people see that you are thirsty and give you a drink of cold water because they know that you are one of my disciples, even if you are not an important person at all. God will certainly reward people who do that.”

Chapter 11

¹When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples about what they should do, he sent them to various Israelite towns. Then he went to teach and preach in other Israelite towns in that area.

²While John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard what the Messiah was doing. So he sent some of his disciples to him ³to ask him, "Are you the Messiah whom the prophets said would come, or is it someone else that we should expect to come?" ⁴Jesus answered John's disciples, "Go back and report to John what you hear me telling people and what you see me doing. ⁵I am making blind people to see again and lame people to walk. I am healing people who have leprosy. I am making deaf people to hear again and dead people to become alive again. I am telling the poor people God's good news. ⁶Also tell John that God is pleased with people who do not stop believing in me because what I do is not what they expected the Messiah to do."

⁷When John's disciples had gone away, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said to them, "When you went out into the wilderness to see John, what was it you expected to see? You did not go there just to look at the tall grass blowing in the wind, did you? ⁸So what kind of person did you expect to see? Surely not a man who was wearing expensive clothes. No! You know very well that people who wear clothes like that reside in kings' palaces and not in the wilderness. ⁹So really, what kind of person did you expect to see? A prophet? Oh, yes! But let me tell you this: John is not just any ordinary prophet. ¹⁰He is the one to whom God was referring when someone wrote in the scriptures and said,

'Notice this! I am sending my messenger to go ahead of you to prepare the people for your coming.'

¹¹Note this: Of all the people who have ever lived, God does not consider any of them to be greater than John the Baptizer. At the same time, God considers those that are not important in the kingdom he rules from heaven to be greater than John. ¹²From the time that John the Baptizer preached until now, some people have been trying to make God rule from heaven in their own way, and they have been using force for this purpose. ¹³Everything that I am saying about John is just what you can read in what the prophets have written and what the law has been saying until the time of John the Baptizer. ¹⁴Not only that, but if you are willing to try to understand this, I will tell you that John is in fact the second Elijah, the prophet who was to come in the future. ¹⁵If you want to understand this, you must think carefully about what I have just said.

¹⁶But you and the other people who are alive now, you are like children who are playing games in the marketplace. Some of them call to their friends, ¹⁷'We played happy music on the flute for you, but you refused to dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you refused to cry!' ¹⁸I say this because you are dissatisfied with both John and me! When John came and preached to you, he did not eat good food and did not drink wine, like most people do. But you rejected him and said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ¹⁹I, the Son of Man, was not like John. I eat the same food and drink wine as other people do. But you also reject me and say, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he is friends with tax collectors and other sinners!' But anyone who is truly wise will show it by doing good deeds."

²⁰In the towns where Jesus had performed most of his miracles, the people there still refused to turn to God. So he began to rebuke them by saying to them, ²¹"You people who live in the city of Chorazin and you in the city of Bethsaida, how terribly you will suffer! I did great miracles in your cities, but you did not stop sinning. If I had done these things in the cities of Tyre and Sidon of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning; they would have put on rough clothing and sat in the cold ashes of their fires, so sorry they would have been. ²²Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when he judges all people. ²³I also have something to say to you people who live in the city of Capernaum. Do you think that others will praise you so much that you will go right up to heaven? That will not happen! On the contrary, you will go down to where God punishes people after they die! If I had done these same miracles in Sodom of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning, and their city would have been here even today. But you have not stopped sinning. ²⁴Let me tell you this: God will punish the

wicked people who lived in Sodom, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when he judges all people.”

²⁵At that time Jesus prayed, “Father, you rule over everything in heaven and on the earth. I thank you that you have prevented people who think that they are wise and well educated from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth just as little children believe what an adult tells them. ²⁶Yes, Father, you have done that because it seemed good to you to do so.”

²⁷Then Jesus said to the people, “God, my Father, has revealed to me all the things that I need to know in order to do my work. Only my Father knows who I really am. Furthermore, only I and those people to whom I wish to reveal him really know him. ²⁸Come to me, all you people who are very weary of trying to obey all the laws your leaders say you should. I will let you rest from all that. ²⁹Submit to me, like an ox to its yoke, and learn what I have to teach you. I am gentle and humble, and you will truly rest. ³⁰For the load I will give you is light. I will not place a heavy burden on you.”

Chapter 12

¹On a Sabbath at that time, Jesus and the disciples were walking past some grain fields. Because his disciples were hungry, they began to pick some of the heads of grain and eat them, something that the law of Moses allowed.

²Some Pharisees saw them doing that, so they said to Jesus, “Look! Your disciples are doing work on our day of rest. The law does not allow that!” ³But Jesus answered, “It is written in the scriptures what our ancestor King David did when he and the men with him were hungry. ⁴King David entered the sacred tent where they worshiped God and ate the bread that had been on display before God. But according to the law of Moses, only priests were permitted to eat that bread, but David and the men who were with him ate it. ⁵Also, surely you have read what Moses wrote, when he said that even though the priests, by working in the temple on our Sabbath day, are not obeying the Jewish day of rest laws, they are not guilty. ⁶Let me tell you what this means: I have come to you, and I am more important than the temple. ⁷You should think about these words of God in the scriptures: ‘I want you to act mercifully toward people, and not just offer sacrifices.’ If you understood what that means, you would not condemn my disciples, who have done no wrong. ⁸I am the Son of Man, and I have the authority to tell people what they can do on the Sabbath day.”

⁹After Jesus left there that day, he went into a synagogue. ¹⁰There he saw a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees kept wanting to debate with Jesus about the Sabbath, so one of them asked him, “Does God permit us to heal people on our day of rest?” They were hoping that Jesus would commit a sin by saying something wrong. ¹¹He replied to them, “Suppose that one of you had just one sheep, and that it fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath day. Would you just leave it there? Certainly not! You would take hold of it and lift it out right away! ¹²But a person is much more valuable than a sheep. So it is certainly right for us to do good by healing another person any day, even on our day of rest!” ¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” The man stretched out his withered hand, and it became healthy like the other hand! ¹⁴Then the Pharisees left the synagogue. They began to plan together how they could kill Jesus.

¹⁵Because Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting to kill him, he took the disciples and went away from there. Large crowds, including many sick people, followed him, and he healed them all. ¹⁶But he told them firmly that they should not tell other people about him. ¹⁷By doing this he fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago. He wrote,

¹⁸“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

the one whom I love and who pleases me.

I will put my Spirit in him,

and he will bring justice and salvation to the non-Jews.”

¹⁹He will not quarrel with people, neither will he shout.

And he will not shout in the streets.

²⁰He will be gentle with the weak people;

If a person is barely alive, he will not kill him.

And he will judge the people with justice and declare that they are not guilty.

²¹So the non-Jews will confidently trust in him."

²²One day some men brought to Jesus a man who was blind and unable to speak because he had a demon. Jesus drove out the demon and healed him. Then the man began to talk and was able to see. ²³All the crowds who saw it marveled. They began asking each other, "Could this man be the Messiah, the descendant of King David, whom we have been expecting?" ²⁴Because the Pharisees heard about this miracle, they said, "It is not God, but Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to drive demons from people!" ²⁵But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If people who live in the same city or house fight each other, they will certainly not remain as one group or family. ²⁶In the same way, if Satan were driving out his own demons, he would be fighting against himself. He will not be able to continue to rule over his servants! ²⁷Furthermore, if it is true that Satan enables me to drive out demons, is it also true that your disciples who drive them out do so by Satan's power? No! So they will judge you for saying that Satan's power was behind their work. ²⁸But because it is God's Spirit who enables me to drive out demons, that proves that the rule of God from heaven is already here.

²⁹I will show you why I am able to drive out demons. A person cannot go into the house of a strong man like Satan and carry off his possessions if he does not first tie up that strong man. But if he ties him up, then he will be able to take his possessions.

³⁰No one can be neutral. Those who do not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit enables me to expel demons are opposing me, and those who do not gather people to become my disciples are causing those people to go away from me.

³¹You are saying that it is not the Holy Spirit who is enabling me to expel demons. So I will say this to you: If those who offend and insult other people in any way are then sorry and ask God to forgive them, God will forgive them. But he will not forgive people who insult the Holy Spirit. ³²God is willing to forgive people who criticize me, the Son of Man. But I warn you that he will not forgive those who say evil things about what the Holy Spirit does. God will not forgive them now, nor in the coming world."

³³"When you see some fruit from a tree, you decide whether the fruit is good or bad. If it is good, then you know that its tree is also good. If I am doing good things, then you should know whether or not I am good. ³⁴You are like the children of poisonous snakes! You cannot say anything good, because you are evil. What a person says shows what is inside him. ³⁵Good people speak good things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these good things in a safe place and can bring them out at any time. But evil people speak evil things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these evil things and bring them out at any time from the place where they store them. ³⁶I tell you that on the day when God judges, he will make people recall every useless word they have spoken, and he will judge the people by what they have said. ³⁷God will either declare that you are righteous based on the words that you have spoken, or else he will condemn you based on what you have said."

³⁸Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws responded to Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see you perform a miracle that will convince us that God sent you." ³⁹Then Jesus said to them, "You people have already seen me perform miracles, but you are evil, and you do not faithfully worship God! You want me to prove that God sent me, but God will show you only one miracle. It will be like what happened to Jonah the prophet. ⁴⁰Jonah was in the stomach of a huge fish for three days and nights before God caused him to come out. Similarly, for three days and nights I, the Son of Man, will be deep in the earth, and then God will cause me to live again. ⁴¹When God

judges everyone, the people who lived in the city of Nineveh will stand in front of him beside you people. But they stopped sinning when Jonah warned them. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Jonah was, but you have not stopped sinning. So God will judge you. ⁴²The queen from Sheba, south of Israel, who lived long ago, came from a distant region in order to listen to King Solomon teach many wise things. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Solomon was, but you have not stopped sinning. So when God judges everyone, the queen of Sheba will stand in front of him beside you people, and she will condemn you."

⁴³"Sometimes when an evil spirit leaves a person, it wanders around in desolate areas, seeking someone in whom he can rest. If he does not find anyone, ⁴⁴he says to itself, 'I will return to the person in whom I used to live.' So he goes back and finds that the Spirit of God is not in control of that person's life. The person's life is like a house that has been swept clean and everything put in order, but it is empty. ⁴⁵Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil, and they all enter that person and begin living there. So although that person's condition was bad before, it becomes much worse. That is what you wicked people who have heard me teach will experience."

⁴⁶While Jesus was still speaking to the crowd, his mother and his younger brothers arrived. They stood outside the house, and they wanted to speak with him. ⁴⁷Someone said to him, "Your mother and your younger brothers are standing outside the house, and they want to talk to you." ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the person who told him that, "I will tell you who are really my mother and brothers." ⁴⁹He then pointed toward his disciples and said, "These are ones who take the place of my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰Those who do what God my Father who is in heaven wants take the place of my brother, my sister, or my mother."

Chapter 13

¹That same day Jesus, along with the disciples, left the house where he was teaching and went to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sat down there, ²and a very large crowd gathered around him to listen to him teach. In order to have a little room, he got into a boat and sat down to teach them. The crowd stood on the shore and listened to him. ³He taught them using many parables. He said, "Listen! A man went out to his field to sow seeds. ⁴As he was scattering the seeds over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. But some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵Other seeds fell on ground where there was not much soil on top of the rock. Those seeds sprouted very soon, because the sun quickly warmed the shallow soil. ⁶But when the young plants came up, they became too hot in the sunlight, and they dried up because they did not have deep roots. ⁷Other seeds fell on ground that had thorny weeds. The thorny weeds grew together with the young plants, and they crowded out the plants. ⁸But other seeds fell on good soil, and the plants grew and produced a lot of grain. Some plants produced one hundred times as many seeds as were planted. Some plants produced sixty times as much. Some plants produced thirty times as much. ⁹If you are able to understand this, you should consider carefully what I have just said."

¹⁰The disciples approached Jesus later and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowd?"

¹¹He answered, "God is revealing to you what he did not reveal before, about how he is ruling from heaven. But he has not revealed it to these other people. ¹²Those who are able to think about what I say and understand it, God will enable them to understand more. But those who are not able think carefully about what I say will forget even what they already know. ¹³That is why I use parables when I speak to people, because although they see what I do, they do not understand what it means, and although they hear what I say, they do not really learn what it means.

¹⁴What these people do completely fulfills what God told the prophet Isaiah to say long ago, You will hear what I say, but you will not understand it. You will see what I do, but you will not learn what it means.

¹⁵God also said to Isaiah,

"These people are able to hear what I say, but they will never understand the message.

They have eyes that can see, but they will never see clearly what it is they are looking at. They have closed their eyes so they cannot see.

They cannot see with their eyes, and they cannot hear with their ears, and they cannot understand.

If they could see and hear and understand, then they would turn to me," God says, "and I would heal them."

¹⁶But as for you, God has made you able because you realize what I have done and because you understand what I say. ¹⁷Note this: Many prophets and righteous people who lived long ago longed to see what you are seeing me do, but they did not see it. They longed to hear the things that you have been hearing me say, but they did not hear what you hear me say."

¹⁸Now listen to me explain the parable about the man who sowed seeds in various kinds of soil. ¹⁹Some people hear about how God is ruling but do not understand it. They are like the path where some of the seeds fell. Satan, the evil one, comes and causes these people to forget what they have heard. ²⁰Some people hear God's message and immediately accept it joyfully. They are like the rocky places where some seeds fell. ²¹But because it does not penetrate deeply into their hearts, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly and make them suffer because they believe in what I have told them, they sin by refusing to believe in it any longer. ²²Some people hear God's message, but they desire to be rich, so they worry only about money and what they can buy with money. As a result, they forget God's message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. These people are like the soil that had the roots of thorny weeds in it. ²³But some people hear my message and understand it. Some of them do many things that please God, some do even more things that please God, and some do very many things that please God. They are like the good soil where some of the seeds fell."

²⁴Jesus also told the crowd another parable. He said, "When God rules from heaven, it will be like a landowner who sent his servants to sow good seed in his field. ²⁵While those servants were sleeping and not guarding the field, an enemy of the landowner came and scattered weed seeds in the midst of the wheat. Then he left. ²⁶After the seeds sprouted and the green plants grew, the heads of grain began to form. But the weeds also grew. ²⁷So the servants of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, you certainly gave us good seeds and those are the ones we sowed in your field. So where did the weeds come from?' ²⁸The landowner said to them, 'My enemy did this.' His servants said to him, 'Do you want us to pull up the weeds?' ²⁹He said to them, 'No, do not do that, because you might pull up some of the wheat at the same time. ³⁰Let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest time. At that time I will say to those who will reap, 'First gather the weeds, tie them into bundles to be burned. Then gather the wheat and put it into my barns.'"

³¹Jesus also told this parable: "When God rules from heaven, it is like mustard seeds that grow after a man plants them in his field. ³²Although mustard seeds are among the smallest of all the seeds that people plant, here in Israel they become large plants. When the plants have fully grown, they are larger than the other garden plants. They become shrubs as big as trees, and they are large enough for the birds to build nests in their branches."

³³Jesus also told this parable: "When God rules from heaven, it is like a woman who was making bread. She took about forty liters of flour and mixed into it a little bit of yeast, and the bread rose."

³⁴Jesus told the crowd parables to teach them all these things. When he spoke to them he habitually told stories like these. ³⁵By doing that, he made come true what God told one of the prophets to write long ago.

I will speak in parables; I will tell parables to teach what I have kept secret since I created the world.

³⁶After Jesus sent the crowd away, he went into the house. Then the disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable about the weeds that grew in the wheat field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed represents me, the Son of Man. ³⁸The field represents this world, where people live. The seeds that grew well represent the people who have God as their father. The weeds represent the people who have the devil as their father. ³⁹The enemy who sowed the weed seeds represents the devil. The time when the reapers will harvest the grain represents the time when the world will end. The reapers represent the angels. ⁴⁰The weeds are gathered and burned. That represents what will happen when God judges all people, when the world will end. It will be like this: ⁴¹I, the Son of Man, will send my angels, and they will gather from among all that I am ruling the things that

cause others to sin and all those who violate God's will. ⁴²The angels will throw those people into the fires of hell. There those people will weep and grind their teeth because of the great pain that they are suffering. ⁴³However, the people who have lived as he wants them to will shine out as brightly as the sun shines. They will shine out because God, their Father, will rule over them. If you are able to understand this, you should think carefully about what I have just said."

⁴⁴"God's ruling from heaven is so precious it is like a man who found a great treasure that another person had buried in a field. When this man dug it up, he buried it again so no one else would find it. Then he happily went and sold all his possessions to obtain money to buy that field. He then went and bought the field, and so he was able to acquire that treasure.

⁴⁵Also, God ruling from heaven is so precious it is like what a merchant did who was looking for good quality pearls to buy. ⁴⁶When he found one very costly pearl that was for sale, he sold all his possessions to acquire enough money to buy that pearl. Then he went and bought it.

⁴⁷When God rules from heaven, it is like what certain fishermen did with the fish they caught in a lake with a large net. They caught all kinds of fish, both useful and worthless fish. ⁴⁸When the net was full, the fishermen pulled it up onto the shore. Then they sat there and put the good fish into buckets, but they threw the worthless ones away.

⁴⁹This is like what will happen to people when the world ends. The angels will come to where God is judging people and will separate the wicked people from the righteous ones. ⁵⁰They will throw the wicked people into the fire in hell. And those wicked people will weep and gnash their teeth because of the intense pain they are suffering."

⁵¹Then Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you understand all these parables I have told you?" They said to him, "Yes, we understand them." ⁵²Then he said, "Those teachers and interpreters who understand these parables and act accordingly under the rule of God from heaven are like a house owner who shares both new things and old things out of his storage room."

⁵³When Jesus had finished telling these parables, he took the disciples and left that area. ⁵⁴Then they went to the town of Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus. On the Sabbath he began to teach the people in the synagogue. The result was that the people there were astonished. But some said, "This man is just an ordinary person like us! So how is it that he knows so much and understands so much? And how is it that he is able to do such miracles? ⁵⁵He is just the son of the carpenter. Certainly! His mother is named Mary, and his younger brothers are James, Joseph, Simon and Judas! ⁵⁶And all of his sisters also live here in our town. So how is he able to teach and do all these things?" ⁵⁷The people there refused to accept that Jesus had such authority. So Jesus said to them, "People honor me and other prophets everywhere else we go, but in our hometowns we are not honored, and even our own families do not honor us!" ⁵⁸Jesus did not perform many miracles there because the people did not believe that he had such authority.

Chapter 14

¹During that time the ruler Herod Antipas heard reports about Jesus performing miracles. ²He said to his servants, "That must be John the Baptizer. He must have risen from the dead, and that is why he has power to do these miracles." ³⁻⁴This is what happened to make Herod think this. Herod had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, while Philip was still living. So John kept saying to him, "What you have done is against God's law!" Then, to please Herodias, Herod told his soldiers to arrest John. They bound him with chains and put him in prison. ⁵Herod wanted to order his men to execute John, but he was afraid of the general public, because they believed that John was a prophet speaking for God.

⁶One day, Herod gave a party to celebrate his birthday, and Herodias' daughter danced for his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod very much, ⁷so he promised to give her whatever she asked, and he asked God to be a witness that he had made this promise. ⁸So Herodias' daughter went and asked her mother what to ask for. Her mother told her what to say. So her daughter went back and said to Herod, "I want you to cut off the head of John the Baptizer

and bring it here on a platter to show that he is really dead!" ⁹The king was now very sorry that he had promised to give Herodias' daughter whatever she wanted. But because he had called on God to hear him make that promise, and because all his guests had heard him do so, he felt that he had to do what he had said. So he ordered his servants to do what she wanted. ¹⁰He sent soldiers to go to the prison and cut off John's head. ¹¹They did that, and they put John's head on a platter and brought it to the girl. Then the girl took it to her mother. ¹²Later John's disciples went to the prison, took John's body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³After Jesus heard that news, he took just the disciples with him and went by boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived.

After the crowds heard about where they had gone, they left their towns and followed them, walking along the shore. ¹⁴When Jesus came to the shore, he saw a very large crowd waiting for him. He felt sorry for them, and he healed the sick people who were among them.

¹⁵When it was nearly evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a place where nobody lives, and it is very late. Tell the crowds to go away so they can buy food in the towns nearby." ¹⁶But Jesus said to his disciples, "They do not need to leave to get food. Instead, you yourselves give them something to eat!" ¹⁷The disciples said, "But we have only five loaves of bread and two cooked fish here!" ¹⁸He said, "Bring them to me!" ¹⁹Jesus told the crowd of people who had gathered there to sit on the grass. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. Then he gave the pieces to his disciples, and they distributed them to the crowd. ²⁰All the people ate until they were no longer hungry. Then some people gathered the pieces that were left over and filled twelve baskets with them. ²¹About five thousand men ate at that time, not counting the women and children!

²²Right after that happened, Jesus told the disciples to get in the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In the meantime, he was going to send the crowd home. ²³After he sent the crowd away, he went up into the hills to pray by himself. When it was evening, he was still there alone. ²⁴By this time the disciples were a long distance from the shore. The wind was blowing very hard opposite to how the disciples were trying to sail; the wind made very large waves that were tossing the boat back and forth in the water. ²⁵Then Jesus came down from the hills to the water. Sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning he walked on the water toward the boat. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they thought that he must be a ghost. They were terrified, and they screamed in fear. ²⁷Immediately Jesus said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!" ²⁸Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to walk on the water to you!" ²⁹Jesus said, "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat. He walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰But when Peter paid attention to the strong wind, he became afraid. He began to sink in the water and cried out, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹Right away Jesus reached out with his hand and grabbed Peter. He said to him, "You only trust a little bit in my power! Why did you doubt that I could keep you from sinking?" ³²Then Jesus and Peter got in the boat, and the wind immediately stopped blowing. ³³All of the disciples who were in the boat bowed down to Jesus and said, "You are really the Son of God!"

³⁴When they had gone further around the lake in the boat, they reached the shore at the town of Gennesaret.

³⁵The men of that area recognized Jesus, so they sent people to inform those who lived in the whole region that Jesus had come. So the people brought to Jesus everyone who was sick. ³⁶The sick people kept begging him to allow them to touch him or even only the edge of his robe so that they would be healed. Everyone who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 15

¹Then some Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws came from Jerusalem to talk to Jesus. They said, ²"We see that your disciples disobey the traditions of our ancestors! They do not perform the proper ritual of washing their hands before they eat!" ³Jesus answered them, "And I see that you refuse to obey God's commands just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you! ⁴God gave these two commands: 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'People who speak evil about their father or mother must be executed.'" ⁵But you tell the people, 'You

can say to your father or mother, "What I was going to give to you to help provide for you, I have now promised to give to God." ⁶When you do that, you think that you do not need to give anything to your parents. In that way you ignore what God commanded, just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you! ⁷You only pretend to be good! Isaiah also told the truth about you when he spoke God's thoughts about your ancestors. ⁸These people talk as if they honor me, but they do not care about me, ⁹It is useless for them to worship me, because they teach what people thought up as their authoritative teachings."

¹⁰Then Jesus again called the crowd to come nearer to him. He said to them, "Listen to what I am about to tell you and try to understand it. ¹¹Nothing that a person puts into his mouth to eat makes him contaminated. Instead, it is what people say—the words that come from their mouths—that makes a person degraded."

¹²Later the disciples went to Jesus and said, "Do you know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became angry at you?" ¹³Then Jesus told them this parable. "My Father in heaven will get rid of all those who teach things that are against what he says, just like a farmer gets rid of plants that he did not plant by pulling them up by their roots. ¹⁴Do not pay any attention to the Pharisees. They do not help people to understand what God commands, just like blind guides do not help blind people to see where they should walk. Instead, they all fall into the same hole."

¹⁵Peter said to Jesus, "Explain to us the parable about what a person eats." ¹⁶Jesus replied to them, "You should certainly understand what I teach, but I am disappointed that you do not. ¹⁷You ought to understand that whatever food people eat enters their stomachs, and later what remains passes out of their bodies. ¹⁸Instead, the evil words that the mouth speaks are what makes God reject a person, because they come from the evil things that the person thinks in his innermost being. ¹⁹This is because it is people's innermost beings that cause them to think things that are evil, to murder people, to commit adultery, to commit other sexual sins, to steal things, to testify falsely, and to speak evil about others. ²⁰It is these actions that cause God to consider people to be unacceptable to him. But to eat with unwashed hands does not cause God to reject people."

²¹After Jesus took the disciples and left the district of Galilee, they all went toward the region where the cities of Tyre and Sidon are located. ²²A woman from the group of people called Canaanites, who live in that region, came to Jesus. She kept shouting to him, "Lord, you are the descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on me and my daughter! She is suffering very much because a demon controls her." ²³But Jesus did not answer her at all. The disciples said to him, "Tell her to leave because she keeps bothering us by shouting behind us as we go along." ²⁴Jesus said to her, "God has sent me only to the people of Israel, because they are like sheep who have lost their way." ²⁵But the woman came closer to Jesus and knelt down in front of him. She pled, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶Then he told her, "It is not good for someone to take food that has been prepared for his children and throw it to the little dogs in the house." ²⁷But the woman replied, "Lord, what you say is correct, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall to the floor when their masters sit at their own tables and eat!" ²⁸Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, because you believe firmly in me, I will heal your daughter as you desire!" At that moment the demon left her daughter, and she became well.

²⁹Then Jesus and his disciples went away from that area, back to the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus climbed the hill near there and sat down to teach the people. ³⁰Large crowds kept coming to him for the next two days and brought lame, crippled, and blind people, those who were unable to talk, and many others who had various sicknesses. They laid them in front of Jesus so that he would heal them. And he healed them. ³¹The crowd saw him heal people who could not talk, crippled people, lame people, and blind people, and they were amazed. They said, "Praise God who rules over us in Israel!"

³²Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "This crowd of people has been with me for three days and have nothing left to eat. I feel sorry for them. I do not want to send them away while they are still hungry, because if I did that, they might faint on the way home." ³³The disciples said to him, "In this place where nobody lives, we cannot possibly obtain enough food to feed such a large crowd!" ³⁴Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They answered him, "Seven small loaves and a few small cooked fish." ³⁵Then Jesus told the people to sit on

the ground. ³⁶He took the seven loaves and the cooked fish. After he had thanked God for them, he broke them into pieces and he kept giving them to the disciples. Then the disciples kept distributing them to the crowd.

³⁷Because Jesus made the food multiply miraculously, all those people ate and had plenty to satisfy them. Then the disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over, and they filled seven large baskets with them. ³⁸There were four thousand men who ate, but no one counted the women and the children who also ate.

³⁹After Jesus sent the crowd away, he and the disciples got in a boat and sailed around the lake to the region of Magadan.

Chapter 16

¹Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and said to him, "Show us that God has really sent you to us! Do a miracle in the sky and use his power to convince us!" ²He answered them,^[1] ["In our country, if the sky is red in the evening, we say, 'It will be good weather tomorrow.' ³But if the sky is red in the morning we say, 'It will be stormy weather today.' By looking at the sky, you can tell what the weather will be, but when you see the things that are now happening all around you, you do not understand what God is doing.] ⁴You evil people have seen me perform miracles, but you do not faithfully worship God. So I will do no miracle for you, except the miracle that happened to Jonah the prophet, who spent three days inside a huge fish but came out again." Then Jesus left them and sailed away, along with his disciples.

⁵They all sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Then the disciples realized that they had forgotten to take anything to eat with them. ⁶At that point, Jesus said to them, "Be careful not to accept the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees want to give you." ⁷They tried to make sense out of what Jesus had told them, and they said to each other, "He must have said that because we forgot to bring anything to eat!" ⁸But Jesus knew what they were saying and answered them, "I am disappointed that you think it was because you forgot bring bread that I talked about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. You believe only a little what I am able to do for you. ⁹Do not think I am worried about having food. Have you really forgotten how I fed the five thousand with five loaves, or how many baskets of leftover food you gathered up? ¹⁰Or what about the four thousand people who ate when I multiplied the seven small loaves? And how many baskets of scraps did you gather up then? ¹¹You should have understood that I was not really speaking about bread. Do not accept yeast from the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ¹²Then the disciples understood that Jesus was not talking about the yeast that is in bread. Instead, he was talking about the wrong teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

¹³When Jesus and his disciples entered into the region near the city of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?" ¹⁴They answered, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, who has come back to life again. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah, who has returned from heaven as God promised. Still others say that you are the prophet Jeremiah or one of the other prophets who lived long ago, who has come back to life again." ¹⁵Jesus said to them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter said to him, "You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the all-powerful God." ¹⁷Then Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonah, God is pleased with you. What you just said—no human has revealed this to you. Instead, it was my Father who lives in heaven who has revealed this to you. ¹⁸I will also tell you this: You are Peter, which means 'rock.' You will be the support for the group of those who believe in me, like a large rock supports a great building. And even the powers of death will not be strong enough to stand up against it." ¹⁹Then he said, "I will enable you to open or close the way for people to come under the rule of God from heaven. Whatever you permit on earth, God will permit in heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth, God will prohibit in heaven." ²⁰Then Jesus warned the disciples strongly not to tell anyone at that time that he was the Messiah.

²¹From that time Jesus, the Messiah, began to teach the disciples that it was necessary for him to go to the city of Jerusalem. There the ruling elders, the chief priests, and the men who taught the Jewish laws would cause him to suffer and die. Then on the third day after that, he would come alive again. ²²But Peter took Jesus aside and began to scold him for saying these things. He said, "Lord, may God never permit that to happen to you! That must

certainly not happen!" ²³Then Jesus turned to look at Peter, and he said to him, "Get out of my sight, because Satan is speaking through you. You are trying to get me to sin. You are not thinking what God thinks, but only what people think!"

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to trust me and go where I am going, he must put away his own desires and purposes, and he must take up his own cross, and go where I go. ²⁵Whoever tries to save his own life, will find that instead of saving his life, he will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me, he will find his life. ²⁶What good would it be for a person to get everything he wants in this world, but then for him to lose his life? What will a man gain in his possessions that would be as valuable as his own life? ²⁷Listen carefully. I, the Son of Man, will leave this earth, but I will return, and the angels of heaven will accompany me. At that time I will have the glorious light that my Father has, and I will reward everyone according to what they did when they were alive in this world. ²⁸Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will see me, the one who came from heaven, when I return as king. You will see this before you die!"

16:2 ^[1]

Chapter 17

¹A week after Jesus said that, he took Peter, James, and John, the younger brother of James, and led them up a high mountain where they were away from other people. ²While they were there, the three disciples saw Jesus' appearance change. His face shone like the sun, and his clothing shone and became as brilliant as light. ³Suddenly Moses and Elijah, who were important prophets many years ago, appeared and started talking with him. ⁴Peter saw them and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is excellent for us to be here! If you want me to, I will set up three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came over them. They heard God speaking about Jesus from inside the cloud. He said to them, "This is my Son. I love him. He pleases me very much. So you must listen to him!" ⁶When the three disciples heard God speaking, they were exceedingly afraid. As a result, they fell facedown on the ground. ⁷But Jesus went to them and touched them and said to them, "Stand up! Do not be afraid anymore!" ⁸And when they looked up, they saw that Jesus was the only one who was still there.

⁹While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Do not tell anyone what you saw on the mountain top until God has caused me, the Son of Man, to become alive again after I die." ¹⁰Those three disciples asked Jesus, "If what you say is true, why do the men who teach the Jewish laws say that it is necessary for Elijah to come back to earth before the Messiah comes?" ¹¹Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised that Elijah would come to prepare many people for the Messiah's coming. ¹²But note this: Elijah has already come and our leaders have seen him, but they did not recognize him as the one who would come before the Messiah. Instead, they treated him badly, just as they desired. And those same rulers will soon treat me, the one who came from heaven, in the same manner." ¹³Then the three disciples understood that when he was talking about Elijah, he was referring to John the Baptizer.

¹⁴When Jesus and the three disciples returned to the rest of the disciples and to the crowd that had gathered, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵He said to him, "Sir, have mercy on my son and heal him! He has epilepsy and suffers very much. Because of this illness, he has fallen in the fire and in the water many times. ¹⁶I brought him to your disciples in order that they might heal him, but they were not able to heal him." ¹⁷Jesus responded, "You people of this time do not believe at all in God's power. How confused you are! How long do I have to be with you before you are able to do what I do? Bring the boy here to me!" ¹⁸When they brought the boy to Jesus, Jesus spoke severely to the demon that was causing the epilepsy. As a result, the demon came out of the boy, and the boy was healed from that time onward. ¹⁹Later, some of the disciples approached Jesus when he was by himself and asked him, "Why were we not able to drive out the demon?" ²⁰He answered them, "It is because you did not believe very much in God's power. Think about this: Mustard seeds are very small, but they grow and produce large plants. Similarly, if you believe even a little bit that God will do what you ask him to, you will be able

to do anything! You could even say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there!' and it would go where you told it to go."

²¹[¹] [But this kind of demon does not go out except with prayer and fasting.] ²²When the disciples had gathered together in the district of Galilee, Jesus said to them, "Someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to the authorities. ²³They will kill me, but God will cause me to become alive again on the third day after I am killed." When the disciples heard that, they became very sad.

²⁴When Jesus and the disciples came to the city of Capernaum, the men who collected taxes for the temple approached Peter and said to him, "Your teacher pays the temple tax, does he not?" ²⁵He answered them, "Yes, he does pay it." When the disciples came into Jesus' house, before Peter began to speak, Jesus said to him, "Simon, from whom do you think rulers collect revenue or taxes? Do they collect taxes from the citizens of their own country, or from citizens of countries they have conquered?" ²⁶Peter answered him, "From citizens of other countries." Then Jesus said to him, "So citizens of their own country do not need to pay taxes. ²⁷But go ahead and pay the tax for us so that the temple tax collectors will not become angry with us. In order to get the money to pay it, go to the Sea of Galilee, cast your fish line and hook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a silver coin that is worth enough to pay the tax for you and me. Take that coin and give it to the temple tax collectors."

17:21 [¹]

Chapter 18

¹At that precise time the disciples approached Jesus and asked him, "Who among us will be the most important when God makes you king from heaven?" ²Jesus called a child to come, and he placed that child in their midst. ³He said, "I tell you the truth: If you do not change and become as humble as little children, surely you will not come under the rule of God from heaven. ⁴The people who become as humble as this child will be the most important people among those over whom God will rule from heaven. ⁵Also, whenever people welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me."

⁶"If a person causes someone who believes in me to sin, even if it is someone who people think is as unimportant as this little child, God will severely punish that person. He will punish that person worse than if someone had thrown him into the sea's deep waters with a heavy stone tied to his neck! ⁷How terrible it will be for those who cause others to sin. There will always be temptations to sin, but how terrible it will be for anyone to cause another person to sin. ⁸So if you are wanting to use one of your hands or feet to sin, stop using that hand or foot! Even if you have to cut it off so you will not sin! Suppose you had only one hand or one foot and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both hands and both feet and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell because of your sin. ⁹Yes, and if what you see makes you want to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out one of your eyes and throw it away to keep from sinning! Suppose you had only one eye and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both eyes and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell."

¹⁰"Be sure not to look down on even one of these children. I tell you truly that the angels who protect them can always go to my Father and report to him if you mistreat the children. ¹¹[¹] [For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.] ¹²What do you think you would do in the following situation? If you had one hundred sheep and one of them got lost, you would surely leave the ninety-nine sheep that were on the hillside and go and search for the lost one, would you not? ¹³If you found it, I affirm to you that you would rejoice very much. You would be happy that ninety-nine sheep did not stray away, but you would rejoice even more because you had found the sheep that had strayed away. ¹⁴In the same way that the shepherd does not want one of his sheep to stray away, so God, your Father in heaven, does not want even one of these children to go to hell."

¹⁵"If a fellow believer sins against you, go to him when you can be alone with him, and reprove him for sinning against you. If that person listens to you and feels sorry that he has sinned against you, you and he will be good

brothers once more. ¹⁶If, however, that person does not listen to you, go get one or two other fellow believers. Have them go with you so that, as the law says, 'there must be two or three witnesses to confirm every accusation.' ¹⁷If the one who has sinned against you does not listen to them, tell the matter to the entire congregation so that they can correct him. And if the person does not listen to the congregation, exclude him from among you, just as you would exclude pagans and tax collectors as hopeless sinners. ¹⁸Keep this in mind: Whatever you decide on earth about punishing or not punishing a member of your congregation is what has also been decided by God in heaven. ¹⁹Also note this: If at least two of you who live here on earth agree together about whatever you ask for, my Father who is in heaven, will give you what you ask for. ²⁰This is true, because wherever at least two or three of you assemble because you believe in me, I am with you."

²¹Then Peter approached Jesus and said to him, "Lord, how many times must I forgive a fellow believer who keeps on sinning against me? If he keeps asking me to forgive him, must I forgive him as many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "I tell you that the number of times you must forgive someone is not just up to seven, but you must forgive him seventy-seven times. ²³God's rule from heaven is like a king and his officials. He wanted his officials to pay what they owed him. ²⁴So those officials came to the king to settle their accounts with him. One of the officials brought to the king owed him a debt that was worth the value of more than three metric tons of gold. ²⁵But because he did not have enough money to pay what he owed, the king demanded that he, his wife, his children and all he possessed be sold to someone else and that the king be repaid with the money that was paid for them. ²⁶Then that official, knowing that he did not have the money to pay that huge debt, fell on his knees in front of the king and he begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ²⁷The king, knowing that the official could never pay all that huge debt, felt sorry for him. So he canceled his debt and released him. ²⁸Then this same official went to another one of the king's officials who owed him a bit less than a year's wages. He grabbed him by the throat, started choking him, and said to him, 'Pay back what you owe me!' ²⁹That official fell on his knees and begged him saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ³⁰But the first official kept refusing to cancel that small debt that the man owed him. Instead, he put that official into prison and to stay there until he could pay back all the money that he owed him. ³¹When the other officials of the king learned that this had happened, they were very distressed. So they went to the king and reported in detail what had happened. ³²Then the king summoned the official who had owed him a debt worth more than three metric tons of gold. He said to him, 'You wicked servant! I canceled that huge debt that you owed me because you begged me to do so! ³³You should have been merciful and canceled your fellow official's debt, just like I was merciful to you and canceled your debt!' ³⁴The king was very angry. He handed this official over to some jailers who would torture him severely until he paid all of the debt that he owed." ³⁵Then Jesus continued by saying, "That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if you do not feel merciful and sincerely forgive a fellow believer who sins against you."

18:11 ^[1]

Chapter 19

¹After Jesus had said that, he took his disciples and left the district of Galilee. They went to the part of the district of Judea that is east of the Jordan River. ²Large crowds followed him there, and he healed the sick among them.

³Some Pharisees approached him and said to him, "Does our Jewish law permit a man to divorce his wife for any reason whatever?" They asked that in order to be able to debate with him. ⁴Jesus said to them, "You have read the scriptures, so you should know that at the time when God first created people, 'He made one man, and he made one woman.' ⁵That explains why God said, 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and marries his wife. The two of them will live together as though they were one person.' ⁶Consequently, although they functioned as two separate people before, they now become as if they were one person. Since that is true, a man must not separate from his wife whom God has joined to him."

⁷The Pharisees then said to him, "If that is true, why did Moses command that a man who wanted to divorce his wife should give her a paper stating his reason for divorcing her, and then send her away?" ⁸Jesus said to them, "It

was because your ancestors stubbornly wanted their own ways that Moses allowed them to divorce their wives, and you are no different from them. But when God first created a man and a woman, he did not intend for them to separate from each other. ⁹I am telling you emphatically that God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, unless his first wife has committed adultery." ¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If that is true, it is better for men never to marry!" ¹¹He answered, "Not every man is able to accept this teaching, but only the men whom God enables to accept it. ¹²There are men who do not marry because their private parts have been defective ever since they were born. There are other men who do not marry because they have been castrated. Then there are still other men who decide not to marry in order to serve God better as he rules from heaven. You who are able to understand what I have said about marriage should accept it and obey it."

¹³Then some little children were brought to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the people for doing that. ¹⁴But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them! It is people who are humble and trusting like they are who belong to the rule of God from heaven." ¹⁵Jesus then laid his hands on the children to bless them. Then he left that place.

¹⁶As Jesus was walking along, a young man approached him and said to him, "Teacher, what good deeds must I do in order to live with God forever?" ¹⁷Jesus said to him, "Why are you asking me about what is good? Only one being is good and really knows what is good. That being is God. But in order to answer your question about desiring to live with God forever, I will tell you to keep the commandments that God gave Moses." ¹⁸The man asked Jesus, "Which commandments must I keep?" Jesus answered him, "Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal things, do not testify falsely, ¹⁹honor your father and your mother, and love every other person as much as you love yourself." ²⁰The young man said to Jesus, "I have always obeyed all those commandments. What else must I do in order to live with God forever?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you desire to be exactly how God wants you to be, go home, sell everything that you have, and give the money to poor people. The result will be that you will be wealthy in heaven. Then come, follow me, and be my disciple!" ²²When the young man heard those words, he went away feeling sad, because he was very rich and did not want to give away everything he owned.

²³Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Keep this in mind: It is very difficult for rich people to agree to let God rule their lives. ²⁴Note this also: It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is even more difficult for rich people to come under the rule of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were very astounded. They thought that rich people were the ones whom God blesses the most. So they said to Jesus, "If that is so, it does not seem likely that anyone will be saved!" ²⁶Then Jesus looked intently at them and said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves. But God can save them, because God is able to do anything!" ²⁷Then Peter said to him, "You know that we have left everything behind and we have become your disciples in order to follow you. So what benefit will we get for doing that?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Keep this in mind: You will get many benefits. When God makes the new earth and when I, the Son of Man, sit on my throne in my glory, those of you who have accompanied me will each sit on a throne, and you will judge the people of the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹God will reward those who, because they were my disciples, left behind a house or a plot of ground, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or any other family members. God will give them a hundred times as many benefits as they have given up. And they will live with God forever. ³⁰But many people who are important in this life now will be unimportant at that future time, and many people who are unimportant now will be important at that future time."

Chapter 20

¹"The way God rules from heaven compares to what the owner of an estate did. Early in the morning the owner of the estate went to the marketplace, where people who wanted work gathered. He went there to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. ²He promised the men whom he hired that he would pay them the standard wage for working one day. Then he sent them to his vineyards. ³At nine o'clock that same morning he went back to the marketplace. There he saw more men who did not have work. ⁴He said to them, 'Go to my vineyard as other men

have done, and work there. I will pay you whatever wage is right.' So they also went to his vineyard and began to work. ⁵At noon and at three o'clock he again went to the marketplace and found other laborers whom he promised to pay a fair wage. ⁶At five o'clock he went to the marketplace once again and saw other men standing there who were not working. He said to them, 'Why are you standing here all day and not working?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'I will hire you. Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there.' So they went.

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Tell the men to come so that you can give them their wages. First, pay the men who started working last, and pay the men last who started working first.'

⁹The manager paid a standard day's wage to each of the men who did not start working until five o'clock in the afternoon. ¹⁰When the men who had begun working early in the morning went to get their wages, they thought that they would receive more than the standard wage. But they also received only the standard wage. ¹¹So they complained to the owner of the vineyard because they thought their payment was unfair. ¹²They said to him, 'You are not being fair! The men who started working after all of the rest of us worked for only one hour! You have paid them the same wage as you paid us! But we worked hard all day. We even worked through the hottest part!' ¹³The owner of the vineyard said to one of those who complained, 'Friend, I did not treat you unfairly. You agreed with me to work the whole day for a standard day's wage. ¹⁴Stop complaining to me! Take your wages and go! I desire to give the same wage that I gave you to the men who began working after all of you had begun working. ¹⁵I certainly have a right to spend my money as I desire, do I not? You should not be envious about my being generous! "' ¹⁶"Similarly, God will reward well some people who seem to be less important now, and he will not reward some people who seem to be more important now."

¹⁷When Jesus was walking on the road up to Jerusalem along with the twelve disciples, he took them to a place by themselves in order that he could talk to them privately. Then he said to them, ¹⁸"Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, someone will enable the chief priests and the men who teach the Jewish laws to seize me, the Son of Man, and they will put me on trial. They will condemn me and say that I should die. ¹⁹Then they will put me in the hands of non-Jews so that they can make fun of me, whip me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, God will cause me to live again."

²⁰Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, brought her two sons to Jesus. She bowed down before Jesus and asked him to do her a favor. ²¹Jesus said to her, "What do you want me to do for you?" She said to him, "Permit these two sons of mine to sit in the places of most honor when you become king, one on your right hand and the other on your left." ²²Jesus said to her and her sons, "You do not understand what you are asking for. Can you suffer like I am about to suffer?" James and John answered him, "Yes, we are able to do that." ²³Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, you will suffer as I will suffer. But I am not the one who chooses the ones who will sit next to me and rule with me. God, my Father, will give those places to the ones whom he appoints."

²⁴When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had requested, they became angry with them because they also wanted to rule with Jesus in the positions of most honor. ²⁵So Jesus called all of them together and said to them, "You know that those who rule the non-Jews enjoy showing them that they are powerful. Their chief rulers enjoy commanding the people under them. ²⁶You should not be like them. On the contrary, everyone among you who wants God to consider him great must become a servant for the rest of you. ²⁷Yes, and everyone among you who wants God to consider him to be the most important must become a servant for the rest of you. ²⁸You should imitate me. Even though I am the Son of Man, I did not come for others to serve me. On the contrary, I came in order to serve them and to allow them to kill me, so that my dying would be like a payment to rescue many people from being punished for their sins."

²⁹As they were leaving the city of Jericho, a large crowd of people followed them. ³⁰As they walked along, they saw two blind men sitting alongside the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they yelled to him, "Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Take pity on us!" ³¹People in the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But the blind men yelled even louder, "Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on us!" ³²Jesus stopped and called them to come to him. Then he said to them, "What do you want me to

do for you?" ³³They said to him, "Lord, heal our eyes so that we can see!" ³⁴Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they went after Jesus.

Chapter 21

¹⁻²As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the village of Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to two of his disciples, "Go to the village just ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey and her colt that are tied up. Untie them and bring them here to me. ³If anyone says anything to you about your doing that, tell him, 'The Lord needs them.' He will then allow you to lead them away." ⁴⁻⁵When all this happened, what one of the prophets had written came true. That prophet had written, "Tell the people who live in Jerusalem, 'Look! Your king is coming to you! He will come humbly. He will show that he is humble, because he will be riding on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.'"

⁶So the two disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. ⁷They brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus. They placed their cloaks on them to make something for him to sit on. Then Jesus mounted and sat on the cloaks. ⁸Then a large crowd spread some of their outer clothing on the road, and other people cut off branches from palm trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that walked in front of him and those who walked behind him were shouting,

"Praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!"

"May the Lord God bless this one who comes as God's representative and with God's authority."

"Praise God, who is in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰As Jesus entered Jerusalem, many people from all over the city became excited and were saying, "Why are they honoring this man like that?" ¹¹The crowd that was already following him answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!"

¹²Then Jesus went into the temple courtyard and chased out all of those who were buying and selling things there. He also overturned the tables of those who were changing Roman coins for temple tax money, and he overturned the seats of those who were selling pigeons for sacrifices. ¹³Then he said to them, "A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said, 'I want my house to be a place where people pray to me,' but you people have made it into a place where robbers gather!"

¹⁴After that, many blind people and lame people came to Jesus in the temple in order that he would heal them, and he did so. ¹⁵The high priests and the men who taught the people the Jewish laws saw the marvelous deeds that Jesus did. They also saw the children shouting in the temple, "We praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!" They were indignant. ¹⁶They asked him, "How can you tolerate this? Do you hear what these people are shouting?" Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, I hear them, but if you remembered what you have read in the scriptures about children praising me, you would know that God is pleased with them. The psalmist wrote, saying to God, 'You have taught infants and other children to praise you perfectly.'"

¹⁷Then Jesus left the city. The disciples went with him to the village of Bethany, and they stayed there that night.

¹⁸Early the next morning when they were returning to the city, Jesus was hungry. ¹⁹He saw a fig tree near the road, so he went over to it to pick some figs to eat. But when he got close, he saw that there were no figs on the tree, but only leaves. So he said to the fig tree, "May you never again produce figs!" As a result, the fig tree immediately dried up. ²⁰The next day the disciples saw that the fig tree was completely dead. They were astonished and said to Jesus, "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?" ²¹Jesus said to them, "Think about this: If you believe that God has power to do what you ask him to and you do not doubt that, you will be able to do things like what I have done to this fig tree. You will even be able to do marvelous deeds like saying to that hill over there, 'Uproot yourself and throw yourself into the sea,' and it will happen! ²²In addition to that, whenever you ask God for something when you pray to him, if you believe that he will give it to you, you will receive it from him."

²³After that, Jesus went into the temple courtyard. While he was teaching the people, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him. They asked, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do what you did here yesterday?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I also will ask you a question, and if you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do these things. ²⁵Where did John the Baptizer get his authority to baptize those who came to him? Did he get it from God or from people?" The chief priests and elders debated among themselves about what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say, 'It was from God,' he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed his message!' ²⁶But if we say, 'It was from people,' the crowd might react violently against us, because all the people believe that John was a prophet whom God had sent." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know where John got his authority from." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who gave me the right to do the things I did here yesterday."

²⁸"Tell me what you think about what I am about to tell you. There was a man who had two sons. He went to his older son and said, 'My son, go and work in my vineyard today!' ²⁹But the son said to his father, 'I will not go!' But later he changed his mind, and he went to the vineyard and worked. ³⁰Then the father approached his younger son and said what he had said to his older son. That son said, 'Sir, I will go and work in the vineyard today.' But he did not go there. ³¹So which of the man's two sons did what their father desired?" They answered, "The older son." Then Jesus said to them, "So think about this: God will be kind to the tax collectors and prostitutes by agreeing to rule over them much sooner than he will agree to rule over you. This is true, even though you condemn those people because they ignore the law of Moses. ³²I say this to you because, even though John the Baptizer explained to you how to live in the right way, you did not believe his message. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed his message, and they turned away from their sinful behavior. In contrast, even though you saw that they changed, you refused to stop sinning, and you did not believe John's message."

³³"Listen to another parable that I will tell you. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a place to collect the juice that would come out of the grapes. He also built a tower in which someone could sit to guard that vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men who would care for it and give him some of the grapes in return. Then he went away to another country. ³⁴When it was time to harvest the grapes, the landowner sent some of his servants to the men who were caring for the vineyard to get his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³⁵But the renters seized the servants. They beat one of them, they killed another one, and killed a third one of them by throwing stones at him. ³⁶So the landowner sent more servants than he had sent the first time. The renters treated those servants the same way that they had treated the other servants. ³⁷After he heard about this, the landowner sent his own son to the renters to get his share of the grapes. When he sent him, he said to himself, 'They will certainly respect my son and give him my share of the grapes.' ³⁸But when the renters saw his son arriving, they said to each other, 'This is the man who will inherit this vineyard! Let us join together and kill him and divide the property among ourselves.' ³⁹So they grabbed him, dragged him outside the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now I ask you, when the landowner returns to his vineyard, what do you think he will do to those renters?" ⁴¹The people replied, "He will thoroughly destroy those wicked men! Then he will rent the vineyard to others. They will give him his share of the grapes when they are ripe." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "You need to think carefully about these words that you have read in the scriptures:

'The men who were building a large building rejected a certain stone. But others put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone of the building. The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it.'

⁴³So I am telling you this: God will no longer let you be the people who belong to him. Instead, he will take as his own a people who do what he requires them to do. ⁴⁴Anyone who falls on this stone will break into pieces, and the stone will crush anyone on whom it falls."

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the elders who were Pharisees heard this parable, they realized that he was accusing them because they did not believe that he was the Messiah. ⁴⁶They wanted to seize him, but they did not do so because they were afraid of what the crowds would do if they did that, because the crowds considered that Jesus was a prophet.

Chapter 22

¹Then Jesus told the Jewish leaders other parables. This is one of those parables. ²“God ruling from heaven is like a king who told his servants that they should make a wedding feast for his son. ³When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to tell the people whom he had invited that it was time for them to come to the wedding feast. The servants went out and told the people. But the people who had been invited did not want to come. ⁴So the king sent other servants to again tell those people to come to the feast. He said to those servants, ‘Say to the people whom I invited to come to the feast, “This is what the king says to you, ‘I have prepared the meal. The oxen and the fattened calves have been butchered and cooked. Everything is ready. It is time now for you to come to the wedding feast!’”’ ⁵But when the servants told them that, they disregarded what the servants said. Some of them went to their own fields. Others went to their places of business. ⁶The rest of them seized the king’s servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷When the king heard what had happened, he became furious. He commanded his soldiers to go and kill those murderers and burn their city. ⁸After his soldiers had done that, the king said to his other servants, ‘I have prepared the wedding feast, but the people who were invited do not deserve to come to it. ⁹So go to the intersections of the main roads. Tell whomever you find that they should come to the wedding feast.’ ¹⁰So the servants went there, and they gathered everyone they could find. They gathered both bad people and good people. They brought them into the hall where the wedding feast was about to take place. The hall was filled with people. ¹¹But when the king went into the hall to see the guests, he saw someone who was not wearing clothes that had been provided for the guests to wear at a wedding feast. ¹²The king said to him, ‘Friend, you should never have entered this hall, because you are not wearing the clothes that guests wear at wedding feasts!’ The man did not say anything, because he did not know what to say. ¹³Then the king said to his servants, ‘Tie this person’s feet and hands and throw him outside where there is total darkness, where people cry out and gnash their teeth because of the pain they are in.’” ¹⁴Then Jesus said, “The point of this parable is that God has invited many to come to him, but only a few people are the ones whom he has chosen to be there.”

¹⁵After Jesus said that, the Pharisees met together in order to plan how they could cause him to say something that would enable them to accuse him. ¹⁶They sent to him some of their disciples along with those of the Herodian party. Those said to Jesus, “Teacher, we know that you are truthful and that you teach the truth about what God wants us to do. We also know that you do not change what you teach because of what someone says about you, no matter what kind of person they are. ¹⁷So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus knew that what they really wanted to do was evil. They were wanting him to say something that would get him in trouble with either the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities. So he said to them, “You are hypocrites; you want me to say something for which you can accuse me. ¹⁹Show me one of the coins with which people pay the Roman tax.” So they showed him a coin called a denarius. ²⁰He said to them, “Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?” ²¹They answered, “It has the picture and name of Caesar, the head of the Roman government.” Then he said to them, “So give to the government what they require, and give to God what he requires.” ²²When those men heard Jesus say that, they marveled that his answer did not enable anyone to accuse him. Then they left Jesus.

²³During that same day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group who do not believe that people will become alive again after they die. They asked Jesus, ²⁴“Teacher, Moses wrote in the scriptures, ‘If a man dies who did not have any children, his brother must marry the dead man’s widow in order that she can have a child by him. The child will be considered the descendant of the man who died, and in that way the dead man will have descendants.’” ²⁵There were seven boys in a family. The oldest one married someone. He and his wife did not have any children, and he died. So the second brother married the widow. But he also died without having a child. ²⁶The same thing happened to the third brother, and also to the other four brothers, who one by one married this same woman. ²⁷Last of all, the woman also died. ²⁸So, at the time when God will raise people from the dead, which of the seven brothers do you think will be her husband? Keep in mind that they had all been married to her.” ²⁹Jesus replied to them, “You are certainly wrong in what you are thinking. You do not know what is written in the scriptures. You also do not know that God has the power to make people alive again. ³⁰The fact is that the woman will not be the wife of any of them, because after God causes all dead people to live again, no one will be married.

Instead, people will be like the angels in heaven. They do not marry. ³¹But about dead people becoming alive again, God said something about that. I am sure you have read it. Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, ³²'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So we are sure that their spirits are still alive!"

³³When the crowds of people heard Jesus teach that, they were amazed.

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had answered the Sadducees in such a way that the Sadducees could not think of anything that they might say to respond to him, the Pharisees gathered together to plan what they would say to him. Then they approached him. ³⁵One of them was a man who was a lawyer, who had studied well the laws that God gave Moses. He wanted to debate Jesus. He asked him, ³⁶"Teacher, which commandment in the laws that God gave Moses is the most important?" ³⁷Jesus quoted the scriptures as he replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your inner being. Show that you love him in all that you desire, in all that you feel, and in all that you think.' ³⁸That is the most important commandment in the laws that God gave Moses. ³⁹The next most important commandment that everyone must surely obey is: 'You must love the people you come in contact with as much as you love yourself.' ⁴⁰These two commandments are the basis of every law that Moses wrote in the scriptures and also of all that the prophets wrote."

⁴¹While the Pharisees were still gathered together near Jesus, he asked them, ⁴²"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is he?" They said to him, "He is the descendant of King David." ⁴³Jesus said to them, "If the Messiah is King David's descendant, then David should not have called him 'Lord' when David was saying what the Holy Spirit told him to say. ⁴⁴David wrote this in the scriptures about the Messiah: 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me on my right, where I will greatly honor you, while I put your enemies under your feet.'" ⁴⁵So, since King David called the Messiah 'my Lord,' the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from David! He must be much greater than David!" ⁴⁶No one who heard what Jesus said was able to think of even one word to say to him in response. After that, no one else ever dared to ask him another question to try to trap him.

Chapter 23

¹Then Jesus said to the crowd and to his disciples, ²"The Pharisees and the men who teach our Jewish laws have made themselves the ones who interpret the laws that God had given Moses for the people of Israel.

³Consequently, you should do whatever they tell you that you must do. But do not do what they do, because they themselves do not do those things. ⁴They require you to obey many rules that are difficult to obey. But they themselves do not help anyone obey those rules. It is as if they were tying up very heavy loads and putting them on your shoulders for you to carry. But they will not even move one finger to help you carry them. ⁵Whatever they do, they do those things so that other people will see them and admire them. For example, they make extra wide the tiny boxes containing portions of scripture that they wear on their arms. They enlarge the tassels on their robes to make others think that they honor God. ⁶They want other people to honor them. For example, at dinners they sit in the seats where the most important people sit. In the synagogues they want to sit in the same kind of places. ⁷They love for people to greet them with great honor in the markets, and for people to call them 'Teacher.'

⁸But you, my disciples, should not allow people to call you 'Teacher,' as they do other Jewish teachers. I am the only one who is really your teacher. This means that you are all equal to each other, like brothers and sisters. ⁹Do not honor anyone on earth by addressing him as 'Father,' because God, your Father in heaven, is your only true father. ¹⁰Do not allow people to call you 'teacher,' because the Messiah is your only teacher. ¹¹Instead, everyone among you who wants God to consider them as important must serve others as servants do. ¹²God will humble those who try to make themselves important. Those who humble themselves, God will make them truly important."

¹³"You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, you are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you, because you refuse to come under the rule of heaven and also keep others out. You yourselves do not want to go in, and you keep others from entering, too."

14^[1] [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, while you make a show of long prayers.] You will therefore receive greater condemnation. **15** "You are hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees! How terribly God will punish you! You work hard to get even one person to believe what you teach. You even travel across seas and lands to distant places in order to do that. And as a result, when one person believes what you teach, you make that person deserve to go to hell much more than you yourselves do."

16 "You Jewish leaders, how terribly God will punish you! You are like blind people who try to lead others. You say, 'If someone asks the temple to confirm that he will do something as if the temple were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gold in the temple to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' **17** You are fools, and you are like people who are blind! The gold that is in the temple is important, but the temple is even more important, because it is the Temple that the gold is in that sets the gold apart for a special use for God. **18** Also you say, 'If someone asks the altar to confirm that he will do something as if the altar were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gift that he has placed on the altar to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' **19** You are like people who are blind. The gift that you put on the altar is important, but the altar is even more important because it is the altar that makes the gift only for God. **20** So those who promise to do something and then ask the altar to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking everything on the altar to do the same thing. **21** Yes, and those who promise to do something and then ask the temple to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking that God, to whom the temple belongs, will confirm the same thing. **22** And those who promise to do something and then ask heaven to confirm that they will do it, they are asking the throne of God to confirm that they will do it, and they are also asking God, who sits on that throne, to confirm the same thing."

23 "You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are hypocrites because, even though you give to God a tenth of the herbs you produce, such as mint, dill, and cummin, you do not obey God's laws that are more important. For example, you do not act justly toward others, you do not act mercifully toward people, and you take things away from others using force. It is good to give a tenth of your herbs to God, but you should also obey these other more important laws. **24** You leaders are like blind people who are trying to lead others. You are careful not to offend God by swallowing even the smallest insect when you drink water, but you act as badly as if you were swallowing a camel!

25 "You hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You make yourselves appear like good people to others. You try to make people think you are righteous, but in fact you sin against them by your greed and taking what belongs to others to delight your own pleasures. You are like dishes that are clean on the outside but are still dirty on the inside. **26** You blind Pharisees! First you must stop doing evil things like stealing from others. Then you will be able to do what is righteous and will be like a dish that is clean both outside and inside."

27 "You hypocrites, you men who teach the laws and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are like buildings over people's graves, buildings that are painted white so that people can see them and avoid touching them. The outside of those tombs are beautiful, but inside they are full of dead people's bones and filth. **28** You are like those tombs. When people look at you, they think that you are righteous, but in your inner beings you are hypocrites, because you disobey God's commands."

29 "You men who teach the Jewish laws and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You rebuild the tombs of the prophets whom others killed long ago. You decorate the monuments that honor righteous people. **30** You say, 'If we had lived when our ancestors lived, we would not have helped those who killed the prophets.' **31** In this way you admit that you are the descendants of those murderers; so, you are like them! **32** You are as ready to murder people as your ancestors were! **33** You people are so wicked! You are as dangerous as poisonous snakes! You foolishly think that you will escape from God punishing you in hell! **34** Take note that this is why I will send prophets, wise men, and teachers. You will kill some of them by nailing them to crosses, and you will kill some in other ways. You will whip some of them in the places where you worship and you will chase them from city to city. **35** So God will consider that you and your ancestors are guilty for killing all the righteous people who ever lived on earth, including Adam's son Abel, who was a righteous man, and Zechariah, the son of

Barachiah, whom your ancestors killed in the holy place between the temple and the altar. You also killed all the prophets who lived between the times that those two men lived. ³⁶Think about this: You people who have observed my ministry, it is you whom God will punish for killing all those prophets!"

³⁷"O people of Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets who lived long ago, and you who killed with stones others whom God had sent to you. Many, many times I wanted to gather you together to protect you, like a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. ³⁸So listen to this: Your city will become an uninhabited place. ³⁹Keep this in mind: You will see me again only when I return, when you say about me, 'God is truly pleased with this man who comes with God's authority.'"

23:14 ^[1]

Chapter 24

¹Jesus left the temple courtyard. As he was walking along, his disciples came to him and began talking about how beautiful the temple buildings were. ²He said to them, "I tell you the truth about these buildings that you are seeing: an army will completely destroy them. They will throw down every stone in these buildings. Not one stone will remain on top of another stone."

³Later, as Jesus was sitting alone on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the disciples went to him and asked him, "When will this happen to the buildings of the temple? And what will happen to show that you are about to come again, and to show that this world is about to end?"

⁴Jesus replied, "All that I will say is, be sure that no one deceives you about what will happen! ⁵Many people will come and say that they are me. Yes, they will actually say, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many people. ⁶You will hear about wars that are close and wars that are far away, but do not let that trouble you. Keep in mind that God has said that those things must happen. But when they happen, it will not mean that the end of the world has come! ⁷People groups will attack each other, and kings will lead armies against each other. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸These things will happen first, but they will be like when a woman starts to suffer pain before she gives birth to a child.

⁹More bad things will happen. People who oppose you will take you away to suffer and die. People who live in all the people groups will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁰Also, many people will stop believing because of the way they will suffer. They will betray their own fellow believers and will hate each other. ¹¹Many will come saying that they are prophets, but they will be lying, and they will deceive many people. ¹²Because more and more people will disobey God's laws, many believers will no longer love each other. ¹³But all those who keep on believing to the end of their lives, God will save them. ¹⁴Furthermore, believers will preach the good news about how God is ruling in every part of the world, in order to announce it to all people groups. Then the end of the world will come."

¹⁵"But before the world ends, the disgusting person who will defile the holy temple and cause people to abandon it will stand in the temple. Daniel the prophet spoke and wrote about that long ago. May everyone who reads this pay attention, because I am warning you. ¹⁶When you see that happen in the temple, those of you who are in the region of Judea must flee to the higher hills! ¹⁷Those who are outside their houses must not go back into their houses to get things before they run away. ¹⁸Those who are working in a field should not turn back to get their outer clothing before they flee. ¹⁹How terrible it will be for pregnant women at that time, and for women who will be nursing their babies, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ²⁰Pray that you will not have to flee in the winter when it will be hard to travel, or on the Sabbath, the day of rest; ²¹because people will suffer very severely when those things happen. People have never suffered that severely since God created the world until now, and no one will ever suffer like that again. ²²If God had not decided to shorten that time when people will suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten it because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen."

²³“At that time, if someone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or if someone says, ‘There is the Messiah!’ do not believe it! ²⁴They will perform many kinds of miracles and amazing things, in order to deceive people. They will even try to deceive you people whom God has chosen. ²⁵Do not forget that I have warned you about all this before it happens. ²⁶So if someone says to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is in the wilderness!’ do not go there. Likewise, if someone says to you, ‘Look, he is in a secret room!’ do not believe that person, ²⁷because just like lightning flashes from the east to the west and people see it, in the same way, when the Son of Man returns again, everyone will see. ²⁸It will be clear to everyone just as when you see vultures gathering you know that an animal carcass is there.”

²⁹“Immediately after people have suffered during that time, the sun will become dark. The moon will not shine. The stars will fall from the sky. And God will shake all things in the sky loose from their place. ³⁰After that, everyone will see the Son of Man appear in the sky. Then unbelieving people from all people groups on earth will wail because they will be afraid. They will see me, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds with power and great glory.

³¹He will send his angels to the earth from everywhere in the heavens. When they hear the trumpet’s loud blast, they will gather together God’s people—the ones he has chosen—from across the whole earth.”

³²“Now be sure to learn something from how fig trees grow. When the branches of a fig tree become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³Similarly, when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time for him to return is very close. ³⁴Keep this in mind: All of these events will happen before all the people have died who have observed these things. ³⁵You can be certain that these things that I have told you about will happen. The earth and sky will disappear one day, but what I say will always be true.”

³⁶“But no other person, nor even any angel in heaven, nor even the Son, knows the day or the hour when these things will happen. Only God the Father knows. ³⁷⁻³⁹It will be like what happened when Noah lived. Until the flood came, the people did not know that anything bad would happen to them. They were eating and drinking as usual. Men were getting married, and parents were giving their daughters to men to marry them. They were doing all this until the day that Noah and his family entered the big boat. And then the flood came and drowned all those who were not in the boat. Similarly, the unbelieving people will not know when the Son of Man will return. ⁴⁰When that happens not all people will be taken up to heaven. For example, two people will be in the fields. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other person will be left here to be punished. ⁴¹Similarly, two women will be grinding grain with a handmill. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other will be left. ⁴²So, because you do not know what day your Lord will return to the earth, you need to be ready all the time. ⁴³You know that if the owner of a house knew at what time in the night thieves would come, he would be awake and prevent the thieves from breaking in. Similarly, the Son of Man will come as unexpectedly as a thief. ⁴⁴So you need to be ready because the Son of Man will return to the earth at a time when you do not expect him to come.”

⁴⁵“Think about what every faithful and wise servant is like. The house owner appoints one servant to supervise the other servants. He tells him to give them food at the proper times. Then he leaves on a long trip. ⁴⁶If the servant is doing that work when the house owner returns, the house owner will be very pleased with him. ⁴⁷Think about this: The house owner will appoint that one servant to be the supervisor of all his possessions. ⁴⁸But a wicked servant might say to himself, ‘The owner has been away for a long time, so he probably will not return soon and find out what I am doing.’ ⁴⁹So he will begin to beat the other servants and eat and drink with those who are drunk. ⁵⁰Then the house owner will come back at a time when the servant does not expect him. ⁵¹He will punish that servant severely and he will put him where the hypocrites are put. In that place the people cry and grind their teeth because they suffer very much.”

Chapter 25

¹“God’s rule from heaven will be like what happened to ten unmarried girls who got ready to go to a wedding feast. They were to take their lamps and go wait for the bridegroom to come. ²Now five of these girls were foolish, and five were wise. ³The foolish girls took their lamps, but they did not take any extra olive oil for them. ⁴But the wise girls took oil in their flasks as well as in their lamps. ⁵The bridegroom was taking a long time to come, and it

became late at night. So all the girls became sleepy and fell asleep. ⁶In the middle of the night someone woke them up by shouting, 'Here he is! The bridegroom is arriving! Go outside and meet him!' ⁷So all the girls got up and adjusted their lamps for burning. ⁸The foolish girls said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out!' ⁹The wise girls replied, 'No, because there might not be enough oil for our lamps and yours. Go to the sellers and buy some for yourselves!' ¹⁰But while the foolish girls were on their way to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived. Then the wise girls, who were ready, went with him into the wedding hall, where the bride was waiting. Then the door was closed. ¹¹Later, the rest of the girls came to the wedding hall, and they called to the bridegroom, 'Sir, open the door for us!' ¹²But he said to them, 'The truth is that I do not know you, so I will not open the door for you!'" ¹³Then Jesus continued by saying, "So, in order that this does not happen to you, stay prepared because you do not know when it will be."

¹⁴"When the Son of Man returns from heaven as king, it will be like a man who was about to go on a long journey. He called his servants together and gave them each some of his wealth to invest and gain more money for him. ¹⁵He gave them money according to their ability to use it. For example, he gave one servant five bags of gold weighing about 165 kilograms, he gave another servant two bags weighing about sixty-six kilograms, and he gave another servant one bag weighing about thirty-three kilograms. Then he left on his journey. ¹⁶The servant who had received five bags of gold went immediately and used that money to gain five more bags. ¹⁷Similarly, the servant who had received two bags of gold gained two bags more. ¹⁸But the servant who had received one bag of gold went and dug a hole in the ground, and he hid it there to keep it safe.

¹⁹After a long time the servants' master returned. He called them together to find out what they had done with his money. ²⁰The servant who had received five bags of gold brought him ten bags. He said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained five more!' ²¹His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²²The servant who had received two bags of gold also came, and he said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained two more!' ²³His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²⁴Then the servant who had received one bag of gold came. He said, 'Master, I was afraid of you. I knew that you are a man who expects to make a lot of money even if you invest nothing, like a farmer who tries to harvest a field he did not plant. ²⁵I was afraid of what you might do if I lost the money you lent me to invest, so I hid it in the ground. Here it is now; please take it back!' ²⁶His boss replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I take from others money that does not really belong to me, like a farmer who harvests grain from another man's field where I did not even plant the seeds! ²⁷So then, you should have at least put my money on deposit in a bank, so that when I returned I would get it back with the interest it earned!' ²⁸Then the master said to his other servants, 'Take the bag of gold from him and give it to the servant who has the ten bags! ²⁹To those who use well what they have received, God will give more, and they will have plenty. But from those who do not use well what they have received, even what they already have will be taken away. ³⁰Furthermore, throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where he will be with those who are wailing and grinding their teeth in pain.'"

³¹"When the Son of Man comes again in his brilliant light and brings all his angels, he will sit as king on his throne to judge everyone. ³²Everyone from all the people groups will be gathered in front of him. Then he will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. ³³He will put the righteous people on his right and the unrighteous ones on his left, just like sheep and goats."

³⁴Then he will say to those on his right, 'You people who have been blessed by my Father, come! Come receive all the good things he will give you, for he is now giving you the blessings of his rule—things he has been preparing since the time he created the world. ³⁵These things belong to you, because you gave me something to eat when I was hungry. You gave me something to drink when I was thirsty. When I was a stranger in your town, you invited

me to stay in your houses. ³⁶When I needed clothes, you gave me some. When I was sick, you took care of me. When I was in prison, you came to visit me.'

³⁷Then the people whom God has declared to be good will reply, 'Lord, when were you hungry and we saw you and gave you something to eat? When were you thirsty and we gave you something to drink? ³⁸When were you a stranger in our town and we invited you to stay in our houses? When did you need clothes and we gave you some? ³⁹When were you sick or in prison and we went to visit you? We do not remember doing any of these things for you.'

⁴⁰The King will reply, 'The truth is that whatever you did for any one of your fellow believers, even the most unimportant one, you certainly did it for me.'

⁴¹But then he will say to those on his left, 'You people whom God has cursed, leave me! Go into the eternal fire that God has prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴²It is right for you to go there, because you did not give me anything to eat when I was hungry. You did not give me anything to drink when I was thirsty. ⁴³You did not invite me into your homes when I was a stranger in your town. You did not give me any clothes when I needed them. You did not take care of me when I was sick or in prison.'

⁴⁴They will answer, 'Lord, when were you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and we did not help you?'

⁴⁵He will reply, 'The truth is that whenever you did not do anything to help any one of my people, even the most unimportant person, it was I for whom you did not do it.'

⁴⁶Then those people on my left will go away to the place where God will punish them forever, but the people good in God's sight will go to where they will live forever with God."

Chapter 26

¹When Jesus had finished saying all those things, he said to the disciples, ²"You know that two days from now we will celebrate the Passover festival. At that time someone will hand the Son of Man over to those who will nail him to a cross."

³At the same time the chief priests and the Jewish elders gathered in the home of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas. ⁴There they planned how they could arrest Jesus in some tricky way so that they could have him executed. ⁵But they said, "We must not do it during the Passover festival, because if we do it then, the people might riot."

⁶While Jesus and his disciples were in the village of Bethany, they ate in the home of Simon, whom Jesus had healed of leprosy. ⁷During the meal, a woman came into the house. She was carrying a beautiful stone jar containing very expensive perfume. She went up to Jesus as he was eating and poured all the perfume on his head.

⁸When the disciples saw that, they were very angry. One of them said, "It is terrible that this perfume was wasted!

⁹We could have sold it and gotten a lot of money for it! Then we could have given the money to poor people."

¹⁰Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said to them, "You should not be bothering this woman! She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹Keep in mind that you will always have poor people among you, so you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not always be with you! ¹²When she poured this perfume on my body, it was as if she knew that I am going to die soon. And it is as if she had anointed my body for being buried. ¹³I will tell you this: Wherever in the entire world people preach the good news about me, they will tell what this woman has done, and as a result, people will always remember her."

¹⁴Then Judas Iscariot, even though he was one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priests. ¹⁵He asked them, "If I enable you to arrest Jesus, how much money are you willing to give me?" They agreed to give him thirty silver

coins. So they counted out the coins and gave them to him. ¹⁶From that time Judas watched for an opportunity when they could arrest Jesus.

¹⁷On the first day of the week-long Festival of Bread with No Yeast, the disciples went to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it with you?" ¹⁸Jesus instructed two of the disciples about what they should do. He said to them, "Go into the city to a man with whom I have previously arranged this. Tell him that I, the Teacher, say this: 'The time that I told you about is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover meal with my disciples at your house, and I have sent these two to prepare the meal.'" ¹⁹So the two disciples did as Jesus told them. They went and prepared the Passover meal in that man's house.

²⁰When that evening had come, Jesus was eating the meal with the twelve disciples. ²¹He said to them, "Listen carefully to this: One of you is going to enable my enemies to arrest me." ²²The disciples were very sad. They began to say to him, one after the other, "Lord, it is surely not I!" ²³He replied, "The one who will enable my enemies to arrest me is the one of you who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²⁴It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what the scriptures say about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who enables my enemies to arrest me! It would be better for that man if he had never been born!" ²⁵Then Judas, the one who was going to betray him, said, "Teacher, surely it is not I!" Jesus replied, "Yes, you are admitting it."

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take this bread and eat it. It is my body." ²⁷Later he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and said, "Drink from this cup, all of you. ²⁸The wine in this cup represents my blood, which will soon flow from my body. With my blood I will sign the agreement that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁹Note this carefully: I will not drink wine in this way anymore until the time when I drink it with you with a new meaning. That will happen when my Father rules completely."

³⁰After they sang a hymn, they started out toward the Mount of Olives.

³¹On the way, Jesus told them, "This night all of you will desert me because of what will happen to me! This is certain to happen because these words that God said are written in the scriptures:

'I will cause men to kill the shepherd,

and they will scatter all the sheep.' ³²But after I have died and become alive again, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." ³³Peter replied, "Perhaps all the other disciples will desert you when they see what happens to you, but I certainly will never leave you!" ³⁴Jesus replied to him, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!" ³⁵Peter said to him, "Even if they kill me while I am defending you, I will never say that I do not know you!" All the rest of the disciples also said the same thing.

³⁶Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place that is called Gethsemane. There he said, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷He took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely distressed. ³⁸Then he said to them, "I am very sorrowful, so much so that I feel as if I were about to die! Remain here and stay awake with me!" ³⁹After going a little farther, he threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, do not make me suffer in the way I know I will have to. But do not do as I want. Instead, do as you want!" ⁴⁰Then he returned to the three disciples and saw that they were sleeping. He woke Peter and said to him, "I am disappointed that you men fell asleep and were not able to stay awake with me for just a short time! ⁴¹You must keep alert and pray so that you can resist when anyone tempts you to sin. You want to do what I tell you, but you are not strong enough to actually do it."

⁴²He went away a second time. He prayed, "My Father, if it is necessary for me to suffer, may what you want happen!"

⁴³When he returned to the three disciples, he saw that they were asleep again. They could not keep their eyes open. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away again. He prayed a third time, saying the same thing that he had prayed

before. ⁴⁵Then he returned to all the disciples. He woke them up and said to them, "I am disappointed that you are still sleeping and resting! Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to arrest me, the Son of Man! ⁴⁶Get up! Let us go to meet them! Here comes the one who is enabling them to arrest me!"

⁴⁷While Jesus was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of the twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus' enemies to arrest him. A large crowd carrying swords and clubs was coming with him. The chief priests and elders had sent them. ⁴⁸Judas had previously arranged to give them a signal. He had told them, "The man whom I will kiss is the one you want. Arrest him!" ⁴⁹He immediately went to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Friend, what you are about to do, do it quickly." Then the men who came with Judas stepped forward and seized Jesus. ⁵¹Suddenly, one of the men who was with Jesus pulled his sword out of its sheath. He struck the servant of the high priest to kill him, but only cut off his ear. ⁵²Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its sheath! All those who try to kill others with a sword—someone else will kill them with a sword! ⁵³Do you think that if I asked my Father, he would not immediately send more than twelve armies of angels to help me? ⁵⁴But if I did that, what the prophets have written in the scriptures about what will happen to the Messiah would not be fulfilled."

⁵⁵At that time Jesus said to the crowd that was seizing him, "You have come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a bandit! Day after day I sat in the temple courtyard, teaching the people. Why did you not arrest me then? ⁵⁶But all this is happening to fulfill what the prophets have written in the scriptures about me." Then all of the disciples deserted Jesus and ran away.

⁵⁷The men who had arrested Jesus took him to the house where Caiaphas, the high priest, lived. The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Jewish elders had already gathered there. ⁵⁸Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He came to the high priest's courtyard. He entered the courtyard and sat down with the guards to see what would happen.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the rest of the Jewish council were trying to find persons who would tell lies about Jesus so that they could condemn him to death. ⁶⁰But even though many people spoke lies about him, they did not find anyone who said anything that was useful. Finally two men came forward ⁶¹and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy God's temple and to rebuild it within three days.'" ⁶²Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply? What do you say about these things that they are saying to accuse you?" ⁶³But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I command you to tell us the truth; you know that the all-powerful God is listening to you: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" ⁶⁴Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. But I will also say this to all of you: Some day you will see the Son of Man sitting beside Almighty God and ruling. You will also see him coming on the clouds from heaven!"

⁶⁵Then the high priest was so upset that he tore his outer garment. Then he said, "This man has insulted God! He claims to be equal with God! We certainly do not need anyone else to testify against this man! You heard what he said! ⁶⁶What do you think?" The Jewish leaders replied, "According to our laws, he is guilty and deserves to be executed!" ⁶⁷Then some of them spat in his face. Others struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸and said, "Since you claim that you are the Messiah, tell us who hit you!"

⁶⁹Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and looked at him. She said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from the district of Galilee!" ⁷⁰But while everyone there was listening, he denied it. He said, "I do not know what you are talking about!" ⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway of the courtyard. Another servant girl saw him and said to the people who were standing nearby, "This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." ⁷²But Peter again denied it. He said, "May God punish me if I am lying! I tell you, I do not even know that man!" ⁷³After a little while, the people who were standing there approached Peter and said to him, "It is certain that you are one of those who were with that man. We can tell from your accent that you are from Galilee." ⁷⁴Then Peter began to proclaim loudly that God should curse him if he was lying. He asked God in heaven to witness that he was telling the truth and said, "I do not know that man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the words that Jesus had spoken to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that

you do not know me." And Peter went out of the courtyard, crying hard because he was so sad about what he had done.

Chapter 27

¹Very early the next morning all the chief priests and Jewish elders decided how to persuade the Romans to execute Jesus. ²Then they tied his hands and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

³Then Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus, realized that they had decided that Jesus must die. So was overcome with regret about what he had done. He took the thirty coins back to the chief priests and elders. ⁴He said, "I have sinned. I have betrayed a man who is innocent." They replied, "That means nothing to us! That is your problem!"

⁵So Judas took the money and threw it into the temple courtyard. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The high priests picked up the coins and said, "This is money that we paid for a man to die, and our law does not allow us to put money like this into the temple treasury." ⁷So they decided to use that money to buy a field that was called the Potter's Field. They made that field a place where they buried strangers who died in Jerusalem.

⁸That is why that place is still called "The Field of Blood." ⁹By buying that field, they made come true these words that the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago: "They took the thirty silver coins—that was what the leaders of Israel decided that he was worth— ¹⁰and with that money they bought the field of the potter. They did that as the Lord had commanded me."

¹¹Then Jesus stood in front of the governor. The governor asked him, "Do you say you are the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you have just said."

¹²But when the chief priests and elders accused Jesus of doing various wrong things, he did not answer. ¹³So Pilate said to him, "You hear how many things they are accusing you of; are you not going to reply?" ¹⁴But Jesus did not say anything. He did not reply to any of the things about which they were accusing him. As a result, the governor was very surprised.

¹⁵Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He released whatever prisoner the people wanted. ¹⁶At that time there was in Jerusalem a well-known prisoner whose name was Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which prisoner would you like me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus, whom they call the Messiah?" ¹⁸He asked that question because he realized that the chief priests had brought Jesus to him only because they were jealous of Jesus. And Pilate thought that the crowd would prefer that he release Jesus.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting in the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Early this morning I had a bad dream because of that man. So do not condemn that righteous man!"

²⁰But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to release Barabbas, and to order that Jesus be executed. ²¹So when the governor asked them, "Which of the two men do you want me to release for you?" They replied, "Barabbas!" ²²Pilate asked them, "So what should I do with Jesus who some of you say is the Messiah?" They all answered, "Command that your soldiers crucify him!" ²³Pilate replied, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted even louder, "Have him crucified!"

²⁴Pilate realized that he was accomplishing nothing. He saw that instead, the people were starting to riot. So he took a basin of water and washed his hands as the crowd was watching. He said, "By washing my hands I am showing you that if this man dies, it is your fault, not mine!" ²⁵And all the people answered, "May we be guilty for causing him to die, and may our children be guilty, too!" ²⁶Then he ordered the soldiers to release Barabbas for them. But he ordered that his soldiers whip Jesus. And then he turned Jesus over to the soldiers for them to nail Jesus to a cross.

²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the soldiers' barracks. The whole cohort gathered around him.

²⁸They pulled off his clothes and put a bright red robe on him, pretending he was a king. ²⁹They took some branches with thorns and wove them to make a crown and put it on his head. They put in his right hand a reed like a staff that a king would hold. Then they knelt in front of him and made fun of him, saying, "Greetings to the king of the Jews!" ³⁰They kept spitting on him. They took the staff and kept striking him on the head with it. ³¹When they had finished ridiculing him, they pulled off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to the place where they would nail him to a cross.

³²After Jesus carried his cross a short distance, the soldiers saw a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene. They forced him to carry the cross for Jesus. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha. That name means "the place like a skull." ³⁴When they got there, they mixed with wine something that tasted very bitter. They gave it to Jesus to drink so that he would not feel so much pain when they nailed him on the cross. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink it. Some soldiers took his clothes. ³⁵Then they nailed him to the cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling with something like dice to decide which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁶Then the soldiers sat down there to guard him, to prevent anyone from trying to rescue him. ³⁷They fastened to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which had been written why they were nailing him to the cross. But all it said was, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' ³⁸They also nailed two bandits to crosses. They placed one cross on the right side of Jesus and the other on the left side. ³⁹The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads as if he were an evil man. ⁴⁰They said, "You said you would destroy the temple and then build it again within three days! So if you can do that, you should be able to save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

⁴¹Similarly, the chief priests, the men who taught the Jewish laws, and the elders made fun of him. They said things like, ⁴²"He saved others from their sicknesses, but he cannot help himself!" "He says that he is the King of Israel. So he should come down from the cross. Then we would believe him!" ⁴³"He says that he trusts in God, and that he is the man who is also God. So if God is pleased with him, God should rescue him now!" ⁴⁴And the two bandits who on crosses with him also insulted him, saying similar things.

⁴⁵At noon it became dark over the whole land. It stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁶At about three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ⁴⁷When some of the people standing there heard the word "Eli," they thought that he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with sour wine. Then he put the sponge on the tip of a reed and held it up in order that Jesus could suck out the wine that was in it. ⁴⁹But the other people there said, "Wait! Let us see if Elijah comes to save him!" ⁵⁰Then after Jesus shouted out loudly again, he died, giving his spirit over to God. ⁵¹At that moment the heavy thick curtain that closed off the Most Holy Place in the temple split into two pieces from top to bottom. The earth shook, and some large rocks split open. ⁵²Tombs opened up, and the bodies of many people who had honored God became alive again. ⁵³They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus became alive again, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people there.

⁵⁴The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing nearby. His soldiers who were guarding the crosses were also there. When they felt the earthquake and saw all the other things that happened, they were terrified. They exclaimed, "Truly he was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵Many women were there, watching from a distance. They were women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee in order to provide the things he needed. ⁵⁶Among these women were Mary from Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John.

⁵⁷When it was almost evening, a rich man named Joseph came there. He was from the town of Arimathea. He also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked Pilate to allow him to take the body of Jesus and bury it. Pilate ordered his soldiers to allow him to take the body. ⁵⁹So Joseph and others took the body and wrapped it in a clean white cloth. ⁶⁰Then they placed it in Joseph's own new tomb that workers had dug out of a rock cliff. They rolled a

huge circular flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. Then they left. ⁶¹Mary from Magdala and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb, watching.

⁶²The next day was Saturday, the Jewish day of rest. The chief priests and some of the Pharisees went to Pilate.

⁶³They said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive, he said, 'Three days after I die I will become alive again.' ⁶⁴So we ask you to order soldiers to guard the tomb for three days. If you do not do that, his disciples may come and steal the body. Then they will tell people that he has risen from the dead. If they deceive people by saying that, it will be worse than the way he deceived people before." ⁶⁵Pilate replied, "You can take some soldiers. Go to the tomb and make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by fastening a cord from the stone that was in front of the entrance to the rock cliff on each side and sealing it. They also left some soldiers there to guard the tomb.

Chapter 28

¹After the Sabbath ended, on Sunday morning at dawn, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb of Jesus. ²There was a strong earthquake because an angel from God came down from heaven. He went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. ³His body was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. ⁴The guards trembled because they were very afraid, and then they fell down like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the two women, "You should not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. ⁶He is not here! God has made him alive again, just as Jesus told you he would! Come and see the place where his body lay! ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead! He will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee. You will see him there.' Pay attention to what I have told you!"

⁸So the women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very joyful. They ran to tell the disciples what had happened. ⁹Suddenly, as they were running, Jesus appeared to them. He said, "Greetings to you!" The women came close to him. They knelt down and clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid! Go and tell all my disciples that they should go to Galilee. They will see me there."

¹¹While the women were going, some of the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went into the city. They reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²So the chief priests and Jewish elders met together. They thought of a way to explain why the tomb was empty. They gave the soldiers a lot of money as a bribe. ¹³They said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came during the night and stole his body while we were sleeping.' ¹⁴If the governor hears about this, we ourselves will make sure that he does not get angry and punish you. So you will not have to worry." ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And this story has been told among the Jews to this very day.

¹⁶Later the eleven disciples went to the district of Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷They saw him there and worshiped him. But some doubted that it was really Jesus and that he had become alive again. ¹⁸Then Jesus came close to them and said, "My Father has given me all authority over everything and everyone in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹So go, and use my authority to teach my message to people of all people groups so that they may become my disciples. Baptize them to be under the authority of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember that I will be with you always, until the end of this age."

Mark

Chapter 1

¹This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, who is the Son of God. ²This good news began just as the prophet Isaiah said that it would when he wrote long ago, "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will make people ready for when you come. ³He will be a voice calling out in the desolate place to anyone who hears him, saying

'Make yourselves ready to welcome the Lord. Get everything organized for his coming.'"

⁴The messenger that Isaiah wrote about was John. People called him "The Baptizer." John was in a desolate area near the Jordan River. He was baptizing people and telling them, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must reject wrong ways of living. Then I will baptize you!" ⁵A great number of people from the district of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to the wilderness to hear John speak. Many of those who heard him agreed that they had sinned. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. ⁷He was preaching, "Very shortly one will come who is very great. I am nothing compared to him. I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie his sandals. ⁸I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹During the time when John was preaching, Jesus came from Nazareth, a town in the Galilee region. He went to where John was preaching, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven open up and the Spirit of God descending on himself. The Spirit of God came down from heaven like a dove. ¹¹Then, God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you." ¹²Then the Spirit of God sent Jesus out into the desolate area. ¹³Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. During that time, Satan was tempting him. There were wild animals in that place, and angels were taking care of him.

¹⁴Later, after the governor Herod Antipas put John the Baptizer in prison, Jesus went to the Galilee region. In Galilee, he was preaching God's good news. ¹⁵He was saying, "The time has come at last. God will soon show that he is king. Be sorry that you have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive you. Believe the good news."

¹⁶One day, while Jesus was walking along the coast of the sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon and Simon's brother, Andrew. They were casting their fishing net into the sea. They earned money by catching and selling fish. ¹⁷Then Jesus said to them, "Just like you have been gathering fish, come with me and I will teach you how to gather people to be my disciples." ¹⁸Immediately after Jesus said this, they stopped working, and they went with him. ¹⁹After they had gone on a little further, Jesus saw two other men, James and James' brother, John. They were the sons of a man named Zebedee. They were all in a boat fixing their fishing nets. ²⁰As soon as Jesus saw them, he told them to come with him. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat with his servants, and they went away with Jesus.

²¹Jesus, along with Peter, Andrew, James and John went into a nearby town called Capernaum. There, Jesus began teaching in the Jewish meeting place on the Sabbath. ²²They were amazed at the way he taught. He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught. ²³In the Jewish preaching place where Jesus taught, there was a man that an evil spirit controlled. The man with the evil spirit began shouting, ²⁴"Hey! Jesus, from Nazareth! We evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!" ²⁵Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Be quiet and come out of that man!" ²⁶The evil spirit shook

the man violently. It screamed loudly, and then he came out of the man and left. ²⁷All the people who were in the synagogue were amazed. As a result, they discussed this among themselves, saying, "This is something we have never seen before! Not only does he teach in a new and authoritative way, but he also commands the evil spirits and they obey him!" ²⁸The people very soon told many others throughout the entire Galilee region what Jesus had done.

²⁹After they left the Jewish preaching place, Jesus, Simon and Andrew, along with James and John, went directly to the house of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed because she was feeling sick due to having a fever. Right away someone told Jesus about her being sick. ³¹Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. She immediately recovered from the fever and began serving them.

³²That evening, after the sun had gone down, people from the surrounding area brought to Jesus many others who were sick and those that evil spirits controlled. ³³It seemed as though everyone who lived in the town had gathered at the doorway of Simon's house. ³⁴Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases. He also forced many evil spirits to come out from people. He did not allow the evil spirits to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Holy One from God.

³⁵Jesus got up very early the next morning while it was still dark. He left the house and went away from the town to a place where there were no people. Then he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions searched for him. ³⁷When they found him they said, "Everyone in town is looking for you." ³⁸Jesus said to them, "We need to go to the other towns in this region so that I can preach there as well. This is the reason I came here." ³⁹So they went throughout Galilee region. As they went, Jesus would preach in the Jewish preaching places and forced evil spirits to come out from people.

⁴⁰One day a man who had a bad skin disease called leprosy came to Jesus. He knelt down in front of Jesus and pleaded with him, saying, "Please make me clean, because you are able to make me clean if it is your will!" ⁴¹Jesus felt compassion for him. He reached out his hand and touched the man. Then he said to him, "It is my will to heal you, so be healed!" ⁴²Immediately the man was healed! He was no longer a leper! ⁴³Jesus gave the man a warning as he was sending him away. ⁴⁴He said, "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go to a priest and show yourself to him in order that he may examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Then make the offering that Moses commanded for people whom God has healed from leprosy. This will be the testimony to the community that you no longer have leprosy." ⁴⁵The man did not follow Jesus' instruction. He began telling many people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, Jesus was no longer able to enter towns publicly because the crowds of people would surround him. Instead, he remained outside the towns in places where no one lived. But people kept coming to him from all over that region.

Chapter 2

¹After some days had passed, Jesus returned to the town called Capernaum. People spread the news quickly to others that Jesus had returned and was in a certain house. ²Soon a great number of people gathered where Jesus was staying. The number was so great that the house was full. There was no longer space to stand, not even around the doorway. Jesus spoke God's message to them. ³Some people came to the house, who were bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed. Four men carried him on a sleeping pad. ⁴They were not able to bring the man close to Jesus because of the crowd that had gathered. So, they went up on the roof of the house and made a big hole in the roof above Jesus. They lowered the paralyzed man on his sleeping pad through the hole in front of Jesus. ⁵After Jesus perceived that the men believed that he could heal this man, he said to the paralyzed man, "My child, I have forgiven your sins!" ⁶Some men who taught the Jewish laws were sitting there. They started thinking to themselves, ⁷"Who does this man think he is talking like that? He insults God by saying that! No person can forgive sins—only God can!" ⁸Jesus knew right away within himself what they were thinking. He said to them, "Why are you thinking that I don't have the right to forgive sins? ⁹Which would be easier for me to say to the paralyzed man, 'I have forgiven your sins' or to say, 'Stand up! Take your sleeping pad and walk'? ¹⁰I will demonstrate to you

that God has given the Son of Man authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, ¹¹"Stand up! Pick up your sleeping pad and go home!" ¹²The man stood up immediately. He picked up the sleeping pad, and he walked out of the house while all the people there were watching. They were all amazed, and they praised God and said, "We have never before seen anything like what happened just now!"

¹³Jesus left the town of Capernaum and walked again along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came to him and he taught them. ¹⁴As he was walking, he saw a man named Levi whose father's name was Alpheus. He was sitting in his office where he collected taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple." He got up and went with Jesus. ¹⁵Later, Jesus was eating a meal in Levi's house. Many men who collected taxes and others who the religious leaders considered to be sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples. There were many people like this who were going everywhere with Jesus. ¹⁶Men who taught the Jewish laws and who were members of the Pharisee sect saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and men who collected taxes. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with sinners and men who collect taxes?" ¹⁷After Jesus heard what they were asking, he said to the men who taught the Jewish laws, "Healthy people do not need a doctor. On the contrary, it is those who are sick who need a doctor. I did not come to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me, but those who know that they have sinned."

¹⁸Now at this time, the students of John the Baptizer and some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect were abstaining from food, as they often did. Some men came to Jesus and asked him, "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees often abstain from food. Why do your students not abstain from food?" ¹⁹Jesus said to them, "When a man is marrying a woman, his friends will certainly not abstain from food while he is still with them. The wedding is a time of feasting and celebrating with the groom. It is not a time for abstaining from food, especially while the groom is with them. ²⁰But some day, the groom will be taken away from his friends. Then in those days, they will abstain from food."

²¹Jesus went on to say to them, "People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment in order to mend a hole. If they did, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and the new piece of cloth would tear off more of the old cloth. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! ²²Similarly, people do not put new wine into old animal skin bags to store it. If they did, the new wine will burst the skin bags because they would not stretch when the wine ferments and expands. As a result both the wine and the skin bags would be ruined! On the contrary, people must put new wine into new skin bags!"

²³On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was walking through some grain fields with his students. As they were walking along through the grain fields, Jesus' disciples were plucking some of the heads of grain. ²⁴Some of the Pharisees saw what they were doing and said to Jesus, "Look at this! They are breaking the Jewish law concerning the day of rest. Why are they doing that?" ²⁵Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the scriptures concerning King David and the men who were with him when they were hungry? ²⁶During the time Abiathar was high priest, King David entered the house of God and asked for some bread. The high priest gave him some of the bread that had been on display before God. According to our laws, only the priests could eat that bread! But David ate some of it. Then he also gave some of it to the men who were with him." ²⁷Jesus said to them further, "God made the day of rest for the sake of mankind. He did not make the day of rest to be a burden on mankind. ²⁸So, to be clear, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the day of rest!"

Chapter 3

¹On another Jewish day of rest, Jesus again went into a Jewish meeting place. There was a man there whose hand was shriveled. ²Some men of the Pharisee sect watched him carefully to see whether he would heal the man on the day of rest. For they wanted to be able to accuse him of doing something wrong. ³Jesus said to the man whose hand was shriveled, "Stand up here in front of everyone!" {So the man stood up.} ⁴Then Jesus said to the people, "Do the laws that God gave Moses permit people to do good on the day of rest, or to do evil? Do the laws permit us to save a person's life on the day of rest, or permit us to refuse to help a person and let them die?" But they did not reply. ⁵He looked around at them angrily. He was very disappointed that they were stubborn {and not willing to

help the man}. So he said to the man, "Extend your hand!" When the man extended his shriveled hand, it became healthy again! ⁶The Pharisees left the meeting place. They immediately met with some of the Jews who supported Herod Antipas, who ruled the district of Galilee. Together they planned how they could kill Jesus.

⁷Jesus and his disciples left that town and went to an area further along the sea of Galilee. A great crowd of people followed him. The people that followed him came from the districts of Galilee and Judea, ⁸from the city of Jerusalem, from the district of Idumea, from the region on the east side of the Jordan River, and from the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They all came to Jesus because they had heard about what he was doing.

⁹Jesus told his disciples to prepare a boat for him. He told them this because the crowd was growing around him and might crush him. ⁹⁻¹⁰Because he had healed many people, many other people who had various illnesses pushed forward in order to touch him. They believed that if only they touched him, it would make them well. So he told his disciples that they should get a small boat ready for him in order that the crowd would not crush him when they pushed forward to touch him. ¹⁰Because Jesus healed many people before, others who were sick drew near to him, in order that they might touch him and be healed. ¹¹Whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they caused the people whom they controlled to fall down in front of Jesus and call out to him, "You are the Son of God!" ¹²Jesus commanded the evil spirits strongly that they must not tell anyone who he was.

¹³Jesus went up into the hills. There, he summoned those that he wanted to go with him and they followed him.

¹⁴He appointed twelve men to travel with him, whom also he would send out to preach. He called them his representatives. ¹⁵He also gave them power to be able to force evil spirits to come out from people. ¹⁶These were the twelve men he appointed: Simon (and Jesus gave him the new name Peter). ¹⁷And along with Peter, Jesus also appointed James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James. He gave both of them the new name, 'Men who are like Thunder' because of their fiery zeal; ¹⁸and he appointed Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, and James who was the son of Alphaeus; and he appointed Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot (who later caused him to get arrested).

²⁰Jesus and his disciples went to a house. Again a crowd gathered where he was staying. Many people crowded around him. He and his apprentices did not even have time to eat. ²¹When his relatives heard about this, they went to take him home with them because some people were saying that he was insane.

²²Some men who taught the Jewish laws came downhill from the city of Jerusalem. They heard that Jesus was forcing evil spirits to come out of people. So they were telling people, "Beelzebul, who rules the evil spirits, controls Jesus. He is the one who gives Jesus the power to force evil spirits out from people!" ²³So Jesus summoned those men over to himself. Jesus spoke to them in parables and said, "How can Satan expel Satan? ²⁴If people who live in the same country are fighting against one another, their country will cease to be a united country. ²⁵And if people who live in the same house fight each other, they will certainly not remain united as one family. ²⁶Similarly, if Satan and his evil spirits were fighting one another, instead of remaining strong, he would become powerless. ²⁷No one can go into the house of a strong man and take his possessions away from him unless he first ties up the strong man. Only then will he be able to steal the things in that man's house." ²⁸Jesus also said, "Consider this carefully! People may sin in many ways and they may speak evil about God. Yet God can still forgive them, ²⁹but if anyone speaks evil words about the Holy Spirit, God will never forgive them. That person is eternally guilty of sin."

³⁰Jesus told them this because they were saying, "An evil spirit is controlling him!"

³¹Jesus' mother and younger siblings came to where Jesus was teaching. While they stood outside, they sent someone inside to tell Jesus to come to them. ³²A crowd was sitting around Jesus. Some of them said to him, "Listen! Your mother and younger siblings are outside. They want to see you." ³³Jesus asked them, "Who is my mother? Who are my siblings?" ³⁴After he looked around at those who sat with him, he said, "Look here! You are my mother and my siblings. ³⁵For those who do what God wants are my brother, my sister, or my mother!"

Chapter 4

¹Another time Jesus began to teach people alongside the sea of Galilee. As he was teaching, a very large crowd gathered around him. Because of this, he got into a boat and pushed out onto the water [so he could teach them all better]. The crowd listened to his teaching from the shore of the sea. ²Then he taught them many parables. While he was teaching them, he told them this: ³"Listen to this: A man went out to his field to plant some seeds. ⁴As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵Other seeds fell on ground where there was little soil, and it was filled with rocks. Very soon the seeds appeared through the soil because the soil was not very deep. ⁶But after the sun shone on those young plants, they became scorched. Then they withered because their roots were not deep enough in the ground. ⁷As he sowed, other seeds fell on ground that contained roots of thorny plants. The seeds grew, but the thorny plants also grew up and crowded out the good plants. So the plants produced no grain. ⁸But as he sowed, other seeds fell on good soil. As a result, they sprouted, they grew well, and then they produced plenty of grain. Some plants bore thirty times as much as the seed that the man had planted. Some bore sixty times as much. Some bore one hundred times as much." ⁹Then Jesus said, "Whoever is willing to listen, listen to what I say."

¹⁰Later, when only the twelve disciples and other close followers were with him, they asked him about the parables. ¹¹He said to them, "To you I have explained the message about how God reveals himself as king, but to the others I have spoken in parables.

¹²When they see what I am doing, they will not learn.

When they hear what I say, they will not understand.

If they learned or understood,

they would be sorry that they had sinned and decide to stop sinning,

and God would forgive them."

¹³He also said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand when I teach you other parables? ¹⁴In the parable that I told you, the man who sows seeds represents someone who teaches God's message to others. ¹⁵Some people are like the path where some of the seeds fell. When they hear God's message, Satan comes at once and causes them to forget what they have heard. ¹⁶Some people are like the ground where the soil was not very deep over the rock. When they hear God's message, they immediately accept it with joy. ¹⁷But, because the message does not grow deep, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly or cause them to suffer because they believed God's message, those people who are suffering soon stop believing God's message. ¹⁸Some people are like the soil that has thorny weeds in it. Those people hear God's message, ¹⁹but they desire to be rich and they want to own many other things. So they only worry about what they have and they forget God's message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. ²⁰But some people are like the good soil. They hear God's message and they accept it and they believe it, and they do the things that God wants them to do. They are like the good plants that produced thirty, sixty, or one hundred grains."

²¹He told them another parable: "People certainly do not light an oil lamp and then bring it in the house in order to put something over it to cover its light. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that the light will shine. ²²Similarly, things that were hidden—one day everyone will know them, and the things that have happened in secret—one day everyone will see them in full light. ²³If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what you have just heard."

²⁴"Consider carefully what you hear me say to you, for God will let you understand to the same degree that you consider what I say. He will let you understand even more than that. ²⁵For if person has some understanding, he will receive even more. But if a person does not have understanding, even what little he has, he will lose."

²⁶Jesus also said, "When God begins to show himself as king, it is like a man who has scattered seed on the ground. ²⁷Afterwards he slept each night and rose up each day without worrying about the seeds. During that time the seeds sprouted and grew in a way that he did not understand. ²⁸The ground produced the crop on its own. First the stalks appeared. Then the heads appeared. Then the full kernels in the heads appeared. ²⁹As soon as the grain was ripe he sent people to harvest it because it was time to harvest the grain."

³⁰Jesus told them another parable. He said, "When God begins to show himself as king, what is it like? What parable can I use to describe it? ³¹It is like mustard seeds. You know what happens to mustard seeds when we plant them. Though mustard seeds are among the smallest of seeds, they become large plants. ³²After they are planted, they grow up and become larger than the other garden plants. They put out big branches so that birds are able to make nests in their shade."

³³Jesus used many parables when he talked to the people about God's message. If they were able to understand some, he kept telling them more. ³⁴He always used parables when he spoke to them. But he explained all the parables to his own apprentices when he was alone with them.

³⁵On that same day, when the sun was setting, Jesus said to his apprentices, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." ³⁶Jesus was already in the boat, so they left the crowd of people and sailed away. Other people also went along with them in their boats. ³⁷A strong wind came up and the waves started coming into the boat! The boat was soon nearly full of water! ³⁸Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was sleeping with his head on a cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Are you not concerned that we are about to die?" ³⁹So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and he spoke to the lake, "Be quiet! Be still!" The wind stopped blowing and then the lake became very calm. ⁴⁰He said to the apprentices, "Why are you afraid? Do you not yet believe that I can protect you?" ⁴¹They were terrified. They said to one another, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Chapter 5

¹Jesus and his apprentices arrived on the other side of the Galilee lake. People called the Gerasenes lived near the place where they landed. ²When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a man came out from the tombs in a cemetery. Evil spirits controlled the man. ³The man was coming out of the cemetery because he lived in tombs. The people knew him and at times they tried to restrain him. They could not restrain him, not even with chains. ⁴Whenever they used chains and shackles, the man would break them apart. He was so strong that no one was able to subdue him. ⁵Day and night the man would spend his time in the caves in the cemetery and in the hills. He would scream out loud and cut himself with sharp stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus in the distance getting out of the boat, he ran over to him and knelt before him. ⁷⁻⁸Jesus had been saying to the evil spirit, "You evil spirit, come out of this man!" But the demon did not leave quickly. It shouted very loudly, "Jesus, I know that you are the Son of God, so we have nothing in common. Leave me alone! In God's name, I beg you. Do not torture me!" ⁹Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Mob because there are many of us evil spirits in this man." ¹⁰Then the evil spirits kept asking Jesus fervently that he not send them out of the region. ¹¹At the same time, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on the hillside. ¹²So the evil spirits pleaded with Jesus, "Allow us to go to the pigs in order that we might enter them!" ¹³Jesus permitted them to do that. So the evil spirits left the man and entered the pigs. The herd, which numbered about two thousand, rushed down the steep hill into the lake, where they drowned.

¹⁴The men who were tending the pigs ran and reported in the town and the countryside what had happened. Many people went to see for themselves what had happened. ¹⁵They came to the place where Jesus was. Then they saw the man whom evil spirits had previously controlled. He was sitting there with clothes on and mentally sound. They were afraid when they saw all this. ¹⁶The people who had seen the events told those who had come from the town and from the countryside about what had happened to the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled. They also described what had happened to the pigs. ¹⁷Then the people pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As Jesus got in the boat to leave, the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled begged Jesus, "Please let me go with you!" ¹⁹But Jesus did not let him go with him. Instead, he said to him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and tell them how he has been so kind to you." ²⁰So the man went and traveled around the Ten Towns in that district. He told people how much Jesus had done for him. All the people who heard what the man said were amazed.

²¹Once more Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Galilee lake in a boat. When he arrived, a large crowd gathered around Jesus while he was standing on the shore. ²²One of the men who presided over a Jewish preaching place, whose name was Jairus, came there. When he saw Jesus, he knelt at his feet. ²³Then he pleaded with Jesus earnestly, "My daughter is sick and nearly dead! Please come to my house and place your hands on her. Heal her and make her live!" ²⁴So Jesus and his apprentices went with him. A large crowd followed and many pushed in close to Jesus. ²⁵There was a woman in the crowd who had a bleeding disorder. She had been bleeding every day for twelve years. ²⁶She had suffered much over the years while doctors treated her. She had spent all her money to pay the doctors and after all they did to her, she got worse instead of better. ²⁷When she heard that Jesus healed people, she came to where he was and pushed in the crowd close behind Jesus. ²⁸She was thinking, "If I touch him or even if I touch his clothes, it will heal me." So she touched Jesus' clothes. ²⁹At once her bleeding stopped. At the same time, she sensed within herself that she had been cured of her illness. ³⁰Jesus also immediately sensed within himself that his power had healed someone. So he turned around in the crowd and then he asked, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹His apprentices replied, "You can see that many people are crowding close to you! Probably many people touched you! So why do you ask, 'Who touched me?'" ³²But Jesus kept looking around in order to see the one who had done it. ³³The woman was very afraid and trembling. She knelt before him and told him what she had done. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, because you have believed that I could heal you, I have now healed you. You may go home with peace in your heart, because I promise that you will not be sick with this disease anymore."

³⁵While Jesus was still speaking to that woman, some people arrived who had come from Jairus' house. They said to Jairus, "Your daughter has now died. So there is no need to bother the teacher any longer, to bring him to your house!" ³⁶But when Jesus heard what these men said, he said to Jairus, "Do not think that the situation is hopeless! Just keep believing that she will live!" ³⁷Then he allowed only his three closest apprentices, Peter, James, and John, to go with him to the house. He did not allow any other people to go with him. ³⁸After they arrived near Jairus' house, Jesus saw that the people there were in turmoil. They were weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹He entered the house and then he said to them, "Why are you so upset and crying? The child is not dead, but only sleeping." ⁴⁰The people laughed at him, because they knew that she was dead. He sent all the other people outside the house. Then he took the child's father and mother and the three apprentices who were with him. He went into the room where the child was lying. ⁴¹He took hold of the child's hand and said to her in her own language, "Talitha koum!" That means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴²At once the girl got up and walked around. (It was not surprising that she could walk, because she was twelve years old.) When this happened, all who were present were greatly amazed. ⁴³Jesus ordered them strictly, "Do not tell anyone about what I have done!" Then he told them to give the girl something to eat.

Chapter 6

¹Jesus left Capernaum city and went to his hometown, Nazareth. His apprentices went with him. ²On the Jewish day of rest, he entered the Jewish preaching place and taught the people. Many who were listening to him were amazed. They wondered where he gained all his wisdom and the power to perform miracles. ³They said, "He is just an ordinary carpenter! We know him and his family! We know Mary his mother! We know his younger brothers James, Joses, Judas and Simon! And his younger sisters also live here with us!" So they resented him. ⁴Jesus said to them, "It is certainly true that people honor me and other prophets in other places, but not in our hometowns! Even our relatives and the people who live in our own houses do not honor us!"

⁵So, although he healed a few sick people there, he was not able to perform any other miracle. ⁶He was amazed by their unbelief, but he went through their villages and taught them.

⁷One day he called the twelve apprentices together, and then he told them that he was going to send them out two by two to teach people in various towns. He gave them power to force evil spirits out from people. ⁸⁻⁹He also instructed them to wear sandals and to take along a walking stick when they were traveling. He told them not to take food, nor a bag in which to put supplies, nor any money for their journey. He also did not allow them to take an extra tunic. ¹⁰He also instructed them, "After you enter a town, if someone invites you to stay in his house, go into his house. Eat and sleep in that same home until you leave that town. ¹¹Wherever the people do not welcome you and wherever the people do not listen to you, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that place. By doing that, you will be testifying that they did not welcome you." ¹²So after the disciples went out to various towns, they were preaching that people should be sorry that they have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive them. ¹³They were also forcing many evil spirits out from people, and they were anointing many sick people with olive oil and healing them.

¹⁴Now King Herod Antipas heard about what Jesus was doing, because many people were talking about it. Some people were saying about Jesus, "He must be John the Baptizer! He has risen from the dead! That is why he has God's power to perform these miracles!" ¹⁵Others were saying about Jesus, "He is the ancient prophet Elijah, whom God promised to send back again." Others were saying about Jesus, "No, he is a different prophet, like one of the other prophets who lived long ago." ¹⁶Having heard what the people were saying, King Herod Antipas himself said, "The man performing those miracles must be John! I commanded my soldiers to cut off his head, but he has become alive again!" ¹⁷What happened was this—some time before, Herod had taken and married Herodias, although she was the wife of his brother, Philip. ¹⁸After that, John kept telling Herod, "God's law does not permit you to marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive." Then, because Herodias urged him to put John in prison, Herod himself sent soldiers to John. They arrested John and put him in prison. ¹⁹But because Herodias wanted to get further revenge on John, she wanted someone to execute him. But she could not do that because while John was in prison, Herod kept John safe from her. ²⁰Herod did this because he respected John, because he knew that he was a righteous man who devoted himself to God. Whenever Herod listened to him, he became very disturbed and did not know what he should do with him, but he liked to listen to him. ²¹But Herodias was able to eventually have someone execute John. One day when they honored Herod on his birthday, he invited the most important government officials, the most important army leaders, and the most important men in the district of Galilee to eat and celebrate with him. ²²While they were eating, Herodias' daughter came into the room and danced for the king and his guests. She pleased King Herod and his guests so much that he said to her, "Ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you!" ²³He also promised to her, "Whatever you ask, I will give it to you! I will give you up to half of what I own and rule, if you ask for it." ²⁴The girl left the room and went to her mother. She told her what the king had said, and asked her, "What should I ask for?" Her mother replied, "Ask the king to give you the head of John the Baptizer!" ²⁵The girl quickly entered the room again. She went to the king and she said, "I want you to command someone to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it to me at once on a platter!" ²⁶The king became very distressed when he heard what she asked for because he knew John was a very righteous man. But he could not refuse what she requested because he had promised that he would give her anything she asked for, and his guests had heard him promise. ²⁷So the king at once ordered someone to go and cut off John's head and bring it to the girl. That man went to the prison and cut off John's head. ²⁸He put it on a platter, brought it back, and gave it to the girl. The girl took it to her mother. ²⁹After John's apprentices heard what happened, they went to the prison and took John's body; then they buried it.

³⁰The twelve sent ones returned to Jesus from the places to which they had gone. They reported to him what they had done and what they had taught to people. ³¹He said to them, "Come with me to a place where no people are living, in order that we can be alone and rest a little while!" He said this because many people were continually coming to them and going away again, with the result that Jesus and his apprentices did not have time to eat or do anything else. ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a place where no people were living. ³³But many people saw them leaving. They also recognized that they were Jesus and the apprentices, and they saw where they were going. So they ran ahead on land from all the nearby towns to the place where Jesus and his apprentices were

going. They actually arrived there before Jesus and the apprentices. ³⁴As Jesus and his apprentices got out of the boat, Jesus saw this great crowd. He felt compassion for them because they were confused, like sheep that do not have a shepherd. So he taught them many things.

³⁵Late in the afternoon the apprentices came to him and said, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late. ³⁶So send the people away in order that they may go to the surrounding places where people live and to villages in order that they can buy for themselves something to eat!" ³⁷But he replied to them, "No, you yourselves give them something to eat!" They replied to him, "We could not buy enough bread to feed this crowd, even if we had as much money as a man earns by working 200 days!" ³⁸But he replied to them, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Go and find out!" They went and found out and then they told him, "We have only five flat loaves and two cooked fish!" ³⁹He instructed the apprentices to tell all the people to sit down on the green grass. ⁴⁰So the people sat in groups. There were fifty people in some groups and one hundred people in other groups. ⁴¹Jesus took the five flat loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and thanked God for them. Then he broke the loaves and fish into pieces and kept giving them to the apprentices in order that they would distribute them to the people. ⁴²Everyone ate this food until they all had enough to eat! ⁴³The apprentices then collected twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and of the fish that were left over. ⁴⁴There were about five thousand men who ate the bread and fish. They did not even count the women and children.

⁴⁵Right away Jesus told his apprentices to get into the boat and then go ahead of him to Bethsaida town, which was further around the Galilee lake. He stayed and dismissed the many people who were there. ⁴⁶After he said goodbye to the people, he went up into the hills in order to pray. ⁴⁷When it was evening, the apprentices' boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was by himself on the land. ⁴⁸He saw that the wind was blowing against them as they rowed. As a result, they were having great difficulty. He approached them early in the morning, when it was still dark, by walking on the water. He intended to walk by them. ⁴⁹They saw him walking on the water, but they thought that he was a ghost. They screamed ⁵⁰because they all were terrified when they saw him. But he spoke to them. He said to them, "Be calm! Do not be afraid, because it is I!" ⁵¹He got into the boat and sat down with them and the wind stopped blowing. They were completely amazed about what he had done. ⁵²Although they had seen Jesus multiply the bread and the fish, they did not understand how powerful he was, as they should have.

⁵³After they went further around the Galilee lake in a boat, they came to shore at Gennesaret town. Then they fastened the boat there. ⁵⁴As soon as they got out of the boat, the people there recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵So they ran throughout the whole district in order to tell others that Jesus was there. Then the people placed those who were sick on stretchers and carried them to any place where they heard people say that Jesus was. ⁵⁶In whatever village, town or place in the countryside where he went, they would bring to the marketplaces those who were sick. Then the sick people would beg Jesus to let them touch him or even the edge of his clothes in order that Jesus might heal them. All those who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 7

¹One day some Pharisees and some men who teach the Jewish laws who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. ²The Pharisees saw that his apprentices often ate without washing their hands first. ³The Pharisees and all of the other Jews strictly observe their traditions that their ancestors taught. For example, they refuse to eat until they first wash their hands with a special ritual,

⁴especially after they return from buying things in the marketplace. They think that God will be angry with them if they do not do that, because some person or thing unacceptable to God might have touched them or the things they bought. ⁵That day, those Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws saw that some of his apprentices were eating food with hands that they had not washed using the special ritual. So they questioned Jesus and said, "Your apprentices disobey the traditions of our elders! Why do they eat food if they have not washed their hands using our ritual!" ⁶Jesus said to them, "Isaiah rebuked your ancestors, and his words describe very well you people who only pretend to be good! He wrote these words that God said:

'These people speak as if they honor me,
but they really do not think about honoring me at all.

⁷It is useless for them to worship me,
because they teach only what people say
as if I myself had commanded them.'

⁸You, like your ancestors, refuse to do what God has commanded. Instead, you follow only the traditions that others have taught." ⁹Jesus also said to them, "You think that you are clever in refusing to do what God commanded just so that you can obey your own traditions! ¹⁰For example, our ancestor Moses wrote God's command, 'Honor your fathers and your mothers'. He also wrote, 'The authorities must execute a person who speaks evil about his father or mother.' ¹¹But you teach people that it is all right if people give their things to God instead of giving them to their parents. You allow them to say to their parents, 'What I was going to give to you to provide for you, I have now promised to give to God. So I cannot any longer help you!' ¹²As a result, you are actually telling people that they no longer have to help their parents! ¹³In this way you disregard what God commanded! You teach your own things to others and tell them that they should obey them! And you do many other things like that."

¹⁴Then Jesus again summoned the crowd to come closer. Then he said to them, "All of you people listen to me! Try to understand what I am about to tell you. ¹⁵Nothing that people eat causes God to consider them to be defiled. On the contrary, it is that which comes from people's inner beings that causes God to consider them to be defiled." ^{16[17]} [Every one of you should think carefully about what you heard me say.]

¹⁷After Jesus had left the crowd, he entered a house with his apprentices. They questioned him about the parable that he had just spoken. ¹⁸He replied to them, "Did you not understand what it means? You ought to understand that nothing that enters us from outside can cause God to consider us unacceptable to him. ¹⁹Instead of entering and ruining our minds, it goes into our stomachs, and afterwards the refuse passes out of our bodies." By saying this, Jesus was declaring that people can eat any food without causing God to consider them unacceptable to him. ²⁰He also said, "It is the thoughts and actions that come from within people that cause God to consider them unacceptable to him. ²¹Specifically, it is people's innermost being that causes them to think things that are evil; they act immorally, they steal things, they commit murder. ²²They commit adultery, they are greedy, they act maliciously, they deceive people. They act indecently, they envy people, they speak evil about others, they are proud, and they act foolishly. ²³People think these thoughts and then they do these evil actions, and that is what causes God to consider them unacceptable to him."

²⁴After Jesus and his apprentices left Galilee, they went to the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. While he stayed at a certain house, he did not want anyone to know it, but people soon found out that he was there. ²⁵A certain woman, whose daughter had an evil spirit within her, heard about Jesus. At once she came to him and knelt at his feet. ²⁶Now this woman was not a Jew. Her ancestors were not Jews. She herself had been born in the area around the region of Phoenicia, in the district of Syria. She pled with Jesus that he force the evil spirit out from her daughter. ²⁷He said to the woman, "First let the children eat all they want, because it is not good for someone to take the food the mother has prepared for the children and then throw it to the little dogs." ²⁸She replied to him, "Sir, what you say is correct, but even the house dogs, who lie under the table, eat the crumbs that the children drop." ²⁹Jesus said to her, "Because of what you have said, go home. I have caused the evil spirit to leave your daughter." ³⁰The woman returned to her house and saw that her child was lying quietly on the bed and that the evil spirit had left.

³¹Jesus and his apprentices left the region around Tyre and went north through Sidon, then toward the east through the area of the Ten Towns, and then south to the towns near the Sea of Galilee. ³²There, people brought to him a man who was deaf and could not talk. They begged Jesus to lay his hands on him in order to heal him. ³³So Jesus took him away from the crowd in order that the two of them could be alone. Then he put one of his fingers

into each of the man's ears. After he spat on his fingers, he touched the man's tongue with his fingers. ³⁴Then he looked up toward heaven, he sighed and then in his own language he said to the man's ears, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" ³⁵At once the man could hear plainly. He also began to speak clearly because what was causing him to be unable to speak was healed. ³⁶Jesus told the people not to tell anyone what he had done. But, although he ordered them and others repeatedly not to tell anyone about it, they kept talking about it all the more. ³⁷People who heard about it were utterly amazed and were saying, "Everything he has done is wonderful! Besides doing other amazing things, he enables deaf people to hear! And he enables those who cannot speak to speak!"

7:16 ^[1]

Chapter 8

¹During those days, a large crowd of people gathered again. After they had been there for two days, they had no food to eat. So Jesus called his apprentices to come close to him, and then he said to them, ²"This is the third day that these people have been with me, and they have nothing left to eat, so now I am very concerned for them. ³If I send them home while they are still hungry, some of them will faint on the way home. Some of them have come from far away." ⁴His apprentices knew that he was suggesting that they give the people something to eat, so one of them replied, "We cannot possibly find food to satisfy this crowd. No one lives in this place! ⁵Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have?" They replied, "We have seven flat loaves." ⁶Jesus commanded the crowd, "Sit down on the ground!" After they sat down, he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, broke them into pieces, and gave them to his apprentices to distribute to the people. ⁷They had also found that they had a few small fish. So after he thanked God for these, he told his apprentices, "Distribute these also." After they distributed the fish to the crowd, ⁸the people ate this food, and they had plenty to satisfy themselves. His apprentices collected the pieces of food that were left over and filled seven large baskets. ⁹His apprentices estimated that there were about four thousand people who ate on that day. Then Jesus dismissed the crowd. ¹⁰Immediately after that, he got into the boat along with his apprentices, and they went around the Galilee lake to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹Then some Pharisees came to Jesus. They began arguing with him and insisting that he perform a miracle to show that God had sent him. ¹²Jesus sighed deeply within himself, and then he said, "Why are you asking me to perform a miracle? I will not do a miracle for you!" ¹³Then he left them. He got into the boat again, along with his apprentices, and they went further around the Galilee lake. ¹⁴His apprentices had forgotten to bring along enough food. Specifically, they had only one flat loaf of bread with them in the boat. ¹⁵As they were going, Jesus warned them and said, "Be careful! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod!" ¹⁶The apprentices misunderstood him. So they said to one another, "He must have said that because we have no bread." ¹⁷Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves. So he said to them, "Why are you talking about not having enough bread? You should understand what I have said by now! You are not thinking! ¹⁸You have eyes, but you do not understand what you see! You have ears, but you do not understand what I say!" Then he asked, "Do you not remember what happened ¹⁹when I broke only five loaves and fed the five thousand people? Not only was everyone satisfied, but there was food left over! How many baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected twelve baskets full." ²⁰Then he asked, "When I broke the seven loaves in order to feed the four thousand people, again when everyone had plenty to eat, how many large baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected seven large baskets full." ²¹Then he said to them, "I am disappointed that you do not understand yet that you should never worry that you do not have enough food!"

²²They arrived in the boat at Bethsaida town. People brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him touch the man in order to heal him. ²³Jesus took the hand of the blind man and led him outside the town. Then he spat into the man's eyes, he put his hands on the man and then asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴The man looked up and then he said, "Yes, I see people! They are walking around, but I cannot see them clearly. They look like trees!" ²⁵Then Jesus again touched the eyes of the blind man. The man looked intently, and at that moment he was

completely healed! He could see everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus said to him, "Do not go into the town!" Then he sent the man to his home.

²⁷Jesus and his apprentices left Bethsaida town and went to the villages near Caesarea Philippi town. On the way he questioned them, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah. And others say that you are one of the other former prophets." ²⁹He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied to him, "We believe that you are the Messiah!" ³⁰Then Jesus warned them strongly that they should not tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah.

³¹Then Jesus began to teach them that he, the Son of Man, would certainly suffer very much. He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the men who teach the Jewish laws. He would even be killed. But on the third day after he died, he would become alive again. ³²He said this to them clearly. But Peter took Jesus aside and started to scold him for talking this way. ³³Jesus turned around and looked at his apprentices. Then he rebuked Peter, saying, "Stop thinking like that! Satan is causing you to talk like that! Instead of wanting what God wants me to do, you are wanting me to do only what people would want me to do."

³⁴Then he called the crowd together along with his apprentices so that they might listen to him. He told them, "If any one of you wants to be my apprentice, you must not do only what makes you live easily. You must be willing to suffer pain like criminals who are forced to carry crosses to the places where they will be crucified. That is what anyone who wants to be my apprentice must do. ³⁵You must do that, because those who try to save their lives by denying that they belong to me will lose their lives. Those who are killed because they are my apprentices and because they tell others the good news will live forever with me. ³⁶People might get everything they want in this world, but they are really gaining nothing if they do not gain eternal life! ³⁷Think carefully about the fact that there is absolutely nothing that people can give to God that would enable them to gain eternal life! ³⁸And think about this: Those who refuse to say that they belong to me, and who reject what I say in these days when many people have turned away from God and are very sinful, I, the Son of Man, will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back with the holy angels and have the glory that my Father has!"

Chapter 9

¹Jesus also said to the crowds and his disciples, "Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will not die before you see God ruling powerfully!"

²Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and James' brother John and led them up a high mountain. While they were alone up there, he appeared very different to them. ³His clothes became dazzling white. They were whiter than anyone on earth could make them by bleaching them. ⁴Two prophets, who had lived long ago, Moses and Elijah, appeared to them. Then the two of them began talking with Jesus. ⁵After a short time, Peter said, "Teacher, it is wonderful to be here! So allow us to make three shelters. One will be for you, one will be for Moses, and one will be for Elijah!" ⁶He said this because he wanted to say something, but he did not know what to say because he and the other two disciples were terrified. ⁷Then a shining cloud appeared that covered them. God spoke to them from the cloud saying, "This is my Son. He is the one whom I love. Therefore, listen to him!" ⁸When the three disciples looked around, they suddenly saw that only Jesus was with them, and that Elijah and Moses were no longer there.

⁹While they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell anyone yet what had just happened to him. He said, "You may tell them after I, the Son of Man, become alive again after I die." ¹⁰So they did not tell others about it for a long time. But they discussed among themselves what it meant when he said that he would rise from the dead.

¹¹The three disciples asked Jesus, "The men who teach the Jewish laws say that Elijah must come back to the earth before the Messiah comes to earth, {but we have just seen Elijah,} so is what they are teaching wrong?" ¹²⁻¹³Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised to send Elijah to come first to put everything as it should be. But

Elijah has already come, and our leaders treated him very badly, just like they wanted to do, as prophets long ago had said they would. But there is much written in the scriptures about me, the Son of Man. The scriptures say that I will suffer much and that people will reject me.”

¹⁴Then Jesus and those three disciples arrived where the other disciples were. They saw a large crowd around the other disciples and some men who taught the Jewish laws arguing with them. ¹⁵The crowd was very surprised to see Jesus come. So they ran to him and greeted him. ¹⁶Jesus asked them, “What are you arguing about?” ¹⁷A man in the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son here to you {in order that you would heal him}. There is an evil spirit in him that makes him unable to talk. ¹⁸Whenever the spirit begins to control him, it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, he grinds his teeth together, and he becomes stiff. I asked your disciples to expel the spirit, but they were not able to do it.” ¹⁹Jesus replied to them by saying, “You faithless people! I have been with you a long time, and you still cannot do what I do! You test my patience! Bring the boy to me.” ²⁰So they brought the boy to Jesus. As soon as the evil spirit saw Jesus, it shook the boy severely, and the boy fell on the ground. He rolled around and foamed at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” He replied, “This started to happen when he was a child. ²²The spirit does not only do this, but he also often throws him into the fire or into the water in order to kill him. Pity us and help us, if you can!” ²³Jesus exclaimed to him, “Of course I can! God can do anything for people who believe in him!” ²⁴Immediately the child’s father shouted, “I believe that you can help me, but I do not believe strongly. Help me to believe more strongly!” ²⁵Jesus saw that the crowd was growing. He rebuked the evil spirit: “You evil spirit, you who are causing this boy to be deaf and unable to talk! I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!” ²⁶The evil spirit shouted and shook the boy violently; then it left the boy. The boy did not move. He seemed like a dead body. So most of the people there said, “He is dead!” ²⁷However, Jesus took him by the hand and helped him get up. Then the boy stood up. ²⁸Later, when Jesus and his apprentices were alone in a house, they asked him, “Why were we not able to force the evil spirit out?” ²⁹He said to them, “You can force this kind of evil spirit out only by abstaining from food and praying that God will give you the power to do it. There is no other way that you can expel them.”

³⁰After Jesus and his apprentices left that region, they traveled through Galilee district. Jesus did not want anyone else to know where he was. ³¹He wanted to have time to teach his apprentices. He was telling them, “Some day my enemies will arrest me, the Son of Man, and I will be put into the hands of other men. Those men will kill me. But on the third day after I die, I will become alive again!” ³²They did not understand what he was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

³³Then Jesus and his apprentices returned to Capernaum town. When they were in the house, he asked them, “What were you talking about while we were traveling on the road?” ³⁴But they did not reply. They were ashamed to reply because, while they were traveling, they had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. ³⁵He sat down, he called the twelve apprentices to come close to him and then said to them, “If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else.” ³⁶Then he took a child and placed him among them. He took the child in his arms and then he said to them, ³⁷“Those who welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me. It is also true that they are also welcoming God, who sent me.”

³⁸John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone who was forcing evil spirits out of people. He claimed that he had authority from you to do that. So we told him to stop doing it because he was not one of the apprentices.” ³⁹Jesus said, “Do not tell him to stop doing that. For no one will say bad things about me soon after performing a mighty deed with my authority. ⁴⁰Those who are not opposing us are trying to achieve the same goals that we are. ⁴¹God will certainly reward those who help you in any way, even if they simply give you a cup of water to drink because you follow me, the Messiah!”

⁴²Jesus also said, “But if you cause someone who believes in me to sin, God will severely punish you, even if that person is socially unimportant like this little child. If someone tied a heavy stone around your neck and threw you into the sea, it would be better for you than if God punished you for causing a person who believes in me to sin.

⁴³So if you are wanting to use one of your hands to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut your hand off and

throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your hands while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result God throws your whole body into hell. There the fires never go out! ⁴⁴[¹] [where worms never stop feeding on them, and the fire that burns them never goes out.] ⁴⁵If you are wanting to use one of your feet to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut off your foot to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your feet while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result for God to throw your whole body into hell. ⁴⁶[²] [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not put out.] ⁴⁷If because of what you see you are tempted to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out your eye and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is better to have only one eye and for God to agree to rule over you, than him to throw you with two eyes into hell. ⁴⁸In that place worms feed on the people there forever and the fires are never put out.”

⁴⁹“For God will put fire on everyone, just like people put salt on their food. ⁵⁰Salt is useful to put on food, but you cannot make it taste salty again if it becomes flavorless. We are to be like salt that adds flavor to food. And live in peace with one another.”

9:44 [¹]

9:46 [²]

Chapter 10

¹Jesus left that place with his apprentices, and they went through the district of Judea and on across to the east side of the Jordan River. When crowds of people gathered around him again, he taught them again, as he customarily did. ²While he was teaching them, some Pharisees approached him and asked him, “Does our law permit a man to divorce his wife?” They asked that in order to be able to criticize him no matter whether he answered “yes” or “no.” ³He answered them, “What did Moses command your ancestors about this?” ⁴One of them replied, “Moses permitted that a man may write out divorce papers so that he may send her away.” ⁵Jesus said to them, “Your ancestors stubbornly wanted to be able to send their wives away. That is why Moses wrote that law. ⁶But when God first created people, it says, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷That explains why God said, ‘When a man marries, he must leave his parents and join with his wife. ⁸They will become like one person. They will no longer be like two people, but like one.’ ⁹Because that is true, a man must not separate from his wife. God has joined them together and he wishes them to stay together!”

¹⁰When Jesus and his apprentices were alone in a house, they asked him again about this. ¹¹He said to them, “God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery. ¹²God also considers a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man to be committing adultery.”

¹³Now people were bringing children to Jesus so that he would touch and bless them. But his apprentices scolded those people. ¹⁴When Jesus saw that, he became angry. He said to his apprentices, “Allow the children to come to me! Do not forbid them! It is people who have qualities like children over whom God will agree to rule. ¹⁵Note this: Those who do not welcome God as their king in the same manner as children would, God will certainly not agree to rule over them.” ¹⁶Then he embraced the children. He also put his hands on them and called on God to do good to them.

¹⁷As Jesus was starting to travel again with his apprentices, a man ran up to him. He knelt before Jesus and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good! ¹⁹But to answer your question, you know the commandments of Moses: ‘Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie about others, do not cheat anyone, and honor your father and mother’.” ²⁰The man said to him, “Teacher, I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young.” ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said to him, “There is one thing that you have not yet done. You must go home, sell all that you possess, and then give the money to poor people. As a result, you will have riches in heaven. After you have done what I have told you, come and follow me!” ²²The man became disappointed when he heard Jesus’ instructions. He went away sad, because he was very rich. ²³Jesus looked around at the people. Then he exclaimed

to his apprentices, "It is very difficult for people who are wealthy to agree for God to rule over them." ²⁴The apprentices were confused by what he said. Jesus said again, "My dear friends, it is very difficult for anyone to agree for God to rule over them. ²⁵In fact, it would be easier for a very large animal like a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for rich people to accept God to rule over them." ²⁶The apprentices were very astonished. So they said to each other, "If that is so, then no one will be saved!" ²⁷Jesus looked at them and then he said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves! But God certainly can save them, because God can do anything!" ²⁸Peter said, "Look, we have left behind everything and followed you." ²⁹Jesus replied, "I want you to know this: Those who have left their houses, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or their plots of ground for me and for the good news, ³⁰they will receive in this life a hundred times as much as they left behind. That will include houses and people as dear as brothers and sisters and mothers and children, and plots of ground. Furthermore, although people will persecute them here on earth because they believe in me, in the future age they will have eternal life. ³¹But I warn you all: Many who now consider themselves to be very important will be unimportant at that future time, and many who now consider themselves to be unimportant will be very important at that future time!"

³²Some days later as they continued to travel, Jesus and his apprentices were walking on the road that leads up to Jerusalem city. Jesus was walking ahead of them. The apprentices were astonished and the other people who were with them were afraid. Along the way he took the twelve apprentices to a place by themselves. Then he began to tell them again about what was going to happen to him; ³³he said, "Listen carefully! We are going up to Jerusalem. There the chief priests and the men who teach the laws will arrest me, the Son of Man. They will declare that I must die. Then they will take me to the Roman authorities. ³⁴Their men will ridicule me and spit on me. They will whip me, and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again!"

³⁵Along the way, James and John, who were the two sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, please do for us what we will ask you to do!" ³⁶He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷They said to him, "When you rule in your kingdom, let one of us sit at your right side and one sit at your left side." ³⁸But Jesus said to them, "You do not understand what you are asking for." Then he asked them, "Can you endure suffering like I am about to suffer? Can you die the kind of death I am about to die?" ³⁹They said to him, "Yes, we are able to do that!" Then Jesus said to them, "It is true that you will endure suffering like I will suffer, and you will endure others to kill you as they will kill me. ⁴⁰But I am not the one who chooses who will sit next to me. God will give those places to the ones whom he chooses in advance."

⁴¹The other ten apprentices later heard about what James and John had requested. So they said they were unhappy with the two apprentices. ⁴²Then Jesus called them all together and said, "You know that kings and others who rule over people enjoy showing that they are powerful. You also know that their officials enjoy commanding others. ⁴³But do not be like them! On the contrary, all those among you who want God to consider them great must become like servants to the rest of you. ⁴⁴Furthermore, if anyone among you wants God to consider him to be the most important, he must act like a slave for the rest of you. ⁴⁵I, the Son of Man, did not come to be served. On the contrary, I came to serve others and to free many people by giving my life for them."

⁴⁶On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus and his apprentices came to Jericho town. Then, while they were leaving Jericho along with a great crowd, a blind man who habitually begged for money was sitting beside the road. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father's name was Timaeus. ⁴⁷When he heard people say that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by, he shouted, "Jesus! You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!" ⁴⁸Many people scolded him and told him that he should be quiet. But he shouted even more, "You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him to come over here!" They called the blind man, saying, "Jesus is calling you! So cheer up and get up and come!" ⁵⁰He threw aside his cloak as he jumped up, and he came to Jesus. ⁵¹Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "Teacher, I want to be able to see again!" ⁵²Jesus said to him, "I am healing you because you believed in me. So you may go!" He could see immediately. And he went with Jesus along the road.

Chapter 11

¹When Jesus and his apprentices came near to Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany villages near the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus called two of his apprentices ²and said to them, "Go to that village just ahead of us. As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Lord needs to use it. He will send it back here with someone as soon as he no longer needs it.'" ⁴So the two apprentices went and found a young donkey. It was tied close to the door of a house, which was beside the street. Then they untied it. ⁵Some of the people who were there said to them, "Why are you untying that donkey?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said. So the people permitted them to take the donkey. ⁷The two apprentices brought the donkey to Jesus and put their cloaks on it to make something for him to sit on. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road in front of him. Others cut branches from palm trees in nearby fields and spread them along the road. ⁹The people who were going in front of him and behind him were all shouting, "Praise God!" and "May God bless this one who comes with his authority." ¹⁰They also shouted, "May you be blessed when you rule like our ancestor King David ruled!" and "Praise God who is in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem with them, and then he went into the temple courtyard. After he looked around at everything there, he left the city because it was already late in the afternoon. He returned to Bethany with the twelve apprentices.

¹²The next day, as Jesus and his apprentices were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry. ¹³He saw in the distance a fig tree with all its leaves, so he went to it to see if he could find any figs on it. But when he came to it, he found no fruit on it, because it was not yet the season for figs to appear. ¹⁴He said to the tree, "No one will ever eat from you again." And his apprentices heard this.

¹⁵Jesus and his apprentices went back into Jerusalem and entered the temple courtyard. He saw people who were selling and buying animals for sacrifices. He chased those people from the temple courtyard. He also overturned the tables of those who were selling temple tax money in exchange for Roman coins. And he overturned the seats of the men who were selling pigeons for sacrifice. ¹⁶He would not allow anyone who was carrying anything to sell to go through the temple area. ¹⁷Then as he taught those people, he said to them, "It is written in the scriptures that God said, 'I want my house to be a house where people from all nations can pray,' but you bandits have made it like a cave where robbers hide." ¹⁸The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws later heard about what he had done. They were planning how they might kill him, but they feared him because they realized that the crowd was amazed at what he was teaching. ¹⁹Every evening Jesus and his apprentices would leave the city.

²⁰The next morning while they were going along the road toward Jerusalem, they saw that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered completely. ²¹Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the fig tree and he said to Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!" ²²Jesus replied, "You must trust that God will do whatever you ask him to do! ²³Also note this: If anyone says to this mountain, 'Be raised up and thrown into the sea!' and if he does not doubt that it will happen, that is, if he believes that it will happen, God will do it for him. ²⁴So I tell you, whenever you ask God for something when you pray, believe that you will receive it, and, if you do, God will do it for you. ²⁵Now, I tell you this also: Whenever you are praying, if you have a grudge against people because they have harmed you, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven will likewise forgive your sins." ²⁶[¹ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.]

²⁷Jesus and his apprentices arrived in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem again. While Jesus was walking there, a group consisting of chief priests, some men who taught the Jewish laws, and elders came to him. ²⁸They said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do things like those you did here yesterday?" ²⁹Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do those things. ³⁰Was it God who authorized John to baptize those who came to him? Or was it people who authorized him?" ³¹They debated among themselves as to what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say that it was God who authorized him, he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed what John said!' ³²On

the other hand, if we say that it was people who authorized John, then what will happen to us?" They were afraid to say that about John, because they knew that the people would be very angry with them. They knew that all the people truly believed that John was a prophet whom God had sent. ³³So they answered Jesus, "We do not know from whom John received his authority." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who authorized me to do those things here yesterday."

11:26 ^[1]

Chapter 12

¹Then Jesus began to tell the Jewish leaders a parable. He said, "A certain man planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a stone tank to collect the grape juice. He also built a tower for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard. He leased the vineyard to some farmers to cultivate it, and then he went away to another country. ²When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant to the men who had taken a lease on his vineyard because he wanted to receive from them his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³But when the servant arrived, they grabbed him and beat the servant, and they did not give him any fruit. Then they sent him away. ⁴Later the owner sent another servant to them. But they beat that one on the head and they hurt him terribly, for which they should be ashamed. ⁵Later the owner sent still another servant. That man the farmers killed. They also mistreated many other servants whom he sent. Some they beat and some they killed. ⁶The owner still had one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So he sent his son to them because he thought that they would respect him. ⁷But when the farmers saw his son coming, they said to each other, 'Look! Here comes the owner's son, who will some day inherit the vineyard! So let us kill him in order that this vineyard will be ours!' ⁸They seized the owner's son and killed him. Then they threw his body outside the vineyard. ⁹So do you know what the owner of the vineyard will do? He will come and kill those evil men who had taken a lease on his vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it. ¹⁰Now think carefully about these words, which you have read in the scriptures:

"The men who were building the building refused to use a certain stone. But the Lord has put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone in the building! ¹¹The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it."

¹²Then the Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told this story about what those wicked people did. So they wanted to arrest him. But they were afraid of what the crowds of people would do if they did that. So they left him and went away.

¹³The Jewish leaders sent to Jesus some Pharisees and some members of the party that supported Herod Antipas. They wanted to trick Jesus; they wanted to make him say something wrong so they could show people that he taught wrong things so they could bring charges against him. ¹⁴After they arrived, they said to him, "Teacher, we know that you teach the truth. We also know that you are not concerned about what people say about you, even if an important person does not like what you say. Instead, you teach truthfully what God wants us to do. So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?" ¹⁵Jesus knew that they did not really want to know what God wanted them to do. So he said to them, "I know that you are just trying to make me say something wrong for which you can accuse me. But I will answer your question anyway. Bring me a coin so that I might look at it." ¹⁶After they had brought him a coin, he asked them, "Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?" They replied, "It is a picture and the name of Caesar." ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "That is correct, so give to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what belongs to him." They were completely amazed by what he said.

¹⁸Men who belong to the group of Sadducees deny what other Jews believe, that people become alive again after they die. Some Sadducees came to Jesus and asked him, ¹⁹"Teacher, Moses wrote for us Jews that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up a descendant for his brother. ²⁰So here is an example. There were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman,

but he and his wife did not bear any children. Then he later died. ²¹The second brother also married that woman, but he, too, did not bear any children. Then he later died. The third brother did like his other brothers did. But he also did not bear any children, and later died. ²²Eventually all seven brothers married that woman one by one, but no one had any children, and one by one they died. Afterwards the woman died, too. ²³Now on the day when people will become alive again after they die, whose wife will that woman be? Keep in mind that she had been married to all seven brothers!" ²⁴Jesus replied to them, "You are certainly wrong. You do not know what the scriptures teach about this. You also do not understand God's power to make people alive again. ²⁵That woman will not be the wife of any of those brothers, because when people become alive again, instead of men having wives and women having husbands, they will be like the angels in heaven. Angels do not marry. ²⁶But let me talk about people becoming alive again after they die. In the book that Moses wrote, he wrote about people who have died; I am sure that you have read it. When Moses was looking at the bush that was burning, God said to him, 'I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.' ²⁷Now it is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So when you say that dead people do not become alive again, you are very wrong."

²⁸A man who taught the Jewish laws heard their discussion. He knew that Jesus had answered the Sadducees' question very well. So he stepped forward and asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord. ³⁰You must love the Lord your God in all that you want and feel, in all that you think, and in all that you do!' ³¹The next most important commandment is: 'You must love the people around you as much as you love yourself.' No other commandment is more important than these two!" ³²The man said to Jesus, "Teacher, you have answered well. You correctly said that God is the only God and that there is no other God. ³³You have also said correctly that we should love God in all that we want and feel, in all that we think, and in all that we do. And you have said correctly that we must love people with whom we come in contact as much as we love ourselves. And you have also correctly said that doing these things pleases God more than burning food or animals as an offering or giving other sacrifices." ³⁴Jesus realized that this man had answered wisely. So he said to him, "You are close to the point where God will agree to rule over you." After that, the Jewish leaders were afraid to ask him any more questions like that to try to trick him.

³⁵Later, while Jesus was teaching in the temple area, he said to the people, "How is it that those who teach the law say—and they are correct in saying—that the Messiah is a descendant of King David? ³⁶The Holy Spirit caused David to say about the Messiah, 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me at my right hand, in the place where I will highly honor you above everyone else! Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies!"' ³⁷In this Psalm of David he refers to the Messiah as 'Lord.' But how—as the teachers of the law correctly say—can the Messiah also be a descendant of David?" Many people listened to him gladly as he taught these things.

³⁸While Jesus was teaching the people, he said to them, "Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our laws. They like people to honor them, so they put on long robes and walk around in order to show people how important they are. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. ³⁹They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At festivals, they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit. ⁴⁰They swindle the houses and property of widows by cheating them. Then they pretend that they are good by praying long prayers in public. God will certainly punish them severely!"

⁴¹Later, Jesus sat down in the temple area opposite the boxes in which people put offerings. As he was sitting there, he watched as they put money in one of the boxes. Many rich people put in large amounts of money. ⁴²Then a poor widow came along and dropped in two small copper coins, which had a very small value. ⁴³⁻⁴⁴Jesus gathered his disciples around him and said to them, "The truth is that those other people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this woman, who is very poor, has put in all the money that she had to pay for the things she needed for today. So this poor widow has put more money into the box than all the others!"

Chapter 13

¹While Jesus was leaving the temple area, one of his apprentices said to him, "Teacher, look at how marvelous these huge cut blocks of stone in the walls are and how wonderful these buildings are!" ²Jesus said to him, "Yes, these buildings that you are looking at are wonderful, but I want to tell you something about them. They will be destroyed completely. No block of stone here in this temple area will remain on top of another block."

³After they arrived at the Mount of Olives across the valley from the temple, Jesus sat down. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew were alone with him, they asked him, ⁴"Tell us, when will these things that God has planned happen? What will happen to show us these things are about to take place?" ⁵Jesus replied to them, "Beware that no one deceive you concerning what will happen! ⁶Many people will come and say that I sent them. They will say, 'I am the Messiah!' They will deceive many people. ⁷When you hear the sound of soldiers fighting battles, or when you hear news about wars that are far away, do not be troubled. These things will definitely happen. But when they do happen, do not think that God will finish all that he has planned at that time! ⁸Groups who live in various countries will fight each other, and various kings and leaders will fight each other. There will also be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines. Yet, when these things happen, people will have only just begun to suffer. These first things that they suffer will be like the first pains a woman suffers who is about to bear a child. They will suffer much more after that.

⁹Be ready for what people will do to you at that time. They will arrest you and put you on trial before groups of leaders. People will beat you in various synagogues. They will put you on trial in the presence of high government authorities. As a result, you will be able to tell them about me. ¹⁰My followers must proclaim the good news to people in all nations before God finishes everything that he has planned. ¹¹When people arrest you, do not worry about what you will say. Instead, say what God puts into your mind at that time. Then it will not be just you who will be speaking. It will be the Holy Spirit who will be speaking through you. ¹²Some brothers and sisters will betray other brothers and sisters. Some fathers will betray their children. Some children will betray their parents so that government officials will kill their parents. ¹³Most people will hate you because you believe in me. But all you who continue to trust in me until your life is finished will be saved.

¹⁴During that time the detestable thing will enter the temple. It will defile the temple and cause people to abandon it. When you see it where it should not be, you should run away quickly! (May everyone who is reading this pay attention to this warning!) At that time those people who are in the district of Judea should flee to higher hills. ¹⁵Those people who are outside their houses should not enter their houses in order to get anything. ¹⁶Those who are working in a field should not return to their houses in order to get additional clothes. ¹⁷I feel very sorry for women who will be pregnant and women who will be nursing their babies in those days, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ¹⁸⁻¹⁹In those days people will suffer very severely. People have never suffered like that since the time when God first created the world until now; and people will not suffer that way again. So pray that this painful time will not happen in winter, when it will be hard to travel. ²⁰If the Lord God had not decided that he would shorten that time when people suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten that time because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen. ²¹⁻²²At that time people will falsely say that they are the Messiah. And some will appear claiming to be prophets from God. Then they will perform many kinds of miracles. They will even try to deceive the people whom God has chosen. So at that time if someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!', or if someone says, 'Look, there he is!', do not believe it! ²³Be alert! Remember that I have warned you about all this before it happens!

²⁴After the time when people suffer like that, God will cause the sun to become dark, and the moon will not shine; ²⁵God will cause the stars to fall from the sky, and all the things in the sky to shake out of their place. ²⁶Then people will see me, the Son of Man, coming through the clouds powerfully and gloriously. ²⁷Then I will send out my angels so they can gather together the people whom God has chosen from everywhere, from the most remote places on earth.

²⁸Now I want you to learn something from how fig trees grow. When their branches become tender and their leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near for us. ²⁹Similarly, when you see what I have just described happening, you yourselves will know that it is very near the time for me to return. It will be as though I am already at the door. ³⁰Keep this in mind: this generation will not die until these things take place. ³¹You can be certain that these things that I have prophesied will happen. The earth and what is in the sky will one day be destroyed, but these things that I have told you will certainly happen. ³²But no one knows the exact time when I will return. The angels in heaven also do not know. Even I, God's Son, do not know. Only my Father knows. ³³So be ready! Always be alert, because you do not know when that time will come when God will cause all these events to happen! ³⁴When a man who wants to travel to a distant place is about to leave his house, he tells his servants that they should manage the house. He tells each one what he should do. Then he tells the doorkeeper to be ready for his return. ³⁵That man must always be ready, because he does not know whether his master will return in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn. Similarly, you also must always be ready, because you do not know when I will return. ³⁶May it not happen that when I come suddenly, I will find that you are not ready! ³⁷These words that I am saying to you apprentices I am saying to everyone: Always be ready!"

Chapter 14

¹It was only two days before the people would begin to celebrate the week-long festival that they called the Passover. During those days they also celebrated the festival which they called Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws were planning how they could arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death. ²But they were saying to one another, "We must not do it during the festival because if we do it then, the people will be very angry with us and riot!"

³Jesus was at Bethany town in the house of Simon, whom Jesus had healed from leprosy. While they were eating, a woman came to him. She was carrying a stone jar that contained expensive, fragrant perfume called nard. She opened the jar and then poured all the perfume on Jesus' head. ⁴Some of the people who were present became angry and said to themselves, "It is terrible that she wasted that perfume! ⁵It could have been sold for almost a year's wages and then the money could have been given to poor people!" So they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Stop scolding her! She has done to me what I consider to be very appropriate. So you should not bother her! ⁷You will always have poor people among you. So you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be here with you much longer. ⁸It is appropriate that she has done what she could do. It is as if she had known that I was going to die soon, because she has anointed my body ahead of time so that it is ready for burial. ⁹I will tell you this: Wherever my followers preach the good news throughout the world, they will also tell what she has done, and people will remember her."

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to talk about helping them to capture Jesus. He did that even though he was one of the twelve apprentices. ¹¹When the chief priests heard what he was willing to do for them, they were very happy. They promised that they would give him a large amount of money in return. Judas agreed and began watching for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

¹²On the first day of the festival that they call Unleavened Bread, when they kill the lambs for the Passover, Jesus' apprentices said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it?" ¹³So Jesus chose two of his apprentices to prepare everything. He said to them, "Go into Jerusalem city. A man will meet you, who will be carrying a large jar full of water. Follow him. ¹⁴When he enters a house, say to the man who owns the house, 'Our teacher wants us to prepare the meal of the Passover Celebration so that he can eat it with us his disciples. Please show us the room.' ¹⁵He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be furnished and ready for us to eat a meal in it. Then prepare the meal there for us." ¹⁶So the two apprentices left. They went into the city and found everything to be just like he had told them. They prepared the meal for the Passover Celebration there. ¹⁷When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with the twelve apprentices.

¹⁸As they were all sitting there and eating, Jesus said, "Listen carefully to this: One of you will make it possible for my enemies to arrest me. It is one of you who is eating with me right now!" ¹⁹The apprentices became very sad and they said to him one by one, "Surely it is not I?" ²⁰Then he said to them, "It is one of you twelve apprentices, the one who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²¹It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what has been written about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who betrays me! In fact, he would have been better off if he had never been born!"

²²While they were eating, he took a flat loaf of bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it into pieces and gave it to them and said to them, "This bread is my body. Take it and eat it." ²³Afterwards, he took a cup that contained wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and they all drank. ²⁴He said to them, "This wine is my blood, which is about to be shed when my enemies kill me. With this blood I will confirm the covenant that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁵I want you to know this: I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when God shows himself as king." ²⁶After they sang a hymn, they went out toward the Mount of Olives.

²⁷While they were on their way, Jesus said to them, "They wrote in the scriptures that God said about me, 'I will kill the shepherd and scatter his sheep.' Those words will come true. You will leave me and run away. ²⁸But after God makes me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee and meet you there." ²⁹Then Peter said to him, "Perhaps all the other disciples will leave you, but I will not! I will not leave you!" ³⁰Then Jesus said to him, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows two times, you will say about me three times, that you do not know me. ³¹But Peter replied strongly, "Even if they kill me, I will not say that I do not know you." And all the other apprentices said the same thing.

³²On the way, Jesus and his apprentices came to the place that people call Gethsemane. Then he said to some of his disciples, "Stay here while I pray!" ³³Then he took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely upset. ³⁴He said to them, "I am very sorrowful. It is as if I were about to die. You men stay here and keep watch!" ³⁵He went a bit farther and threw himself on the ground. Then he prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to suffer. ³⁶He said, "O my Father, because you are able to do everything, rescue me so that I do not have to suffer now! But do not do what I want. Instead, do what you want!" ³⁷Then he returned and found his apprentices sleeping. He woke them up and said, "Simon Peter! Are you sleeping? Were you not able to stay awake for just a short time?" ³⁸And he said to them, "You want to do what I say, but you are weak. So keep awake and pray so that you can resist when you are tempted!" ³⁹Then he went away again and prayed again what he prayed before. ⁴⁰When he returned, he found that they were sleeping again; they were so sleepy that they could not keep their eyes open. Because they were ashamed, they did not know what to say to him when he awakened them. ⁴¹Then he went and prayed again. He returned a third time and found them sleeping again. He said to them, "You are still asleep? No more of this! The time for me to suffer is about to begin. Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to capture me, the Son of Man. ⁴²So get up! Let us go! Look! Here comes the one who is enabling them to capture me!"

⁴³While he was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of Jesus' twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus' enemies to capture him. A crowd who carried swords and clubs was with him. The leaders of the Jewish council had sent them. ⁴⁴Judas, who was betraying Jesus, had previously told this crowd, "The man whom I kiss is the one whom you want. When I kiss him, seize him and lead him away." ⁴⁵So, when Judas arrived, he immediately went to Jesus and said, "My teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁴⁶Then the crowd grabbed Jesus. ⁴⁷But one of his apprentices who was standing nearby drew his sword. He struck the servant of the high priest with it, but he only cut off his ear. ⁴⁸Jesus said to them, "Have you come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a bandit?"

⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple courtyard teaching the people Why did you not seize me then? But this is happening in order that what the prophets have written in the Scriptures about me may happen." ⁵⁰All his apprentices at once left him and ran away. ⁵¹At that time, a young man was following Jesus. He was wearing only a linen cloth around his body. The crowd grabbed him, ⁵²but, as he pulled away from them, he left behind the linen cloth in their hands, and then he ran away naked.

⁵³The men who had seized Jesus led him away to the high priest's house. All of the Jewish council were gathering there. ⁵⁴Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He went into the courtyard of the house where the high priest lived, and he sat there with the men who guarded the house of the high priest. He was warming himself beside a fire. ⁵⁵The chief priests and all the rest of the Jewish council were looking for evidence against Jesus that would be strong enough to put him to death. But they did not find any evidence that would require the officials to put him to death. ⁵⁶Many other people told lies about Jesus, but the statements they made did not agree with each other. And so, their statements were not strong enough to make a charge against Jesus. ⁵⁷Finally, some stood up and accused him falsely by saying, ⁵⁸"We heard him when he said, 'I will destroy this temple that was built by men, and then within three days I will build another temple without help from anyone else.'" ⁵⁹But what some of these men said also did not agree with what others of them said.

⁶⁰Then the high priest himself stood up in front of them and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply? What do you say about all the things that they are saying in order to accuse you?" ⁶¹But Jesus was silent and did not reply. Then the high priest tried again. He asked him, "Are you the Messiah? Do you say that you are the Son of God?" ⁶²Jesus said, "I am. Furthermore, you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling beside God, who is completely powerful. You will also see me coming down through the clouds in the sky!" ⁶³When Jesus said this, the high priest tore his own outer garment in protest, and the high priest said, "Do we need more witnesses to testify against this man?" ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemous claim to be God!" They all agreed that Jesus was guilty and that he deserved to be put to death. ⁶⁵Then some of them began spitting on Jesus. They put a blindfold on him, and then they began striking him and saying to him, "If you are a prophet, tell us who hit you!" And those who were guarding Jesus struck him with their hands.

⁶⁶While Peter was outside in the courtyard of the high priest's house, one of the girls who worked for the high priest came near him. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself beside the fire, she looked at him closely. Then she said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from Nazareth!" ⁶⁸But he denied it by saying, "I do not know what you are talking about! I understand nothing of it!" Then he went away from there to the gate of the courtyard. ⁶⁹The servant girl saw him there and said again to the people who were standing nearby, "This man is one of those who have been with that man they arrested." ⁷⁰But he denied it again. After a little while, those who were standing there said to Peter again, "We can tell that you also are from Galilee district. So it is certain that you are one of those who accompanied Jesus!" ⁷¹But he began to say that God could punish him if he were not telling the truth; he said, "I do not know the man that you are talking about!" ⁷²Immediately the rooster crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him earlier: "Before the rooster crows a second time, you will deny three times that you know me." When he realized that he had denied him three times, he started crying.

Chapter 15

¹Very early in the morning the chief priests met together with the rest of the Jewish council in order to decide how to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor. Their guards tied Jesus' hands again. They took him to the residence of Pilate, the governor. ²Pilate asked Jesus, "Do you say that you are the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "You yourself have said so." ³Then the chief priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. ⁴So Pilate asked him again, "Do you have nothing to reply? Listen to how many bad things they are saying that you have done!" ⁵But even though Jesus was not guilty, he did not say anything more. The result was that Pilate was very much surprised.

⁶Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He usually released any prisoner the people requested. ⁷At that time there was a man called Barabbas who was in prison with some other men. They had committed murder when they rebelled against the Roman government. ⁸A crowd approached Pilate and asked him to release someone, just as in the past. ⁹Pilate answered them, "Would you like me to release for you the man whom you people say is your king?" ¹⁰He asked this because he realized what the chief priests were wanting to do. They were accusing Jesus because they were jealous of him because many people were becoming his disciples. ¹¹But the chief priests urged the crowd to request that Pilate

release Barabbas for them instead of Jesus. ¹²Pilate said to them again, "If I release Barabbas, what do you want me to do with your king?" ¹³Then they shouted back, "Command your soldiers to crucify him!" ¹⁴Then Pilate said to them, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵So because Pilate wanted to please the crowd, he released Barabbas to them. Then his soldiers flogged Jesus; after that, Pilate told them to take him away and crucify him.

¹⁶The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the barracks. Then they summoned the whole cohort who were on duty there. ¹⁷After the soldiers gathered together, they put a purple robe on Jesus. Then they placed on his head a crown that they had woven from thornbush branches. They did those things in order to ridicule him by pretending that he was a king. ¹⁸Then they greeted him like they would greet a king, in order to ridicule him; they said, "Greetings, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹They repeatedly struck his head with a reed and spat on him. They knelt down in front of him to pretend to honor him. ²⁰When they had finished mocking him, they pulled off the purple robe. They put his own clothes on him, and then they led him outside of the city in order to nail him to a cross.

²¹Now a man named Simon from Cyrene came along. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and he was passing by Jesus on his way to the city from somewhere else. The soldiers compelled Simon to carry the cross for Jesus. ²²The soldiers brought them both to a place that they call Golgotha. That name means, "A place like a skull." ²³Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with myrrh. They wanted him to drink it so that he would not feel so much pain when they crucified him. But he refused to drink it. ²⁴Some of the soldiers took his clothes. Then they nailed him to a cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling for them.

²⁵It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶They attached to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which it had been written the reason why they were nailing him to the cross. It said, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷At the same time, they also nailed to crosses two men who were robbers. They nailed one to a cross at the right side of Jesus and one to a cross at his left side. ^{28/1} [The scripture was fulfilled that says, 'He was counted with the lawless ones.'] ²⁹The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads at him. They said, "Aha! You said that you would destroy the temple and then you would build it again within three days. ³⁰If you could do that, then rescue yourself by coming down from the cross!" ³¹The chief priests, along with the men who taught the Jewish laws, also wanted to make fun of Jesus. So they said to each other, "He has saved others from trouble, but he cannot save himself! ³²He said, 'I am the Messiah. I am the King who rules the people of Israel.' If his words are true, he should come down now from the cross! Then we will believe him!" The two men who were nailed onto crosses beside him also insulted him.

³³At noon the whole land became dark, and it stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ³⁴At three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ³⁵When some of the people who were standing there heard the word 'Eloi', they misunderstood it and said, "Listen! He is calling for the prophet Elijah!" ³⁶One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. He placed it on the tip of a reed, and then held it up to try to get Jesus to suck on it. He said, "Wait! Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down from the cross!" ³⁷And then Jesus shouted loudly, stopped breathing, and died. ³⁸At that moment the curtain in the temple sanctuary split into two pieces from top to bottom. That showed that ordinary people could now go into the presence of God. ³⁹The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing in front of Jesus. When he saw how Jesus had died, he exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹There were also some women there; they were watching these events from a distance. They had accompanied Jesus when he was in Galilee, and they had provided what he needed. They had come with him to Jerusalem. Among those women was Mary from Magdala. There was another Mary, who was the mother of the younger James and of Joses. There was also Salome.

⁴²⁻⁴³When evening was near, a man named Joseph from Arimathea came there. He was a member of the Jewish council, one whom everyone respected. He was also one of those who had been waiting expectantly for when God would show himself as king. Evening was now approaching. It was the day before the Sabbath, a day the Jews called the day of preparation. So he went with courage to Pilate and asked him to permit him to take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it immediately. ⁴⁴Pilate was surprised when he heard that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the officer who was in charge of the soldiers who had crucified Jesus, and he asked him if

Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵When the officer told Pilate that Jesus was dead, Pilate allowed Joseph to take away the body. ⁴⁶After Joseph had bought a linen cloth, he and others took Jesus' body down from the cross. They wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that previously had been dug out of the rock cliff. Then they rolled a huge flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary from Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus were watching where they placed Jesus' body.

15:28 ^[1]

Chapter 16

¹On Saturday evening when the Jewish day of rest had ended, Mary from Magdala, Mary the mother of the younger James, and Salome bought fragrant ointments to follow the Jewish custom and anoint Jesus' body for burial. ²Very early on Sunday, the first day of the Jewish week, just after the sun rose, they took the fragrant ointment and started going toward the tomb. ³While they were going there, they were asking each other, "Who will roll away for us the stone that blocks the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴After they arrived, they looked up and were surprised to see that someone had rolled away the stone because it was very large. ⁵They entered the tomb and saw an angel who looked like a young man. He was sitting at the right side of the cave. He was wearing a white robe. As a result, they were astonished. ⁶The young man said to them, "Do not be astonished! I know that you are looking for Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was put to death by being nailed to a cross. But he has become alive again! He is not here! Look! Here is the place where they placed his body. ⁷Go and tell his apprentices. Particularly be sure that you tell Peter. Tell them, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee district, and you will see him there, just like he told you previously!'" ⁸The women went outside and ran from the tomb. They were trembling because they were afraid, and they were astonished. But they did not say anything to anyone about this because they were afraid.

⁹^[1] [When Jesus became alive again early on Sunday morning, the first day of the Jewish week, he appeared first to Mary from Magdala. She was the woman from whom he had previously forced out seven evil spirits. ¹⁰She went to those who had been with Jesus, while they were mourning and crying. She told them what she had seen. ¹¹But when she told them that Jesus was alive again and that she had seen him, they refused to believe it. ¹²Later that day, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of his apprentices while they were walking from Jerusalem to the surrounding area. ¹³After they recognized him, those two went back to Jerusalem. They told his other apprentices what had happened, but they did not believe it. ¹⁴Later Jesus appeared to the eleven apprentices while they were eating. He scolded them because they had stubbornly refused to believe the reports of those who saw him after he had become alive again.

¹⁵He said to them, "Go into the whole world and preach the good news to everyone! ¹⁶God will save everyone who believes your message and who is baptized. He will condemn everyone who does not believe. ¹⁷Those who believe the good news will perform miracles to show that I am with them. By my power they will do miracles like these: they will force evil spirits out of people. They will speak in languages that they have not learned. ¹⁸If they pick up snakes or if they drink any poisonous liquid accidentally, they will not be hurt. God will heal sick people on whom they lay their hands."

¹⁹After the Lord Jesus had said this to his apprentices, God took him up into heaven. Then he sat down on his throne beside God at the place of highest honor at his right hand, to rule with him. ²⁰As for the apprentices, they went out from Jerusalem, and then they preached everywhere. Wherever they went, the Lord enabled them to perform miracles. By doing that, he showed people that God's message is true.]

16:9 ^[1]

Luke

Chapter 1

¹Many people have already been writing about the things that happened among us. ²They have been recording what the people who saw these things happen told us about them. Those people were there from the time when everything first started happening, and they have been sharing the story ever since. ³I myself have carefully investigated everything that happened from the very beginning. So I decided that I should also write an accurate account for you. Your Excellency, Theophilus, ⁴I want you to know that what people have told you about Jesus is true.

⁵When Herod was the ruler of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a descendant of Abijah, and so he took his turn serving in the temple with other priests who were also descendants of Abijah. His wife was named Elizabeth. She was a descendant of Aaron, and so she was also from the priestly line. ⁶God considered that both of them were righteous because they always obeyed everything that the Lord had commanded. ⁷But they did not have any children, because Elizabeth had been unable to bear children. And now she and her husband were too old to have children.

⁸The time came for Zechariah's group of priests to take its turn {serving in Jerusalem}. So Zechariah was there working as a priest for God. ⁹The priests chose Zechariah to go into the Lord's temple and burn incense there. They chose him in their usual way, by casting lots {to determine whom God wanted to perform a particular task}. ¹⁰When it was time to burn the incense, many people were praying {in the courtyard} outside {the temple}. ¹¹Just then, an angel of the Lord came to Zechariah. He stood at the right side of the altar where he was burning incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw the angel, he became agitated and terrified. ¹³But the angel said to him, "There is no reason to be afraid {of me}, Zechariah. You have been praying, and God is going to answer your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son for you. Give him the name John. ¹⁴You will be very happy, and many other people will also be happy when he is born. ¹⁵You and they will be happy because your son will be very influential for God. He must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. The Holy Spirit will begin to influence him even before he is born. ¹⁶Your son will persuade many of the Israelites to stop sinning and to start obeying the Lord their God again. ¹⁷Your son will go in advance of the Lord and he will be powerful in his spirit like the prophet Elijah was. He will cause parents to love their children again. He will cause many people who do not obey God to want to obey him and to live wisely and righteously. He will do this so that the Lord's people will be ready for him when he comes."

¹⁸Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure that the things you have said will really happen? I am very old, and my wife is also very old, so it is difficult for me to believe that they will happen."

¹⁹Then the angel replied to him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! God sent me to tell you this good news about what will happen to you. ²⁰Now listen! What I have told you will certainly happen at the time that God has decided. But since you did not believe my message, God will keep you from talking. You will not be able to speak until the day that your son is born!"

²¹{While Zechariah and the angel were talking in the temple,} the people in the courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he was staying in the temple for such a long time. ²²Then he came out of the temple, but he was not able to speak to them. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands to try to explain what had happened. This made the people conclude that he had seen a vision from God while he was in the temple.

²³When Zechariah finished the time he needed to work as a priest in the temple, he left Jerusalem and went back to his home.

²⁴Some time after this, his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant, and she did not go out in public for five months. She said to herself, ²⁵"The Lord has enabled me to become pregnant. In this way, he has shown compassion to me. Thanks to him, I no longer have to feel ashamed around other people."

²⁶When Elizabeth had been pregnant for six months, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town called Nazareth in the district of Galilee. ²⁷God sent him there to speak to a virgin whose name was Mary. {Her parents had promised that} she would marry a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. ²⁸The angel came to where Mary was and said to her, "Hello, blessed one! You are very special to the Lord!" ²⁹But when he said this, she was confused. She had to try to understand what this greeting could mean. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, "God desires to bless you, Mary, so do not be afraid! ³¹Now listen. You will become pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. Give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great, and he will be the Son of God Most High. God the Lord will make him king over his people, just as his ancestor David was. ³³He will always be the king over the people of Israel. He will rule over them forever!"

³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, "But I am a virgin. So how can this happen?" ³⁵The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of God Most High will be like a shadow falling on you. So the baby you give birth to will be holy. He will be the Son of God. ³⁶Also listen to this. Your relative Elizabeth is also pregnant, and she is going to have a son. Because she is very old, people thought that she could not bear children. But she has been pregnant now for almost six months. ³⁷So you see, God can do anything!" ³⁸Then Mary said, "All right. I am willing to obey the Lord. God can make the things you have described happen to me." Then the angel left her.

³⁹Very soon after that, Mary got ready and traveled as quickly as she could to the city where Zechariah lived, which was in the highlands of Judea. ⁴⁰She entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth, his wife. ⁴¹As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby inside Elizabeth suddenly moved. Immediately the Holy Spirit inspired Elizabeth to speak. ⁴²She exclaimed loudly to Mary, "God has blessed you more than he has blessed any other woman, and he has blessed the baby you will bear! ⁴³I am not worthy of this, that you, the mother of my Lord, should come to visit me! ⁴⁴I know all of this because as soon as I heard you greet me, the baby in my womb started moving around because he was so excited! ⁴⁵You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord told you would come true."

⁴⁶Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord

⁴⁷and I feel very joyful about God,

the one who saves me!

⁴⁸I am happy because he was gracious to me, even though I was not very important.

Just imagine this—from now on, people living at all times in the future will say that God has blessed me.

⁴⁹They will say this because God, the Powerful and Holy One, has done great things for me.

⁵⁰He acts mercifully throughout all time periods to the people who revere him.

⁵¹He has shown people that he is very powerful.

He has routed those who think proudly within themselves.

⁵²He has made rulers stop ruling,

but he has honored people who are lowly.

⁵³He has let people who were hungry eat good food until they were full,

but he has sent rich people away without giving them anything.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵He has helped Israel, the people who serve him.

Long ago he promised our ancestors that he would be merciful to them.

He has kept that promise and has always acted mercifully toward Abraham and all who descended from him.”

⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. After that, she went back home.

⁵⁷When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth to her child, she bore a son. ⁵⁸When her neighbors and relatives heard about how kind the Lord had been to her by giving her a son, they were very happy along with Elizabeth.

⁵⁹Eight days later, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby {to show that he belonged to God}. {This was also the time to give the baby a name.} The people wanted to name the baby Zechariah because that was his father’s name. ⁶⁰But his mother said, “No, {his name will not be Zechariah.} His name will be John!”

⁶¹So they said to her, “But John is not the name of any of your relatives!” ⁶²Then they made motions with their hands to his father, asking him to indicate what name he wanted to give to his son. ⁶³So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. {When they gave him one,} he wrote on it, “His name is John.” This amazed all of the people who were there! ⁶⁴Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

⁶⁵{When} the people who lived nearby {heard about these things, they} felt a deep reverence for God. {They told many other people about what had happened,} and this news spread to people throughout the highlands of Judea.

⁶⁶Everyone who heard about these things kept thinking about them. They thought, “Certainly this child will grow up to be someone very special!” {They thought this} because {they could see that} the Lord was present in his life in a powerful way. ⁶⁷After the child’s father, Zechariah, could speak again, the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah and he spoke these words from God:

⁶⁸“Praise the Lord, the God whom we people of Israel worship,

because he has come to set us, his people, free.

⁶⁹He has sent someone who will powerfully save us,

someone who is descended from David, whom he chose to be king.

⁷⁰{Long ago God inspired his prophets to say that he would do these things.}

⁷¹{God is sending this deliverer} to save us from our enemies,

and {he will rescue us} from the power of everyone who hates us.

⁷²God has done this because he is faithful to our ancestors and so he is keeping the holy promise that he made to them.

⁷³This is the promise that he solemnly swore to our ancestor Abraham about what he would do for us.

⁷⁴He promised that he would rescue us from the power of our enemies

so that we could serve him without being afraid of them.

⁷⁵As a result, we could live in the right way, as people who completely belong to him, for as long as we live.”

⁷⁶{Then Zechariah said to his baby son,}

“And as for you, my child, you will be a prophet

of the Most High God.

You will begin your work before the Lord comes

so that you can prepare the people to be ready for him.

⁷⁷You will tell God's people that he wants to save them by forgiving their sins.

⁷⁸God wants to save us because he is compassionate and merciful.

That is why he is sending this Savior from heaven to help us.

⁷⁹This Savior will show the truth to those who do not know it, even to those who do not know it at all. He will show us how to live in a way that pleases God."

⁸⁰Over time, Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby boy grew up and became spiritually strong. Then he went to live in a desolate region. He was still living there when he began to preach publicly to God's people, Israel.

Chapter 2

¹Also during that time, Caesar Augustus{, who ruled over the whole Roman Empire,} commanded that every person living in his empire had to register {his name in an official list of the people who lived there}. ²This was the first time that the Romans recorded the names of everyone living in their empire. They did this during the time when Quirinius was the governor of the province of Syria. ³So everyone had to go to his family's hometown to register. ⁴⁻⁵Joseph also traveled to his family's hometown, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, they left the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee and traveled to the region of Judea, to the town of Bethlehem, which is also known as the city of David. Joseph and Mary went there to be registered in the public record. ⁶⁻⁷When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay in a place where visitors usually stayed. So they had to stay in a place where animals slept overnight. While they were there the time came for Mary to give birth and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in wide strips of cloth and laid him down where the food was kept for the animals inside the barn.

⁸There were some shepherds camping out in the open country near Bethlehem that night. They were there taking care of their sheep. ⁹Suddenly they saw an angel from the Lord standing in front of them. A glorious light from the Lord shone all over them. They became very afraid. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, because I have come to tell you very good news! This news is for all people, and should make everyone rejoice! ¹¹They will rejoice because today, in Bethlehem, King David's hometown, the person was born who will save you {from your sins}! He is the Messiah, the Lord! ¹²And here is a sign for you. {If you go to Bethlehem,} you will find a baby there wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding place for animals."

¹³Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven appeared with the other angel. They were all praising God by saying,

¹⁴"In the highest heaven may all the angels praise God! And on the earth may all the people who please God be peaceful {with God and each other}!"

¹⁵When the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "We should go right now to Bethlehem and see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" ¹⁶So they went quickly, and when they had found {the place where} Mary and Joseph {were staying}, they saw the baby lying in a feeding place for animals. ¹⁷After they had seen him, they told everyone what the Lord had revealed to them about this baby. ¹⁸All the people who were listening thought that what the shepherds told them was amazing. ¹⁹But Mary carefully remembered all of these things and thought about them continually. ²⁰The shepherds returned {to the fields where their sheep were}. They kept talking about how great God is and praising him for all of the things that they had heard and seen. Everything had been exactly as the angel had told them it would be.

²¹On the eighth day after the baby was born, they circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name that the angel had told them to give him even before Mary had become pregnant with him.

²²Mary and Joseph waited the number of days that the law of Moses required for her to become ceremonially clean again after having a baby. Then they brought him to Jerusalem so that they could dedicate him to the Lord {in the temple}. ²³They did this to obey the law of the Lord, which says, "You must set apart for the Lord every male offspring who is the first to be born." ²⁴There they offered the sacrifice that the law of the Lord told the parents of a newborn son to offer, "two turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵At that time there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He did what was pleasing to God and obeyed God's laws. He was eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to encourage the people of Israel. The Holy Spirit was directing him. ²⁶The Holy Spirit had previously revealed to him that before he died, the Lord would send the Messiah and he would get to see him. ²⁷So the Holy Spirit led Simeon to go into the temple courtyard. He was there when Joseph and Mary brought in the baby Jesus so that they could perform the ceremony for him that God had commanded in the law. ²⁸{When Simeon saw Jesus,} he picked him up in his arms and thanked God, and then he said,

²⁹"Lord, you have kept your promise to me, and now I am content for you to let me die.

³⁰Because I have seen the one whom you have sent to save people,

³¹the one whom you have prepared for all people to see.

³²He will be like a light that will reveal your truth to the other nations. He will show how glorious your plan is for Israel, your people."

³³Jesus' father and mother marveled at what Simeon said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus' mother, Mary, "Note well what I say: God has determined that, because of this child, many people in Israel will reject God and many will submit themselves to God. He will be a sign {from God} that many people will oppose.

³⁵As for you, {the cruel things that people will do to him will make you so sad that} it will feel as if a sword is piercing through your very soul. {But this is necessary} so that he can reveal the secret thoughts of many people."

³⁶A prophetess named Anna was also there {in the temple courtyard}. She was very old. She was the daughter of Phanuel, who was from the tribe of Asher. As a young woman, she had been married for seven years{, and then her husband had died}. ³⁷After that, she had lived as a widow for 84 more years. It seemed as if she was always in the temple, worshiping God by fasting and praying, {at all times of the} night and day. ³⁸At that same time, Anna approached {Joseph and Mary and the baby}. Anna began thanking God {for the baby}. Afterwards, she kept speaking about Jesus to many other people who were also expecting {God to send} the Messiah who would set the people of Israel free.

³⁹After Joseph and Mary had finished doing everything that the law of the Lord required {for parents of a first son}, they returned to their own town, Nazareth, in the district of Galilee. ⁴⁰As the child grew up, he became strong and very wise, and God was present in his life.

⁴¹Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. ⁴²So when Jesus was 12 years old, they all traveled to Jerusalem together when it was time for the {Passover} festival. ⁴³When the days for celebrating the festival ended, Jesus' parents started to return home, but their son, Jesus, stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know {that he was still there}. ⁴⁴They thought that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. But after walking for one day, they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶Three days after {Mary and Joseph had left Jerusalem}, they found Jesus at the temple. He was sitting among the Jewish religious teachers. He was listening to them teach and he was asking them questions. ⁴⁷All the people who heard what he said were amazed at how much he understood and how well he answered {the questions that the teachers asked}. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were very surprised. His mother said to him, "My son, you should not have done this to us. Listen to me! Your father and I have been very worried as we have been searching for you!" ⁴⁹He said to them, "I am surprised that you needed to search for me. I thought you would know that I needed to be at my Father's house{, learning about him}." ⁵⁰But they did not understand the meaning of what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he

returned with them to Nazareth, and he always obeyed them. His mother kept thinking deeply about all the things that had happened.

⁵²As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser, and he grew taller. God and people continued to approve of him more and more.

Chapter 3

¹{This next part of the history happened} when Tiberius Caesar had been ruling {the Roman Empire} for about fifteen years. At that time, Pontius Pilate was the governor of the province of Judea, Herod Antipas was ruling the district of Galilee, his brother Philip was ruling the regions of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius was ruling the region of Abilene. ²The high priests {at the temple in Jerusalem} were Annas and Caiaphas. During that time, God spoke to Zechariah's son John {while he was living} out in the desolate area. ³John traveled all around the area near the Jordan River. He kept announcing {to the people who came to hear him}, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must reject wrong ways of living. Then I will baptize you!" ⁴{When John preached like this,} the words came true that the prophet Isaiah wrote on a scroll long ago:

"In the desolate place, someone will be calling out {to the people}:

'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!

Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'

⁵{When an important person is going to arrive by a certain road,} people fill in all the ravines and level off all the steep places in it.

They make the road straight wherever it is crooked,

and they smooth out all the bumps. {In the same way, God will make sure that there will be people who are ready for the Messiah.}

⁶Then everyone will recognize God's way of saving people."

⁷Large groups of people were coming out {to the desolate place where John was} so that he would baptize them. So John said to them, "You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You think that if I baptize you, God will spare you when he punishes sinners. {But I did not say that!} ⁸You need to do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living! And do not even begin to say to yourselves, '{Certainly God will not punish us, because} we are descendants of Abraham!' {That does not impress God.} Let me assure you, God could turn these stones into descendants of Abraham! ⁹You are like fruit trees that do not produce good fruit. God is like a man who is positioning the head of his axe at the base of those trees, ready to chop them down and throw them into the fire. God is ready to punish you like that if you continue sinning." ¹⁰Then {several of the people in} the crowd asked him, "What kinds of things, then, does God want us to do?" ¹¹He answered them, "If any of you has two shirts, you should give one of them to someone who does not have a shirt. If any of you has plenty of food, you should give some to those who do not have food." ¹²Some tax collectors also came, wanting John to baptize them. They asked him, "Teacher, what {does God want us} to do?" ¹³He said to them, "Do not collect more money {from the people} than the Roman government tells you to collect!" ¹⁴There were also some men there who were soldiers. Even they asked him, "And what about us? What does God want us to do?" He said to them, "Do not force people to give you money by threatening to harm them or by falsely accusing them {of doing something wrong}. Be content with the amount of money that you earn as a soldier." ¹⁵People had been waiting {for a long time for the Messiah to come. But now they were getting very hopeful about John}. They thought that he might be the Messiah. ¹⁶But John said to all of them, "{I am not the Messiah.} He is coming, and he is far greater than I am. He is so great that I am not worthy even to be like the slave who would untie the straps of his sandals {when he comes in the house}! When I baptized you, I used only water. But {when the Messiah comes,} he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, who will judge and purify you. ¹⁷{The Messiah is ready to do this, just like} a

farmer who has his winnowing fork ready to use. A farmer separates all the good grain from the useless chaff. He stores the grain safely in his barn, but he burns the chaff until it is all gone. {That represents how the Messiah will gather up the people who are pleasing to God, and he will punish the people who are displeasing to God.}" ¹⁸In many different ways like this, John urged the people {to stop sinning and to submit themselves to God}, as he kept telling them the good news {from God}. ¹⁹John even rebuked King Herod for all of the many evil things that Herod had done. But when John rebuked Herod for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive, ²⁰Herod did another evil thing. He had his soldiers put John in prison. ²¹But before Herod did that, while John was still baptizing many people, John also baptized Jesus. Afterwards, while Jesus was praying, the sky opened. ²²Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down and landed on Jesus. Then God spoke {to Jesus} from heaven. He said, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you!" ²³At that time Jesus began his work for God. He was about 30 years old. This is Jesus' lineage: People considered Jesus to be the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli. ²⁴Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. ²⁵Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. ²⁶Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. ²⁷Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri. ²⁸Neri was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. ²⁹Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Jorim. Jorim was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. ³⁰Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. ³¹Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David. ³²David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. ³³Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son of Judah. ³⁴Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. ³⁵Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. ³⁶Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. ³⁷Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Cainan. ³⁸Cainan was the son of Enos. Enos was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam came from God.

Chapter 4

¹After John baptized him, Jesus came back out of the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit was fully empowering him. Then the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. ²Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. While he was there, the devil kept tempting him. During that entire time, Jesus did not eat anything. So when the 40 days were over, he was very hungry. ³Then the devil said to Jesus, "If you really are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread {for you to eat}!" ⁴Jesus replied, "{No, I will not do that, because} the Scriptures say, 'People need more than just food in order to live.'" ⁵Then the devil took Jesus up {to the top of a high mountain} and showed him all the nations of the world in an instant. ⁶Then the devil said to Jesus, "I will make you the ruler over all of these nations and you will possess all of their wealth. I can do this because God has permitted me to control all of them, and so I can give them to whomever I wish. ⁷All you have to do is bow down and worship me. Then I will let you rule them all!" ⁸But Jesus replied, "{No, I will not worship you, because} the Scriptures say, 'You must only worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you may serve!'"

⁹Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. He set him on the highest part of the temple and said to him, "If you really are the Son of God, jump down from here. ¹⁰You will not be hurt, because the Scriptures say,

'God will command his angels to protect you.' ¹¹And the Scriptures also say,

'The angels will hold you up in their hands when you are falling, so that you will not get hurt.'" ¹²But Jesus replied, "{No, I will not do that, because} the Scriptures also say: 'Do not test the Lord your God'."

¹³Then, after the devil had finished trying to tempt Jesus in all of these ways, the devil left Jesus to wait until another time {when he could try to tempt Jesus again}.

¹⁴After this, Jesus {left the desolate area and} returned to the district of Galilee. The Holy Spirit was empowering him. Throughout that whole region, people heard about Jesus and told others about him. ¹⁵He taught people in their Jewish meeting places. {As a result,} all of the people praised him.

¹⁶Then Jesus went to Nazareth, the town where he had grown up. As he usually did on the Jewish day of rest, he went to the Jewish meeting place. {At the appropriate time,} he stood up to read {something aloud from the Scriptures}. ¹⁷{Jesus wanted to read some of the words that} the prophet Isaiah {had spoken long ago. So he asked for} the scroll that contained these words, and a synagogue attendant handed it to him. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place from which he wanted to read. {He read these words:}

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is empowering me,

because he has specially appointed me to declare God's good news to people who are poor.

He has sent me to declare to people who are in prison that they will go free,

and to tell those who are blind that they will see again.

He has sent me to release people whom others are oppressing,

¹⁹and to announce that now is the time when the Lord will act favorably toward people."

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and he sat down {to teach the people}. Everyone in the Jewish meeting place was looking intently at him. ²¹He began to teach them by saying, "I have made this Scripture passage come true right now, as you heard me read it." ²²Everyone there approved of him and they were amazed at the wonderful things that he said. Many of them said to each other, "{It is surprising that he can speak like this!} This man is only Joseph's son!" ²³He said to them, "Surely some of you will quote to me the proverb that says, 'Doctor, heal yourself!' {What you will mean by it is, 'People told us that} you did miracles in the town of Capernaum. {If you want us to believe that you are a prophet, then} do the same kind of miracles here in your hometown!" ²⁴Then he said, "It is certainly true that the people in a prophet's own hometown do not accept that he is a prophet. ²⁵Think about this: There were many widows in Israel during the time when the prophet Elijah lived. At that time there was no rain for three and a half years. This caused a great famine throughout the whole country. ²⁶And yet God did not send Elijah to help any of the widows in Israel. Instead, God sent him to the town of Zarephath near the city of Sidon, to help a {non-Israelite} widow there. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel during the time when the prophet Elisha lived. But Elisha did not heal any of them. Instead, he healed only Naaman, {a non-Israelite man} from the country of Syria." ²⁸When all the people in the Jewish meeting place heard him say those things, they became very angry. ²⁹So they stood up, grabbed Jesus, and dragged him out of the city. They took him to the edge of the cliff outside of their city in order to throw him off of the cliff and kill him. ³⁰But Jesus simply walked through the crowd and went away.

³¹From there Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On each Jewish day of rest, he taught the people {in the Jewish meeting place there}. ³²The things that Jesus taught the people amazed them, because he spoke as someone who knew what he was talking about. ³³Now in that Jewish meeting place there was a man whom an evil spirit controlled. He shouted very loudly, ³⁴"Aah! Jesus, from Nazareth! What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are the Holy One from God!" ³⁵But Jesus spoke sternly to the evil spirit. He said, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The evil spirit threw the man down on the ground in the middle of the people. But then he came out of the man, without harming him. ³⁶All of the people {in the Jewish

meeting place} were amazed. Many of them said to each other, "We have never seen anything like this! His words are so powerful! He commands the evil spirits as if they must obey him, and {when he commands them,} they come out {of people}!" ³⁷In every place throughout the surrounding region, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

³⁸Then Jesus left the Jewish meeting place and went to the house of a man named Simon. His mother-in-law was there. She was sick and had a high fever. The people there asked Jesus to heal her. ³⁹So Jesus went over to where she was and stood next to her. He commanded the fever to leave her, and it did! She immediately got up and served them some food.

⁴⁰When the sun was setting{, which ended the Jewish day of rest}, many people whose friends or relatives were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus. He put his hands on each one of them and healed them. ⁴¹{As Jesus put his hands on the sick people,} evil spirits also came out from many of them. {As the evil spirits came out,} they shouted {to Jesus}, "You are the Son of God!" But he commanded those evil spirits not to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴²Early the next morning, Jesus went out to an uninhabited place. Crowds of people went looking for him. When they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³But Jesus said to them, "I must also tell people in other cities the good news that they can have God rule their lives, because that is what God sent me here to do." ⁴⁴So he went on preaching in the Jewish meeting places throughout the province of Judea.

Chapter 5

¹One day while many people were crowding around Jesus and listening to him teach God's message, he was standing next to Lake Gennesaret. ²He saw two fishing boats there at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left the boats and were washing their fishing nets. ³Jesus stepped into one of the two boats, the one that belonged to Simon. Jesus asked him to move the boat out a short distance away from the shore. Then Jesus sat down in the boat and continued to teach the crowds from there. ⁴After he finished teaching them, he said to Simon, "Take the boat out to deeper water and let your nets down into the water to catch some fish." ⁵Simon replied, "Master, we worked hard through the whole night and yet we did not catch any fish. But I will let down the nets again because you told me to." ⁶So Simon and his crew let down their nets and they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷They motioned to their fishing partners in the other boat to come and help them. So they came and filled both boats so full with fish that the boats began to sink. ⁸Seeing this, Simon Peter bowed down before Jesus and said, "Please leave me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." ⁹{He said this} because he marveled at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled. ¹⁰James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners, were just as amazed. But Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid! {Until now you gathered in fish, but} from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples." ¹¹So after the men brought the boats to the shore, they left their fishing business and everything else and went with Jesus.

¹²Jesus went to one of the towns nearby. There was a man there who was covered with a skin disease. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground in front of him. He pleaded with him, "Lord, {please heal me!} I know that you are able to heal me if you are willing!" ¹³Then Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. He said, "I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!" Immediately the man was healed. He no longer had leprosy! ¹⁴Then Jesus told him, "Do not tell anyone that I healed you. First, go and show yourself to a priest so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Bring the sacrifice that Moses commanded you to offer to become ceremonially clean again." ¹⁵But instead even more people heard {about how Jesus had healed the man}. As a result, large crowds came to hear {Jesus teach} and to have him heal them from their sicknesses. ¹⁶But he would often go away from them to isolated areas and pray.

¹⁷One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect and some expert teachers of the Jewish law were sitting nearby. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus the power to heal people. ¹⁸While Jesus

was there, several men brought him a man who was paralyzed. They were carrying the man on a sleeping pad and trying to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. ¹⁹But because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, they were not able to bring him in. So they went up {the outside steps} onto the flat roof. {They removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening.} Then they lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle {of the crowd}. He came down right in front of Jesus. ²⁰When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, "Friend, I forgive your sins!" ²¹The teachers of the law and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, "This man insults God by saying that! Nobody except God can forgive sins!" ²²Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "You should not question what I said within yourselves! ²³Here is something I want you to think carefully about. Which is easier to say, 'I forgive your sins,' or, 'Get up and walk'? {You might think that saying 'I forgive your sins' is easier because it does not require any visible proof.} ²⁴But I want you to know that God has given me, the Son of Man, authority to forgive people on earth their sins. {To demonstrate that, I will also tell this man to get up.}" Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, "To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!" ²⁵Immediately {the man was healed!} He got up in front of them all. He picked up the sleeping pad on which he had been lying, and he went home, praising God. ²⁶All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were completely amazed {at what they had seen Jesus do}. They kept saying, "We have seen wonderful things today!"

²⁷Then Jesus left that place and saw a man named Levi who collected taxes {for the Roman government}. He was sitting in the booth {where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required}. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" ²⁸So Levi left his work and went with Jesus.

²⁹Later on Levi prepared a big feast in his own house for Jesus {and his disciples}. There was a large group of tax collectors and others eating together with them. ³⁰Then some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect, including some of them who taught Jewish laws, complained to Jesus' disciples. They said, "You should not be having a banquet with tax collectors and {other} sinners." ³¹Then Jesus said to them, "People who are well do not need a doctor. People who are sick need a doctor. ³²Similarly, I did not come from heaven to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. On the contrary, I came to invite those who know that they are sinners to turn from their sinful behavior and come to me."

³³Those Jewish leaders responded to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptizer often abstain from food and pray. The disciples of the Pharisees do that too. But your disciples keep on eating and drinking! Why do they not fast like the others?" ³⁴Jesus answered, "No one tells the friends of the bridegroom to fast while the wedding celebration is still going on! ³⁵But some day the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then, at that time, they will abstain from food."

³⁶Then Jesus gave other examples to explain what he meant. He said, "People never tear a piece of cloth from a new garment and attach it to an old garment to mend it. If they did that, they would ruin the new garment by tearing it, and the piece of cloth from the new garment would not match the old garment. ³⁷And no one puts newly squeezed wine into old skin bags {to store it}. If anyone did that, the skin bags would tear open {because they would not stretch when the new wine fermented and expanded}. Then the skin bags would become useless, and the wine {would also become useless because it} would spill out. ³⁸On the contrary, new wine must be put into new skin bags.

³⁹Those who have only drunk old wine do not want to try new wine, because they think, 'The old wine is good enough!'"

Chapter 6

¹One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the disciples picked some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grain from the husks. Then they ate the grain.

²Some Pharisees {were watching this. They} said {to them}, "You should not be doing work like that! Our law forbids us to do work on the Sabbath day!" ³Jesus replied to the Pharisees, "Consider what the Scriptures say

about what David did when he and the men who were with him were hungry. ⁴As you know, David entered the tabernacle {and asked for some food}. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display before God. David ate some, and he also gave some to the men who were with him, even though the law said they could not do that. Only priests could eat that bread.” ⁵Jesus also said to them, “I, the Son of Man, have the authority {to determine what is right for people to do} on the Sabbath!”

⁶On another Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue and taught {the people}. A man was there who could not move his right hand. ⁷Some teachers of the Jewish laws and some Pharisees {were there. They} were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see whether he would heal the man. If he did, then they would accuse him {of disobeying their laws about not working on the Sabbath}. ⁸But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here in front of everyone!” So the man got up and stood there. ⁹Then Jesus said to them, “I want to ask you a question. Do the laws that God gave Moses command people to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? Do they command people to save a life on the Sabbath, or to destroy it?” ¹⁰{No one answered him, so} he looked around at them all and then said to the man, “Stretch out your withered hand!” The man did that, and his hand became completely well again! ¹¹But the religious leaders were very angry, and they discussed with one another about what they could do to {get rid of} Jesus.

¹²Around that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray. He prayed to God all night there. ¹³The next day he called all his disciples to come to him. From among them he chose 12 men and made them apostles. ¹⁴{These are their names:} Simon, to whom Jesus gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter’s brother; James and his brother, John; Philip; Bartholomew; ¹⁵Matthew{, whose other name was Levi}; Thomas; another man named James whose father was named Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; ¹⁶Judas, the son of a different man named James; and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

¹⁷Jesus came down from the hills with his disciples and stood on a level area. There was a great crowd of his disciples there. There was also a large group of people who had come from Jerusalem and from many other places in the region of Judea, and from the coastal areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They came to hear Jesus {teach them} and heal them from their diseases. He also healed those whom evil spirits had troubled. ¹⁹Everyone in the crowd tried to touch him, because he was healing everyone by his power. ²⁰Then he looked at his disciples and said, “It is very good for you who are poor, because God is ruling you. ²¹It is very good for you who are hungry now, because God will give you everything you need.

It is very good for you who are grieving now, because God will someday make you laugh with joy.

²²It is very good when other people hate you, when they reject you and insult you and say that you are bad because you follow me, the Son of Man. ²³When that happens, rejoice! Jump up and down because you are so happy! Keep in mind that God is going to give you a great reward in heaven! Do not forget that the ancestors of the people who are treating you this way did similar things to God’s prophets {long ago}.

²⁴But how sad it is for you who are rich. You have {already} received all the comfort you are going to get {from your riches}. ²⁵How sad it is for you who can stuff yourselves with food now. Later you will go hungry.

Woe to the ones who are laughing now. Later you will be very unhappy. ²⁶How sad it is for you when everyone says good things about you. In the same way, their ancestors used to say good things about people who falsely claimed to be God’s prophets.

²⁷But I say this to each of you who are listening to what I say: Love your enemies{, not only your friends}! Do good things for those who hate you! ²⁸Ask God to bless those who curse you! Pray for those who treat you badly! ²⁹If someone {insults you by} striking you on one of your cheeks, turn your face so that he can strike the other cheek also. If someone wants to take away your coat, let him also have your shirt. ³⁰Give something to everyone who asks you. If someone takes things that belong to you, do not make him return them. ³¹In whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way that you should act toward them.

³²If you love {only} those who love you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners love those who love them. ³³Do not expect God to reward you because you do good things for people who do good things for you. After all, even sinners do that. ³⁴If you lend {money or property} only to those who will give it back to you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners lend to other sinners who will give everything back to them. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies! Do good things for them! Lend to them, and do not expect them to pay anything back! Then God will give you a great reward. And you will be children of God the Most High, since God is kind even to people who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶So you should act mercifully toward other people, just as God, your Father, acts mercifully toward people.

³⁷Do not harshly criticize {other people}. Then God will not harshly criticize you. Do not condemn {other people}. Then God will not condemn you. Forgive {others for the wrong things they have done to you}. Then God will forgive you. ³⁸Give {to others}. Then God will give to you. It will be as if he is trying to give you as much grain as possible in a container you have. He will press the grain down. He will shake it together. He will keep filling the container until it overflows. So when you give to others, it should be as if you are using a big scoop, because God will use the same size scoop to give to you."

³⁹He also gave his disciples this example: "A blind person should not try to lead another blind person {down the road}. If he did, they both would fall into the ditch {on the side of the road}! ⁴⁰A disciple is not greater than his teacher. But once the teacher has finished training him, he will become like his teacher.

⁴¹{None of you should be concerned about the small faults of another person. You should be concerned about your own serious faults.} Otherwise, that would be like noticing a speck in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴²You should not tell another believer, 'Friend, let me help you correct your faults,' when you have not dealt with your own faults yet. If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first {stop committing your own sins. That will be like} removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result, you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the {smaller faults that are like} little specks in their eyes.

⁴³Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit.

⁴⁴You can tell what a person is like inside by the things that they do. {Then you know what to expect from them. You would not look for kindness or good advice from someone who does bad things.} That would be like looking for figs on a thornbush or looking for grapes on a bramble vine. ⁴⁵Good people do good things because they think good things. Evil people do evil things because they think evil things. This is because people speak and act based on what they are thinking about."

⁴⁶{Jesus said to the people,} "Why do you call me 'Lord' when you do not obey what I tell you to do? ⁴⁷Let me tell you what people are like who come to me, hear my teachings, and obey them. ⁴⁸Such people are like a person who dug deep into the ground to prepare to build his house. He made sure to build the foundation {for the house} on solid rock. Then there was a flood. A torrent of water was beating against that house. But it could not destroy it, because the person had built the house on a solid foundation. ⁴⁹But some people who hear my teachings do not obey them. They are like a person who built a house on top of the ground without digging a foundation first. When the floodwaters came, it collapsed immediately. The waters destroyed that house completely."

Chapter 7

¹After Jesus finished saying all these things to the people who were listening, he went to the town of Capernaum.

²In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave who was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. ³When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him {to help the centurion's slave}. They said, "He deserves to have you do this for him, ⁵because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us." ⁶So Jesus went with them {to the officer's house}. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: "Lord, do not go to the trouble {of coming here}, since I am not worthy to have you

come into my house. ⁷That is why I did not feel that I was worthy to come to you in person. I knew that you could heal my dear slave just by speaking {a command}. ⁸{I know that you can do this} because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another one, 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, "Let me tell you, I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!" ¹⁰When the friends who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found that the slave was in good health again.

¹¹Soon after that Jesus traveled to the town of Nain. His disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As Jesus came near to the town gate, he saw a large crowd coming out of the town. A man had just died, and they were carrying him out to bury him. His mother was in the crowd. She was a widow, and he had been her only son. {He had taken care of her while he was alive.} ¹³When Jesus saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not cry!" ¹⁴Then he came close {to them} and touched the stretcher {on which the body was lying}. The men carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵Then the man who had died sat up and began to talk! And Jesus led him back to his mother. ¹⁶Everyone there was awestruck. They praised God and said {to each other}, "A great prophet has come among us!" and "God has come to care for his people!" ¹⁷Then this news about {what} Jesus {had done} spread throughout the region of Judea and all the other areas nearby.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹The disciples of John the Baptizer told him about all these things. So John called for two of his disciples and told them to go to the Lord and ask him: "Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we be expecting someone else?" ²⁰When those two men came to Jesus, they told him, "John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one whom God promised would come? Or should we wait for someone else?'" ²¹At that same time Jesus was healing many people from sicknesses and serious diseases, and he was delivering them from evil spirits. He also gave many blind people the ability to see again. ²²So he answered those two men, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. People who were blind are now seeing. People who were lame are now walking. People who had skin diseases no longer have them. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead have come back to life. I am proclaiming good news to poor people." ²³{And also tell him,} "God will bless anyone who {sees what I do and hears what I teach and} continues to believe in me."

²⁴When the men whom John had sent left, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said, "What did you go into the wilderness to see? A thin stalk of a plant shaken by the wind? ²⁵But what did you go out to see? A man wearing fancy clothing? Listen, those who wear splendid clothes and who have the best of everything live in kings' palaces. ²⁶Then what did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes{, that is who John is}! But I tell you that John is more significant than an ordinary prophet. ²⁷He is the one about whom the prophet wrote long ago: 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.'

²⁸I tell you that of all the people who have ever lived, there is no one greater than John. Yet the most insignificant people whose lives God is ruling are greater than John."

²⁹When all the people whom John had baptized heard what Jesus said—including the tax collectors—they agreed that God had done the right thing {by sending John}. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the experts in the Jewish law, whom John had not baptized, rejected God's will for them.

³¹{Then Jesus also said, "I will tell you} what you people living in this time period are like. ³²You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to each other, saying, 'We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not cry!' ³³Similarly, when John came to you and did not eat ordinary food or drink wine, you {rejected him and} said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ³⁴But when the Son of Man came to you and he ate {ordinary food} and drank {wine as others do}, then you {rejected him and} said, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with tax collectors and other sinners!' ³⁵But those who are wise themselves recognize that what John and I do is also wise."

³⁶One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man's house and reclined at a table to eat. ³⁷There was also a woman in that city who had a bad reputation. When she heard

that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, {she went there,} bringing a stone jar that contained perfume. ³⁸{As Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet.} She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair. She kept kissing them and anointing them with the perfume. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw {what the woman was doing}, he thought, "If this man really were a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him. He would have known what kind of person she is, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰In response, Jesus said to him, "Simon, there is something I want to tell you." He replied, "Teacher, what is it?" ⁴¹{Jesus told him this story:} "Two people owed money to a man who had a business lending money. One of these people owed him 500 silver coins. The other one owed him 50 silver coins. ⁴²Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they both did not have to pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?" ⁴³Simon replied, "I assume that the one who had owed him the larger amount will love him more." Jesus said to him, "You are correct." ⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house{, you did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests.} You did not give me any water to wash my feet. But this woman has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! ⁴⁵You did not greet me with a kiss. But from the moment I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet! ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. ⁴⁷So I tell you that God has forgiven her many sins, and that is why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks that God has only had to forgive him for a few sins will love me only a little bit." ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the woman, "I have forgiven your sins." ⁴⁹Then those who were eating with him said among themselves, "Who is this man who says that he can even forgive sins?" ⁵⁰But Jesus said to the woman, "Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!"

Chapter 8

¹After that, Jesus and his twelve disciples traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus preached to people, telling them the good news that they could have God rule their lives. ²{Also traveling with them were} several women whom he had delivered from evil spirits and healed from sicknesses. These included Mary from the village of Magdala. Jesus had forced seven evil spirits to leave her. ³{Another of these women was} Joanna. She was the wife of Chuza, who was a manager for King Herod. {These women also included} Susanna and many others. They were using their own money to support Jesus and his disciples.

⁴One day a very large crowd was gathering. People were traveling from many different towns to see Jesus. He told them this story: ⁵"A farmer went out to plant some grain seeds. As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell onto the hard pathway. People stepped on those seeds, and birds ate them all up. ⁶Some of the seeds fell on {shallow soil above a layer of} rock. As soon as those seeds grew, the plants dried up because their roots could not get past the rock to reach to the moisture. ⁷Some of the seeds fell on ground where thorn plants had left their own seeds. The new thorn plants grew up together with the young grain plants. The {stronger} thorns crowded out the grain plants, so that the grain did not grow well. ⁸But some of the grain seeds fell on fertile soil. They grew so well that they produced a crop that had a hundred times as many seeds." After saying these things, Jesus called out to the crowd, "You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

⁹Then Jesus' disciples asked him, "What does that story mean?" ¹⁰And he said, "God has given you the privilege of knowing hidden things about how God will rule as king. But {I speak} to everyone else only in parables, so that,

'Although they see, they may not perceive, and although they hear, they may not understand.'

¹¹Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent what God wants people to understand. ¹²The seeds that fell on the pathway {show what happens when} people understand the message from God only superficially. This makes it easy for the devil to come and take that message away from their minds. As a result, they do not believe it, and so God does not save them. ¹³The seeds that fell on the rocky ground {show what happens when} people hear the message from God and receive it joyfully, but they do not commit themselves seriously. They only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop trusting in God. ¹⁴The seeds that fell among the thorny plants {show what happens to some other} people who hear the message from God. As they go on in life,

they allow the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life to occupy all their attention. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. ¹⁵But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground {show what happens when} people hear the message about God and accept it with great sincerity. They make a firm commitment, and because they keep this commitment, they become spiritually mature.

¹⁶Think about this. When people light a lamp, they do not cover it with a basket. They do not put it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a lampstand. That way everyone who enters the room can see by its light. ¹⁷This illustrates that someday everyone will be able to see everything that is now hidden. And someday everyone will see in the open everything that is now secret. ¹⁸So make sure that you are listening carefully {to what I tell you}, because if someone believes God's truth, God will enable him to understand even more. But if someone does not believe God's truth, God will cause him not to understand even {the little} he thinks he has understood."

¹⁹One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near him because there was {such} a {large} crowd {around him in the house where he was}. ²⁰Then people told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹But he replied to them, "Those who hear the message from God and obey it are as dear to me as my mother and my brothers."

²²On another day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. He said to them, "I would like us to go across to the other side of the lake." So they started to sail across the lake. ²³But as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Then a powerful windstorm began on the lake. Soon the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. ²⁴So Jesus' disciples came over to wake him up. They said to him, "Master! Master! We are all going to die!" He woke up and scolded the wind and the violent waves. The wind stopped blowing, the waves stopped hitting the boat, and everything became calm. ²⁵Then he said to them, "You acted as if you had no faith!" The disciples were alarmed and amazed {because of what had just happened}. They kept asking each other, "Who could Jesus be? He is able to command even the winds and the waves, and they obey him."

²⁶Jesus and his disciples continued sailing and came to the region where the Gerasene people lived. It was on the opposite side of the lake from the district of Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus came out of the boat onto the land, a certain man from the town in that area met him. This man had demons in him. For a long time this man had not worn clothes and had not lived in a house. Instead, he lived in the burial caves.

²⁸When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and lay facedown before him. He shouted, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" ²⁹{The man said this because} Jesus had just commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. In the past, people had bound him with chains and shackles and kept a close watch on him. Even so, many times the evil spirit would suddenly seize him by force. Then the man would break free, and the demon would make him go out into deserted places. ³⁰Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" The demon replied, "{My name is} Thousands." He said that because many demons had entered the man. ³¹The demons kept begging Jesus not to command them to go into the deep pit where God punishes demons. ³²There was a large herd of pigs grazing on the hillside nearby. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and he allowed them. ³³So the demons left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴When those who were taking care of the pigs saw what happened, they ran away! They reported what they had seen to all the people who lived around them. ³⁵Then the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they saw that the man from whom the demons had gone out was sitting at the feet of Jesus. They saw that he had clothes on and his mind was normal again. {They realized how powerful Jesus must be,} and they became afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen what had happened told the people who had just arrived how Jesus had rescued the man who had been controlled by demons. ³⁷Then many people from that place where the Gerasenes lived asked Jesus to leave their area, because they were very afraid. So Jesus and his disciples got into the boat to go back across the lake. ³⁸Before they left, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged Jesus, saying, "Please, let me go with you!" But instead, Jesus sent him away by saying to him, ³⁹"No, go back to your home and tell {everyone} how much God has done for you!" So the man went away and told people throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

⁴⁰And when Jesus and his disciples got back across the lake to Capernaum, a crowd of people welcomed them. They had all been waiting for him there. ⁴¹Just then a man named Jairus, who was one of the leaders of the synagogue there, came near to Jesus, and he lay facedown before him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house. ⁴²He did this because he had an only daughter, who was about 12 years old, and she was dying. {He wanted Jesus to heal her.}

Now as Jesus went {with him}, many people were crowding around him. ⁴³Now in the crowd there was a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She had spent all her money^[1] to pay doctors to help her, but none of them was able to heal her. ⁴⁴She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his robe. At once her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵Jesus said, "Who touched me?" Everyone {around Jesus} said that they had not touched him. Peter said, "Master, there are many people crowding around you and pressing up against you. {So any one of them might have touched you!}" ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "I know that someone {deliberately} touched me, because power has gone out from me {to heal that person}." ⁴⁷Then the woman realized that she could not hide. She came trembling to Jesus and {respectfully} lay facedown on the ground before him. As the other people were listening, she explained why she had touched Jesus and how she gotten better immediately. ⁴⁸And Jesus said to her, "My dear woman, because you believed {that I could heal you}, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God's peace be with you."

⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking {to the woman}, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. So do not take up any more of the teacher's time." ⁵⁰But when Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Just believe {in me}, and she will live again." ⁵¹When he arrived outside the house, Jesus did not allow anyone to go in the house with him except for Peter, John, and James, and the girl's father and mother. ⁵²And all the people there were loudly demonstrating how sad they were that the girl had died. But Jesus said to them, "Stop crying! She is not dead! She is only sleeping!" ⁵³And the people laughed at him because they knew that the girl was dead. ⁵⁴But Jesus took hold of her hand and called {to her}, saying, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵And immediately she came back to life and she got up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed, but Jesus told them not to tell anyone else {yet} what had happened.

8:43 ^[1] should be included here.

Chapter 9

¹Then Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal {people's} diseases. ²He sent them out to announce {the good news about} how God would rule as king. He told them to heal people who were sick. ³{Before they left,} he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not bring an extra tunic. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. ⁵If the people in any town do not welcome you, you should not stay there. Instead, leave that town and, as you go, shake its dust off your feet. That will be a warning to them {for rejecting you}." ⁶Then Jesus' disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God, and they healed sick people.

⁷Herod, the ruler over the district of Galilee, heard about everything that was happening, and he was perplexed. Some people were saying that John the Baptizer had become alive again. ⁸Other people were saying that the prophet Elijah had appeared again. Still others were saying that one of the other prophets from long ago had become alive again. ⁹But Herod said, "It cannot be John, because I had his head cut off. So who is this man? I keep hearing such amazing things about him!" And he kept looking for a way to see Jesus.

¹⁰When the apostles returned from their trip, they told Jesus everything that they had done. Then he took them aside to go by themselves with him to the town of Bethsaida. ¹¹But when the crowds learned where Jesus had gone, they followed him there. He welcomed them and spoke to them about how God was going to rule as king. He also healed those who were sick.

¹²Now it was getting late in the day, so the twelve disciples came to him and said, "Please send this large crowd of people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to get some food and find places to stay, since we are out here in this isolated place." ¹³But he said to them, "You must give them something to eat!" They replied, "All we have are five small loaves of bread and two small fish. We could never go buy enough food for all these people!" ¹⁴{They said this} because there were about 5000 men there. Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have the people sit down in groups. Put about 50 people in each group." ¹⁵So the disciples did that, and the people all sat down. ¹⁶Then Jesus took the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and praised God for them. Then he divided the bread and fish into pieces and gave them to the disciples for them to distribute to the people. ¹⁷They all ate, and everyone had enough to eat. Then the disciples collected the leftover pieces of food, which filled 12 baskets!

¹⁸One day while Jesus was praying in private, with his disciples nearby, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹They replied, "{Some people say that you are} John the Baptizer, but others say that you are the prophet Elijah, and still others say that you are one of the other prophets from long ago who has come back to life again." ²⁰He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, who has come from God." ²¹Then Jesus warned them strongly not to tell that to anyone yet. ²²Then he said, "I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things: The elders, chief priests, and teachers of the Jewish laws will reject me and kill me. Then, on the third day after that, I will come back to life again."

²³Then he said to them all, "If any one of you wants to be my disciple, you must not do only what you want to do. Rather, every day you must be willing to suffer, even to the point of giving up your life. That is how to be my disciple. ²⁴{You must do that} because those who try to save their own lives will lose them eternally, but those who give up their lives in order to become my disciples will save their lives eternally. ²⁵After all, how does it benefit you if you gain everything in this world but you then end up losing, or even destroying, your own self? ²⁶Suppose someone is afraid to say that they believe in me and that they follow my teaching. Then, I, the Son of Man, will say that such a person does not belong to me. This will happen when I come back in my glory and in the glory of God the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But you can be sure of this: Some of you who are standing here now will not die until you see God ruling as king!"

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said those things, he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray {there}. ²⁹While he was praying, the appearance of his face became very different, and his clothes began to shine brightly. ³⁰All at once, two {prophets from long ago} were there talking with Jesus. They were Moses and Elijah. ³¹These men appeared surrounded in glory. They spoke with Jesus about how he was going to die. This was something that was going to happen soon in Jerusalem. ³²Peter and the other disciples who were with him were very sleepy. But when they woke up fully, they saw how brightly Jesus was shining. They also saw Moses and Elijah standing with him. ³³As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here! We should make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" But he really did not realize what he was saying. ³⁴As he was saying these things, a cloud formed and covered them. The disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. ³⁵God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶When the voice had finished speaking, {the three disciples saw that} only Jesus was there. They kept all this to themselves. For a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

³⁷The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people met Jesus. ³⁸Suddenly a man from the crowd called out, "Teacher, I plead with you, do something to help my son! He is my only child. ³⁹Here is what is happening. An evil spirit suddenly seizes him and causes him to scream. It shakes him violently and causes him to foam at the mouth. This spirit hardly ever leaves my child and, when it does, it injures him severely. ⁴⁰I pleaded with your disciples to command the evil spirit to come out of him, but they were not able to do it!" ⁴¹In response, Jesus said, "This generation of people does not believe, and so its thinking is corrupt! How much longer must I be with you before you believe?" {Then he said to the boy's father,} "Bring your son here to me!" ⁴²While they were bringing the boy to him, the demon threw the boy down to the ground and shook him severely. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he returned him to his father. ⁴³Then all the people there were completely amazed at the great power God had shown.

While they were all still marveling at all the miracles Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you, because someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to my enemies.” ⁴⁵But the disciples did not understand what he meant by this. God prevented them from understanding it so that they would not know yet what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had said.

⁴⁶Sometime later, the disciples began to argue among themselves about which one of them would be the most important. ⁴⁷But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he brought a young child over and had the child stand beside him. ⁴⁸He said to them, “If someone welcomes a little child like this one because of me, it is the same as welcoming me. And if someone welcomes me, it is the same as welcoming God, who sent me. Remember that those among you who seem to be the least important are the ones whom God considers to be most important.”

⁴⁹John replied to Jesus, “Master, we saw a man who was using your name to command demons to come out of people. But we told him to stop doing that, because he was not working closely with you the way we are.” ⁵⁰But Jesus told John, “Do not stop him from doing that! If someone is not doing something that is harmful to you, then what he is doing is helpful to you!”

⁵¹When it was getting close to the time when God would take him back up to heaven, Jesus firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²He sent some messengers ahead of him. They traveled on and went into a village in the region of Samaria to try to arrange for him to stay there. ⁵³But the Samaritans would not let Jesus stay in their village, because he was on his way to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴Two of his disciples, James and John, {got angry when they} saw {that the Samaritans were not going to welcome them}. So they asked Jesus, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and destroy these people?” ⁵⁵But Jesus turned {to them} and sternly told them they were wrong to say that. ⁵⁶So they went to a different village.

⁵⁷As Jesus and the disciples were walking along the road, someone said to him, “I will go with you wherever you go!” ⁵⁸Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!” ⁵⁹Jesus said to a different person, “Come with me!” But that person said, “Lord, let me first go home and bury my father.” ⁶⁰But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. I want you to go and tell people everywhere that they can have God rule their lives.” ⁶¹Someone else said, “Lord, I will come with you and be your disciple, but first let me go home to say goodbye to my family.” ⁶²Jesus said to him, “Anyone who is like a farmer who tries to plow his field while looking behind him is not able to serve God as his ruler.”

Chapter 10

¹After that, Jesus appointed 72 other disciples {to go and prepare people to hear him}. He sent them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village where he was intending to go himself. ²He said to them, “Many people are ready to believe in me, but there are only a few of you whom I can send out to help them. So pray to God{, who wants all of those people to believe,} and plead with him for more disciples who can go and help them. ³Go now, but remember that I am sending you out to tell my message to people who will be hostile to you. ⁴Do not bring along any money. Do not bring {a lot of things with you in} a pack. Do not bring {extra shoes}. Do not {stop and} talk with people along the way. ⁵Whenever you enter a house, first say to the people who live there, ‘May God bless everyone in this house with peace!’ ⁶If the people who live there desire God’s peace, then they will experience the peace you are offering them. But if they do not desire God’s peace, then you will experience that peace yourselves. ⁷Stay in that same house until you leave that village. Do not move around from one house to another. Eat and drink whatever they provide for you, because a worker deserves to receive payment for his work. ⁸If you enter any town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. ⁹Heal the people in that city who are sick. Tell everyone, ‘You are seeing close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king.’ ¹⁰But if you enter any town and the people there do not welcome you, go into its main streets and say, ¹¹‘{As a warning} against you, we will wipe off even the dust that sticks to our feet {as we are leaving your town}. But you must realize that you have seen close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king!’ ¹²I want you to know

that at the time when God judges everyone, God will punish the people of that town even more severely than the wicked people who lived long ago in the city of Sodom!

¹³How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! I say this because I did great miracles while I was in your cities. If I had performed those same miracles in {the ancient cities of} Tyre and Sidon, the {wicked} people who lived there would have been very sorry for their sins. They would have shown this by sitting on the ground wearing coarse clothing and putting ashes on their heads. ¹⁴So when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁵I also have something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. You may think that God is going to give you great rewards. No, God is not going to reward you at all!"

¹⁶{Jesus also said to the disciples,} "Whoever listens to your message is{, in effect,} listening to me. Whoever rejects your message is{, in effect,} rejecting me. And whoever rejects me is{, in effect,} rejecting God who sent me."

¹⁷The 72 people whom Jesus appointed {went and did what he told them to do.} When they returned, they were very joyful. They said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when, by your authority, we commanded them to leave people!" ¹⁸Jesus told them, "{While you were away doing that,} I saw Satan lose a position of advantage as suddenly and quickly as lightning comes down! ¹⁹Listen! I have given you the power to defeat evil spirits. I have even given you enough power to defeat our enemy, Satan. Nothing will hurt you at all. ²⁰But do not {only} rejoice that the evil spirits must obey you. You should rejoice {even more} that God has written your names in heaven{, because that means you will be with God forever}."

²¹Right then, the Holy Spirit gave Jesus great joy. He said, "God my Father, you are Lord over everything in heaven and on earth. I praise you that you have prevented people who think they are smart from understanding things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth as readily as little children do. Yes, Father, you have done that because it pleased you to do so. ²²God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. And only I, his Son, really know my Father. But I do choose to show some people who he is."

²³Then Jesus said, just to his disciples, "God has given you a great gift by letting you see the things that I am doing! ²⁴I want you to know that many prophets and kings would have liked to see the things that you are seeing me do. But they did not get to see them{, because they lived long ago}. They would have liked to hear the things that you have been hearing me say. But they did not get to hear them{, because they lived long ago}."

²⁵A man who taught Jewish laws was there. He wanted to test Jesus {by asking him a difficult question}. So he stood up and asked, "Teacher, what do I have to do in order to live with God forever?" ²⁶Jesus said to him, "You have read what Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him. What do those laws say?" ²⁷The man replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." ²⁸Jesus told him, "You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live {with God forever}."

²⁹But the man wanted to show that God would approve of him. So he said to Jesus, "Which people are my neighbors {whom I should love}?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "One day, a Jewish man was traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man's clothes and everything else that he had. They beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him there. ³¹It happened that a {Jewish} priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, {instead of helping him,} he passed by on the other side of the road. ³²Similarly, a Levite {who worked in God's temple} also came to that place and saw the man. But he too passed by on the other side of the road. ³³Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. ³⁴He went over to him and put some olive oil and wine on his wounds {to help heal them}. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of this man. If you need to spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return.'" ³⁶{Then Jesus asked,} "Three people found the man whom the bandits had attacked.

Which one of them would you say was a true neighbor to that man?" ³⁷The teacher of the law replied, "The one who acted mercifully toward him." Jesus said to him, "{That is correct.} So you should go and act like that toward anyone who needs your help."

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples continued to travel, they entered a certain village. There a woman whose name was Martha invited them to come to her house. ³⁹Her sister, whose name was Mary, sat near Jesus' feet and listened to what he was teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was worrying about preparing the meal for all of them. She went to Jesus and said, "Lord, my sister has left me to prepare everything by myself. You must know that is not fair. Please tell her to help me!" ⁴¹But Jesus replied to her, "Martha, Martha, you are very worried about many things. ⁴²But the one thing that is really important {is to listen to what I am teaching}. Because Mary has chosen the best thing to do, I will not tell her to do something else."

Chapter 11

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us how to pray. John the Baptist did that for his own disciples, and we would like you to do that for us." ²He said to them, "When you pray, say {things like this}: 'Father, may all people honor your name as holy. May you soon rule all people everywhere. ³Please give us the food we need each day. ⁴Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done. We ourselves will forgive people for the wrong things they have done to us. Help us to not sin when something tempts us.'"

⁵Then he said to them, "Suppose that one of you goes to the house of a friend at midnight. You {stand outside and} call to him, 'My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread! ⁶Another friend of mine who is traveling has just arrived at my house. But I do not have any food ready to serve him!' ⁷And suppose that he responds from inside the house, 'Do not bother me! I have already locked the door, and my whole family is in bed. It would be too hard for me to get up and give you something!' ⁸I tell you, he may not want to get up and give his friend any food just because he is his friend. But if he keeps on asking, the man inside will certainly get up and give him everything he needs. ⁹So I tell you: Keep asking God for the things you need, and he will give them to you. Keep seeking those things from God, and you will receive them. Ask God to make things possible for you, and he will act on your behalf. ¹⁰You should do this because anyone who keeps asking God for the things he needs will receive them. Anyone who seeks those things from God will receive them. If anyone asks God to make things possible for him, God will act on his behalf. ¹¹Suppose one of you fathers had a son who asked you for a fish to eat. You certainly would not give him a poisonous snake instead! ¹²Suppose he asked you for an egg. You certainly would not give him a scorpion instead! ¹³Even though you people are sinful, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. So it is even more certain that your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

¹⁴One day Jesus was forcing out a demon who was keeping a man from speaking. After Jesus forced the demon out, the man began to talk. This amazed the crowd of people that was there. ¹⁵But some of them said, "It is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to force out demons!" ¹⁶Other people there questioned his authority. They demanded that he perform a miracle to prove that God had sent him. ¹⁷But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If the people in one household oppose each other, they will destroy their family. ¹⁸Similarly, if Satan and his demons were fighting against each other, his rule over them would certainly not last! I say this because you are saying that I force out demons by the power of the ruler of demons! ¹⁹If it is true that Beelzebul is enabling me to force out demons, it must also be true that he is enabling your disciples to force out demons. {But you know that is not true.} So your own disciples prove that you are wrong. ²⁰I must actually be forcing out demons by the power of God. This means that God has begun to rule over you."

²¹{Jesus continued,} "When a strong man who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the things inside. ²²But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and subdues him, he takes away the weapons that the man was depending on. Then he can steal anything he wants from that man's house. ²³Anyone

who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from me.”

²⁴{Then Jesus said,} “An evil spirit might leave someone and wander around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. If it does not find anyone there, it may say, ‘I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!’

²⁵So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has swept clean and put in order{, but which has no one living in it}. ²⁶Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person’s condition was bad before, and it becomes even worse.”

²⁷When Jesus said that, a woman in the crowd {who was listening} called out to him loudly, “God is pleased with the woman who gave birth to you and who nursed you!” ²⁸Then he replied, “God is even more pleased with those who hear his message and obey it!”

²⁹More and more people were coming to join the crowd around Jesus. He said, “The people living at this time are evil people. They want me to do a miracle {to prove that I have come from God}. But the only proof they will see is a miracle like the one that happened to Jonah. ³⁰Long ago God did a miracle for Jonah to show the people living in the city of Nineveh that he had sent him. In the same way, God will do a similar miracle for me, the Son of Man, to show the people living now that he has sent me. ³¹Long ago the Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to hear the wise things that Solomon said. Now someone greater than Solomon is right here with you. {But you have not really listened to what I am saying.} Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, she will stand up and condemn the people who are living now. ³²The people who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways when Jonah preached to them. And now I, who am greater than Jonah, have come and preached to you. {But you have not turned from your sinful ways.} Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, the people who lived in Nineveh will stand up and condemn the people who are living now.

³³People who light a lamp do not hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter the room can see the light. ³⁴Your eye lets light into your body. If your eye is working right, then your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is not working right, then your body will not get any light.

³⁵Therefore, be careful not to think that your eye is working right and letting in light if it is actually not working right and not letting in any light. ³⁶So if light is getting into every part of your body, so that no part of it is in the dark, then all of your body will be full of light. Bright light will shine all over you inside, just as the bright light of a lamp shines all over you outside.”

³⁷After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table to eat. ³⁸The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not ritually wash his hands first before eating. ³⁹Jesus said to him, “You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. ⁴⁰You foolish people! Surely you know that God not only made the outside, but also made the inside! ⁴¹{Instead of worrying about dishes being ritually clean, be merciful and} give whatever is inside the dishes to people in need. Then both the inside and outside of you will be acceptable to God.

⁴²But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! You carefully give to God a tenth of all you have, including even the herbs that you grow in your gardens. But then you do not show God’s love or fairness toward others. You should make sure that you do that, in addition to giving to God. ⁴³How terrible it will be for you Pharisees, because you like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues, and you like people to greet you {with special honor} in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴How terrible it will be for you, because you are like unmarked graves that people walk over without realizing it and so become ceremonially unclean.”

⁴⁵One of the teachers of the Jewish laws who were there complained to Jesus, “Teacher, when you say things like that, you are criticizing us too!” ⁴⁶But Jesus responded, “How terrible it will also be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! I say this because you tell people to follow so many rules, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help them. ⁴⁷How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets,

but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! ⁴⁸So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. ⁴⁹So God, who is very wise, also said, 'I will send prophets and apostles to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly. They will even kill some of them.' ⁵⁰As a result, the people living at this time will be punished for the murder of all the prophets whom people have killed since the world was created. ⁵¹They will be punished for every murder from that of {Adam's son} Abel{, whose brother Cain killed him,} right through to the murder of {the prophet} Zechariah, whom the king's agents killed {in the temple} between the altar and the holy place. ⁵²How terrible it will be for you teachers of the Jewish laws. You are keeping people from knowing about God! You do not know God yourselves, and you make things difficult for other people who want to know God better."

⁵³{After Jesus finished saying those things,} he left the Pharisee's house. Then the teachers of the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They questioned him intensely about many things.

⁵⁴They kept listening for him to say something wrong so that they could accuse him of false teaching.

Chapter 12

¹Meanwhile, many thousands of people gathered {around Jesus}. There were so many that they were stepping on each other. The first thing he said to his disciples was, "Be careful that you do not become like the Pharisees, who act religious in public but do evil things in secret. ²It is useless for people to try to keep their sins a secret. Someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. ³Someday people will hear publicly everything you have said privately. Someday someone will shout for everyone to hear what you have whispered in your room.

⁴My friends, listen carefully! Do not be afraid of people. They can kill you, but they cannot do anything more to you after that! ⁵I will tell you whom you should truly be afraid of. You should be afraid of God. Not only does he have the right to cause people to die, he also has the right to throw them into hell afterward! Yes, I tell you, God is the one you should truly be afraid of! ⁶Think about the sparrows. {They have so little value that} you can buy five of them for only two small coins. And yet God never forgets any of them! ⁷God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. Do not be afraid, because you are more valuable {to God} than many sparrows.

⁸I tell you also that if people tell others that they are my disciples, then I, the Son of Man, will say to God's angels that those people are my disciples. ⁹But if they tell others that they are not my disciples, then I will say to God's angels that those people are not my disciples. ¹⁰I also tell you that if people say bad things about me, the Son of Man, God will forgive them for that. But if people say bad things about the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive them for that. ¹¹So when people bring you into the synagogues {to question you before the religious leaders there} and to other people who have power in the country, do not worry about how you will answer them or about what you should say, ¹²because the Holy Spirit will tell you at that very time what you should say."

¹³Then one of the people in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide our father's property with me!" ¹⁴But Jesus replied to him, "Man, no one made me a judge to settle arguments that people have about property!" ¹⁵Then he said to the whole crowd, "Be careful not to be greedy in any way! What matters about a person's life is not how many things he owns."

¹⁶Then Jesus told the crowd this story: "The lands of a certain rich man produced abundant crops. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'I do not know what to do, because I do not have any place {big enough} to store all my crops!' ¹⁸Then he thought to himself, 'I know what I will do! I will tear down my grain bins and build larger ones! Then I can store all my grain and other things in the big new bins. ¹⁹Then I will say to myself, "Now I have stored up enough things to last many years. So I will take life easy. I will eat and drink and be happy"' ²⁰But God said to him, 'You foolish man! Tonight you will die! Then all the things you have saved up for yourself will belong to someone else, not to you!'"

²¹Then Jesus ended this illustration by saying, "That is what will happen to those who store up things just for themselves and do not value the things that God considers valuable."

²²Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Here is something you should learn from the story. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat to stay alive or enough clothes to wear to stay warm. ²³After all, your life is more important than the food you eat, and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. ²⁴Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not have rooms or buildings in which to store crops, but God provides food for them. And you are certainly much more valuable than birds. ²⁵None of you can add even a minute to his life by worrying about it! ²⁶So since you cannot even do that small thing, you certainly should not worry about anything else. ²⁷Think about the way that flowers grow. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. But I tell you that King Solomon, who {lived long ago and} wore glorious clothes, never dressed as beautifully as a single flower. ²⁸God makes the plants beautiful, even though they grow for only a short time. Then people cut them down and throw them into the fire. {But you are very precious to God.} He will care for you even more than he cares for the plants. You should trust God more than you do. ²⁹As for you, do not wonder about what you will eat and drink, and do not keep worrying {about those things}. ³⁰While the people who do not know God all worry about such things, {you can be confident that} your Father in heaven knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, concentrate on what you can do for the kingdom of God. When you do, you can trust God to provide everything you need.

³²So you should not be afraid, my friends. Your Father in heaven wants you to be part of his kingdom {and receive all of its benefits}. ³³So sell the things you own and give the money to people who need food or clothing or a place to live. Get yourselves wallets that do not wear out. I mean store up treasure in heaven where it will always be safe. There no thief can steal anything and no moths will destroy your clothing. ³⁴After all, whatever it is that you treasure, that is what you will think about and spend your time on.

³⁵{Always} be {ready for doing God's work,} like people who have put on their work clothes and are keeping the lights on all night. ³⁶Be {ready for me to return,} like servants who are waiting for their master to return after being at a wedding feast. They are waiting to open the door for him as soon as he arrives and knocks at the door. ³⁷It will be very good for those servants if they are awake when their master returns. Let me tell you this: He will reward them by dressing like a servant, telling them to sit down, and serving them a meal. ³⁸Even if he comes home late in the evening or in the middle of the night, if he finds that his servants are awake and ready for him, he will be very pleased with them. ³⁹And I want you to consider this: If the owner of a house knew that a thief was coming, and at what time, he would stay awake and not let the thief break into his house. ⁴⁰So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me."

⁴¹Peter asked, "Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us, your disciples? Or is it for the crowd too?" ⁴²Jesus replied, "I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master's house. His master puts him in charge of his other servants, to make sure they get their food at the proper time. ⁴³If his master comes home and sees that he is doing that work, he will reward that servant. ⁴⁴Let me tell you this: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁵But that servant who was put in charge might say to himself, 'My master is going to be away for a long time.' Then he might start to beat the other servants. He might also start to eat and drink a lot and get drunk. ⁴⁶If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully. ⁴⁷The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished. ⁴⁸But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. The master will expect much from all servants to whom he has given much. And the master will expect even more from servants whom he has entrusted with many responsibilities.

⁴⁹I came to stir up spiritual passions in people. I wish that they were already acting on them! ⁵⁰Soon I must go through terrible suffering. I will continue to be distressed until I finish my suffering. ⁵¹You should know that I did not come so that people would live together peacefully. No, you must understand that instead, people will take sides for and against me. ⁵²Be prepared, because this is what is going to happen. In a family of five people, some will believe in me and some will not. Three family members will join together against the other two. ⁵³Family members will conflict. A father will oppose his son, or a son will oppose his father. A mother will oppose her

daughter, or a daughter will oppose her mother. A mother-in-law will oppose her daughter-in-law, or a daughter-in-law will oppose her mother-in-law.”

⁵⁴He also said to the crowds, “When you see a dark cloud forming in the west, you immediately say ‘It is going to rain!’ and that is what happens. ⁵⁵When the wind blows from the south, you say, ‘It is going to be a very hot day!’ and you are right. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! By observing the clouds and the wind, you are able to discern what is happening regarding the weather. You should be able to discern what God is doing at this present time!

⁵⁷Each of you ought to decide for yourselves what is right! ⁵⁸Here is one thing you should do. You should try to settle things with someone who has accused you while you are still on the way to the court. If he forces you to go to the judge, the judge could decide that you are guilty and turn you over to the court officer. Then that officer will put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you that if you go to prison, you will never get out of there until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe.”

Chapter 13

¹At that time, some people who were there in the crowd told Jesus about what had recently happened to some Galileans. Pilate, the Roman governor, had ordered soldiers to kill the Galileans while they were offering sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. ²Jesus replied to them, “Do you think that this happened to those people from Galilee because they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? ³I assure you, that was not the reason! Instead, God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior. ⁴Or what about those 18 people who died when the tower in {the neighborhood of} Siloam fell on them? Do you think that this happened to them because they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem? ⁵I assure you, that was not the reason! But instead, you need to realize that God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior!”

⁶Then Jesus told them this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden. {Each year} he came to pick the figs, but there were {always} none on it. ⁷Then he said to the gardener, ‘Look at this tree! I have been looking for fruit on it every year for the past three years, but there have been no figs. Cut it down! It is just using up the nutrients in the soil for nothing!’ ⁸But the gardener replied, ‘Sir, leave it here for another year. I will dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it has figs on it next year, we can allow it to keep growing! But if it does not bear any fruit by then, you can cut it down.’”

¹⁰On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues. ¹¹There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for 18 years. She was always bent over. She could not stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, “Woman, I have healed you of this illness!” ¹³He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, “There are six days each week on which our laws permit people to work. If you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue for someone to heal you. Do not come on our day of rest!” ¹⁵Then Jesus replied to him, “You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you {also works on the day of rest sometimes! For example, you} untie your ox or donkey to lead it from the stall to a place where it can drink water. ¹⁶This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for 18 years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from this disabling disease, even if I do it on a day of rest!” ¹⁷After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

¹⁸Then he said, “I want to explain what it is like when God rules as king. I will give you a picture to help you understand. ¹⁹It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It grew until it became big, like a tree. It was so big that birds built nests in its branches.”

²⁰Then again he said, "I will tell you in another (way what) it is like when God rules. ²¹It is like a little bit of yeast that a woman mixed with about 25 kilograms of flour. That small amount of yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

²²Jesus continued traveling toward Jerusalem. He stopped in all the towns and villages along the way and taught the people. ²³Someone asked him, "Lord, will God only save a few people?" Jesus replied so that everyone there could hear, ²⁴"You need to try hard to enter, because it is very difficult. I tell you that many people will try to get in, but they will not be able to. ²⁵After the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside and you will knock on the door. And you will beg the owner and say to him, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'No, I will not open it, because I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from!' ²⁶Then you will say, '{You must have forgotten that} we ate meals with you, and you taught us in the streets of our towns!' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you again, I do not know where you are from. You are all wicked people! Get away from here!'" ²⁸{Then Jesus continued by saying,} "You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob {in the distance}. All the prophets who lived long ago will also be there where God rules everything as king. But you will be outside, crying and grinding your teeth in sorrow! ²⁹But inside there will be people from every part of the world{, including many non-Jewish people}. They will all celebrate together where God rules everything as king. ³⁰Think about this: Some people who seem the least important now will be the most important then, and others who seem important now will be the least important then."

³¹That same day, some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Leave this area, because the ruler Herod Antipas wants to kill you!" ³²He replied to them, "Go and tell that cunning man{, who thinks he can hurt me but who really cannot,} this message from me: 'Listen! I am expelling demons and performing miracles now, and I will continue doing so for a short time. After that, I will finish my work.' ³³But I must also continue my trip to Jerusalem during the coming days, since {the Jewish leaders have always acted as if} it is not appropriate to kill a prophet in a place other than Jerusalem."

³⁴Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the prophets who lived long ago. Then you killed others whom God sent to you. You killed them by throwing stones at them. Many times I have wanted to gather you together to protect you, as a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. ³⁵Now look! God will no longer protect you, people of Jerusalem. I will also tell you this: I will enter your city only once more. After that, you will not see me until the time when I return, and then you will say about me, 'May God bless this man who comes with God's authority!'"

Chapter 14

¹One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. {This leader had invited other Pharisees to the same meal.} They were all watching Jesus carefully {to try to find grounds to accuse him}. ²Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen. ³Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, "Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?" ⁴They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him. Then he told him he could go. ⁵And he said to the others there, "If one of you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, you would pull him out immediately." ⁶Again, they were not able to answer him.

⁷Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. So he gave this advice to them. ⁸"When someone invites one of you to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that he has invited a person who is more important than you to the feast. ⁹When the host who invited both of you sees where you are each sitting, he will say to you, 'Let this person have your seat!' Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed. ¹⁰Instead, when someone invites you to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the host who invited everyone comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, come sit in a better seat!' Then all the people who are

eating with you will see that he is honoring you. ¹¹For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves."

¹²Jesus also said to the Pharisee who had invited him to the meal, "When you invite people to a midday or evening meal, do not only invite your friends, relatives, or rich neighbors, since they will later repay you by inviting you for a meal. ¹³Instead, when you give a feast, invite poor people, crippled people, lame people or blind people. ¹⁴If you do that, God will reward you, because they will not be able to repay you. You can be sure that God will pay you back at the time when he causes righteous people to become alive again."

¹⁵One of those who were eating with him heard him say that. He said to Jesus, "God has truly blessed everyone who will get to celebrate where God rules everything as king!" ¹⁶Jesus replied to him, "One time a man decided to prepare a large feast. He invited many people to come. ¹⁷When it was time for the feast, he sent his servant to tell those whom he had invited, 'Come now, because everything is ready!' ¹⁸But when the servant did that, all of the people whom he had invited began to say why they could not come. The first man to whom the servant went said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go there and see it. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ¹⁹Another person said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ²⁰Another person said, 'I have just gotten married, so I cannot come.' ²¹So the servant returned to his master and reported what everyone had said. The owner of the house was angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and find poor and crippled and blind and lame people, and bring them here into my house!' ²²{After} the servant {went out and did that, he came back and} said, 'Sir, I have done what you told me to do, but there is still room for more people.' ²³So his master said to him, 'Then go outside the city. Search for people along the highways. Search also along the narrow roads with hedges. Strongly urge the people in those places to come to my house. I want it to be full of people! ²⁴Moreover I tell you this, those men whom I invited first will not get to enjoy my feast{, because they refused to come}.'" "

²⁵A large crowd of people was traveling with Jesus. He turned toward the people and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to me who loves his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters more than he loves me, he can not be my disciple. He must even love me more than he loves his own life! ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and does not obey me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸After all, if one of you wanted to build a tower, you would first sit down and determine how much it would cost. That way you would know whether you had enough money to finish it. ²⁹Otherwise, if you laid the foundation and were not able to finish the rest of the tower, everyone who saw it would make fun of you. ³⁰They would say, 'This man started to build a tower, but he was not able to finish it!' ³¹Or suppose a king had 10,000 soldiers in his army. And suppose another king who had 20,000 soldiers was coming to attack him. Before sending his army out to battle, that first king would certainly sit down with his advisors to determine whether he could defeat the other king's army. ³²Suppose he decided his army could not defeat the other army. Then he would send messengers to the other king while his army was still far away. He would tell the messengers to ask, 'What must I do to have peace with you?' ³³So, similarly, if any one of you does not first decide that you are willing to give up all that you have, you cannot be my disciple."

³⁴{Jesus also said, "You are like} salt{, which} is very useful. But if salt were to lose its saltiness, no one could ever make it taste salty again. ³⁵{If salt does not taste salty anymore,} it is no longer any good even for the soil or the manure heap. People just throw it away. You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

Chapter 15

¹Now, many tax collectors and other people whom the religious leaders considered to be sinners kept coming to Jesus to listen to him teach. ²{When} the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws {saw this, they} began to grumble. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them." {They thought Jesus was defiling himself by doing that.} ³So Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose that one of you had 100 sheep and you lost one of them. Certainly you would leave the 99 other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep until you had found it. ⁵When you found it, you would joyfully put it on your shoulders to carry it home. ⁶Then when you

arrived home, you would call together your friends and neighbors and say to them: 'Be joyful with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!' ⁷You should know that, in a similar way, there is great joy among those in heaven when one sinner repents from his sins. That joy is greater than their joy over many people who are already right with God and do not need to repent.

⁸Or suppose that a woman had ten valuable silver coins but lost one of them. Certainly she would light a lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she found it. ⁹When she found it, she would call together her friends and neighbors and say to them, 'Be very happy with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!' ¹⁰I tell you that, in a similar way, there is much joy among the angels of God when one sinner repents from his sins."

¹¹Then Jesus continued and said, "There once was a man who had two sons. ¹²One day the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me now the share of your property that I would otherwise have received when you died.' So the father divided his property between his two sons. ¹³Only a few days later, the younger son gathered together all that he owned and traveled to a country far away. There in that country he spent all his money foolishly in wasteful, immoral living. ¹⁴After he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine throughout that country. Soon he did not have anything left to live on. ¹⁵So he went to a man who lived in that country and asked him to hire him. So the man sent him out to his fields to feed his pigs. ¹⁶{He became so hungry that} he wished he could eat the bean pods that the pigs ate, yet no one gave him anything. ¹⁷Finally he began to think clearly about how foolish he had been, and he said to himself: 'All of my father's hired servants have more than enough food to eat, but here I am dying because I do not have anything to eat! ¹⁸So I will leave here and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹I do not deserve to have you consider me your son any more. Please let me work for you as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰So he left there and started traveling back to his father's house. But while he was still a great distance from the house, his father saw him and felt deep compassion for him. He ran to his son and embraced him and kissed him on the cheek. ²¹His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I do not deserve to have you consider me your son any more.' ²²But his father said to his servants; 'Go quickly and bring my best robe and put it on my son. Also put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet! ²³And bring the calf that we have fattened for a special occasion and kill it, so that we can eat it and celebrate! ²⁴We need to celebrate because this son of mine was like a dead man, but he is now alive again! He was like a lost person, but we have found him again!' So they all began to celebrate.

²⁵{While all that was happening,} the father's older son was out working in the fields. {After he finished working,} he headed home. As he was getting close to the house, he heard people playing music and dancing. ²⁶He called for one of the servants and asked what was happening. ²⁷The servant said to him, 'Your brother has come home. Your father told us to kill the fattened calf to celebrate because your brother returned safe and healthy.' ²⁸But the older brother was angry and did not want to join the celebration. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in. ²⁹But he replied to his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have worked as hard as a slave for you. I have always obeyed everything you told me to do. But you have never given me so much as a young goat that I could use to host a feast for my friends. ³⁰But now that this son of yours has come back home, after wasting all your money on prostitutes, you have told your servants to kill the fattened calf for a celebration!' ³¹But his father said to him, 'My son, you are always with me, and all that I own is yours. ³²But it is right for us to celebrate and rejoice, because it is as though your brother was dead and is alive again! It is as though he was lost and we have him found again!'"

Chapter 16

¹Jesus also said to his disciples, "Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day someone informed the rich man that the manager was doing such a bad job that the rich man was losing lots of money. ²So he called the manager to come to him and said to him, 'What I hear you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final written report of the things you have been managing, because you will no longer be my household manager!' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. ⁴I know what I will do so that people will take me into their houses {and provide for me} after he dismisses me from my

management work!' ⁵So he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him one by one. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶The man replied, '3,000 liters of olive oil.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1, 500 liters!' ⁷He said to another man, 'How much do you owe?' The man replied, '1,000 baskets of wheat.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill and change it to 800 baskets!' ⁸{When} the master {heard what his manager had done, he} praised the dishonest manager for being so clever. The truth is, the people who belong to this world are more clever than the people who belong to God in how they relate to those around them. ⁹I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourselves. Then when that money is gone, those friends will welcome you into their homes, which will last forever. ¹⁰People who faithfully manage small amounts of money will also be honest with much greater amounts. People who are dishonest in the way they manage small amounts of money will also be dishonest with much greater amounts. ¹¹So if you have not faithfully handled the money {God has given you} in this world, he will certainly not trust you with the true riches {of heaven}. ¹²If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you should not expect anyone to give you property of your own. ¹³No servant is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions."

¹⁴When the Pharisees {who were there} heard what Jesus was teaching, they made fun of him because they loved to acquire money. ¹⁵But Jesus said to them, "You try to make other people think that you are righteous, but God knows what you are really like. Keep in mind that God considers to be detestable many things that people praise as very important.

¹⁶The laws that God gave Moses and the things that the prophets wrote were in effect until John the Baptizer came. Since then, I have been preaching the good news about how God will rule as king. Many people {are accepting my message and} are very eagerly trying to become part of the kingdom of God. ¹⁷All of God's laws, even those that seem insignificant, are more permanent than heaven and earth.

¹⁸Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her is also committing adultery."

¹⁹{Jesus also said,} "Once there was a rich man who wore expensive purple and linen clothes. Every day he gave lavish feasts. ²⁰And {every day} people laid a poor man whose name was Lazarus at the gate of the rich man's house. Lazarus' body was covered with sores. ²¹{He was so hungry that} he wanted to eat the scraps of food that fell from the table where the rich man ate. {While he was lying there,} dogs came and licked his sores. ²²Eventually the poor man died. Then the angels took him to be with {his ancestor} Abraham. The rich man also died, and people buried his body. ²³In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham. ²⁴So the rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, I am suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and touch my tongue to cool it!' ²⁵But Abraham replied, 'Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering. ²⁶Besides that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to you there are not able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.' ²⁷Then the rich man said, 'If that is so, Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my family home. ²⁸I have five brothers {who live there}. Tell him to warn them so that they do not also come to this place where we suffer great pain!' ²⁹But Abraham replied, '{No, I will not do that because} your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!' ³⁰But the rich man replied, 'No, Father Abraham{, that will not be enough}! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior.' ³¹Abraham said to him, 'So they would not obey what Moses and the prophets wrote. Then it would not help even if someone from among the people who have died went and warned them. They would still not believe that they should turn from their sinful behavior.'"

Chapter 17

¹Jesus said to his disciples, "Things that tempt people to sin will certainly happen. But how terrible it will be for anyone who causes those things to happen! ²It would be better for that person if someone fastened a huge stone around his neck and threw him into the sea than if he were to cause someone to sin whose faith was weak. ³Be careful how you act. If another believer sins, you should rebuke him. If he says that he is sorry for having sinned and asks you to forgive him, then you should forgive him. ⁴Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, if he comes to you each time and says, 'I am sorry for what I did,' you must continue forgiving him."

⁵Then the apostles said to Jesus, "Give us more faith!" ⁶Jesus replied, "Even if you had faith that was no bigger than this tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Pull yourself out of the ground, roots and all, and plant yourself in the sea,' and it would obey you!"

⁷{Jesus also said,} "Suppose that one of you had a servant who was plowing your fields or taking care of your sheep. After he came into the house from the field, you would not say, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat!' ⁸Instead, you would say to him, 'Prepare a meal for me! Then put on your serving clothes and serve it to me so that I can eat and drink! Afterwards you can eat and drink.' ⁹You would not thank your servant just for doing the work that he had been told to do! ¹⁰Similarly, when you have done everything that God has told you to do, you should say, 'We are only God's servants. We do not deserve to have you thank us. We have only done the things that he told us to do.'"

¹¹As Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to Jerusalem, they were going through the area between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers came toward him, but they stood at some distance away. ¹³They called out, "Jesus, Master, please have pity on us!" ¹⁴When Jesus saw them, he said to them, "Go and have the priests examine you." So they went, and on the way, their leprosy disappeared. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he no longer had leprosy, went back, praising God loudly. ¹⁶{He came to Jesus and} he lay down on the ground with his face at Jesus' feet, and he thanked him. This man was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus said, "I healed ten lepers! I would have expected the other nine to come back as well! ¹⁸This foreign man was the only one who returned to thank God. None of the others came back!" ¹⁹Then he said to the man, "Get up and go on your way. God has healed you because you trusted in me."

²⁰One day some Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will God begin to rule everyone?" He replied, "That will not happen with signs that people can recognize if they watch for them. ²¹People will not be able to say, 'Look! God is ruling here!' or 'God is ruling there!' {Contrary to what you think,} God has already begun to rule within you."

²²Jesus said to his disciples, "There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. ²³People will say to you, 'Look, the Messiah is over there!' or they will say, 'Look, he is here!' {When they say that,} do not follow them. ²⁴For when the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other{, everyone can see it}. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me. ²⁵But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and people will reject me. ²⁶But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at the time when Noah lived. ²⁷At that time people ate and drank {as usual}, and they got married {as usual}, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. ²⁸Similarly, when Lot lived {in the city of Sodom}, people {there} ate and drank {as usual}. They bought things and they sold things. They planted crops and they built houses {as usual}. ²⁹But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who had stayed in the city. ³⁰Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared. ³¹On that day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses, must not take the time to go inside and get them. Similarly, those who are out working in a field must not come back home to get anything. {They must flee quickly.} ³²Remember what happened to Lot's wife! ³³Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But anyone who leaves his old way of living {for my sake} will live forever. ³⁴I tell you this: On the night when I return, there will be two people

sleeping in one bed. God will take the one who believes in me and leave the other one behind. ³⁵Two women will be grinding grain together. God will take one of them and leave the other one behind.” ³⁶[¹] [“There will be two in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”] ³⁷His disciples said to him, “Lord, where will this happen?” He replied to them, “Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat it.”

17:36 [¹]

Chapter 18

¹Jesus told his disciples another story to teach them that they should pray continually and not become discouraged {if God did not immediately answer their prayers}. ²He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not revere God and did not care about people. ³There was a widow in that city who kept coming to that judge, saying, ‘Please get justice for me against the man who is opposing me in court.’ ⁴For a long time the judge refused to help her. But later, he said to himself, ‘I do not revere God and I do not care about people. ⁵But this widow keeps bothering me! So I will judge her case and make sure she is treated fairly. I am concerned that if I do not do that, she will exhaust me by continually coming to me!’” ⁶Then Jesus said, “Think carefully about what the unjust judge said. ⁷{Even more} certainly will God{, who is just,} bring about justice for his chosen people, who pray earnestly to him all day long! And he is always patient with them. ⁸I tell you, God will quickly bring about justice for his chosen ones! Nevertheless when I, the Son of Man, come back to earth, there will still be many people who do not believe in me.”

⁹Then Jesus also told the following story to some people who thought they were righteous and who looked down on other people. ¹⁰{He said,} “Two men went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee. The other man was someone who collected taxes from the people for the Roman government. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself in this way, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Some steal money from others. Some treat others unjustly. Some commit adultery. I do not do any of those things. And I am certainly not like this sinful tax collector who cheats people! ¹²I fast on two days during every week, and I give ten percent of all that I earn to the temple!’ ¹³But the tax collector stood far away from the other people in the temple courtyard. He would not even look up toward heaven. Instead, he beat on his chest and said, ‘O God, please forgive me, because I am a terrible sinner!’” ¹⁴Then Jesus said, “I tell you that as they left to go home, God had forgiven the tax collector, but God had not forgiven the Pharisee. This is because God will humble everyone who exalts himself, and God will exalt everyone who humbles himself.”

¹⁵One day people were bringing even their babies to Jesus so that he would put his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw this, they told them not to do that. ¹⁶But Jesus called for the children to be brought to him. He said, “Let the little children come to me! Do not stop them, because it is {humble and trusting} people like these children who let God rule their lives. ¹⁷Indeed, I say to you that whoever will not humbly and trustingly let God rule over his life will not accept God’s rule at all.”

¹⁸Once a Jewish leader asked Jesus, “Good teacher, what must I do in order to have everlasting life?” ¹⁹Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? God is the only one who is truly good!

²⁰{In answer to your question, certainly} you know the commandments {that God gave to Moses for us to obey}: ‘Do not commit adultery. Do not murder anyone. Do not steal. Do not give a false report. Honor your father and mother.’” ²¹The man said, “I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young.” ²²When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, “You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiritual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!” ²³The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. ²⁴When Jesus looked at the man and said, “It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to let God rule over them. ²⁵In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives.” ²⁶Those who heard Jesus say that replied, “Then it seems that God will not consider that anyone should have eternal life!” ²⁷But

Jesus said, "What is impossible for people is possible for God." ²⁸Then Peter said, "What about us? We have left everything we had in order to become your disciples." ²⁹Jesus said to them, "I can assure you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to let God rule over them ³⁰will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind and, in the coming age, they will receive everlasting life."

³¹Jesus took the 12 disciples to a place by themselves. He said to them, "Listen carefully! We are on our way to Jerusalem. While we are there, everything that the prophets wrote long ago about me, the Son of Man, will happen. ³²This will happen when my enemies turn me over to the authorities who are not Jews. They will mock me, treat me with disdain, and spit on me. ³³They will whip me and then they will kill me. But two days later I will become alive again." ³⁴But the disciples did not understand any of those things that he said. God prevented them from recognizing their significance, so they did not know what Jesus meant by what he was telling them.

³⁵As Jesus and his disciples came near to the city of Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road. He was begging for money. ³⁶When he heard a crowd of people passing by, he kept asking {those around him}, "What is happening?" ³⁷They told him, "{There is a crowd because} Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, is coming down the street." ³⁸He shouted, "Jesus, you who are descended from King David, have pity on me!" ³⁹Those who were walking at the front of the crowd scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, "You who are descended from King David, have pity on me!" ⁴⁰Jesus stopped walking and commanded the people to bring the man to him. When the blind man came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" He replied, "Lord, I want you to enable me to see!" ⁴²Jesus said to him, "Then I now restore your sight! Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you!" ⁴³Immediately he was able to see. And he went with Jesus, praising God. And when all the people there saw this, they also praised God.

Chapter 19

¹Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city. ²There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes, and he was very rich. ³He wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see him over the crowd. He was a very short man {and there were many people around Jesus}. ⁴So he ran farther down the road. He climbed a sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. ⁵When Jesus got there, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, I have to stay at your house tonight!" ⁶So he came down quickly. He was glad to welcome Jesus into his home. ⁷But the people who saw Jesus go there grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a real sinner!" ⁸Then Zacchaeus stood up while they were eating and said to Jesus, "Lord, I want you to know that I am going to give half of what I own to poor people. And as for the people whom I have cheated, I will pay them back four times the amount I took from them." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Today God has saved this household, because this man has shown that he is a true descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰Remember this: I, the Son of Man, came to find and save people {like you} who have been disobeying God."

¹¹The people were listening to everything Jesus said. He was getting close to Jerusalem{, and he knew that the people had a wrong idea}. They thought he would begin to rule as king over God's people as soon as he got to Jerusalem. So Jesus decided to tell them another story {to correct that idea}. ¹²He said, "A prince was preparing to go to a distant country so that a higher king could give him the right to rule over the country where he lived. After he received it, he would come back to rule his people. ¹³{Before he left,} he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, 'Do business with this money until I return!' {Then he left.} ¹⁴But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say {to the higher king}, 'We do not want this man to be our king!' ¹⁵{But he was made king anyway. Later} he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. ¹⁶The first servant came to him and said, 'Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!' ¹⁷He said to this man, 'You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.' ¹⁸Then the second servant came and said, 'Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!' ¹⁹He also

said to that servant, ‘{Well done!} I will put you over five cities.’ ²⁰Then another servant came. He said, ‘Sir, here is your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe. ²¹I was afraid that you would take everything I earned. I know you are a hard man who takes things from others that do not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another farmer has planted.’ ²²He said to that servant, ‘You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You said I am a hard man. You said I take what does not belong to me. You said I am like a farmer who harvests what another farmer has planted. ²³So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!’ ²⁴Then the king said to those who were standing near, ‘Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!’ ²⁵They protested, ‘But sir, he already has a lot of money!’ ²⁶But the king said, ‘I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have. ²⁷Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!’”

²⁸After Jesus said those things, he traveled farther along on the road up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When they got close to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples on ahead. ³⁰He told them, “Go to the village just ahead of you. As you enter it, there you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying the donkey?’ say to him, ‘Jesus needs it.’” ³²So the two disciples went to the village and found the donkey, just as Jesus had told them. ³³As they were untying it, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying our donkey?” ³⁴They replied, “Jesus needs it.” And the owners gave them permission to use it. ³⁵Then the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their robes on the donkey’s back and helped Jesus get on it. ³⁶Then, as he rode along, others spread their cloaks on the road in front of him to honor him. ³⁷As Jesus approached the road that goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to praise God with loud, joyful shouts for all the great miracles that they had seen him do. ³⁸They were saying things like, “May God bless our king who comes with God’s authority! May there be peace between God in heaven and us his people, and may everyone praise God!” ³⁹Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell your disciples to stop saying those things!” ⁴⁰He replied, “I tell you this: If these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout to praise me!”

⁴¹When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he cried about its people. ⁴²He said, “I wish that today you people knew how to have God’s peace. But now you are unable to know this. ⁴³I want you to know this: You are going to experience difficult times. Your enemies will come and set up a barricade around your city. They will surround the city and attack it on all sides. ⁴⁴They will {break through the walls and} destroy them and the rest of the city. They will kill all of you. They will completely demolish everything. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!”

⁴⁵Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courtyard. He began to force the people who were selling things there to leave. ⁴⁶He told them, “The Scriptures say, ‘God’s temple should be a place where people pray.’ But you have made it ‘a hideout for thieves!’”

⁴⁷Each day during that week, Jesus was teaching people at the temple. The chief priests, the teachers of religious laws, and other Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him. ⁴⁸But they did not find any way to do it, because very many people were eager to hear him.

Chapter 20

¹One day during that week, Jesus was teaching the people at the temple and telling them God’s good message. As he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and some other elders came to him. ²They said to him, “Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?” ³He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me ⁴about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans command him?” ⁵They discussed this among themselves. They said, “If we answer, ‘God commanded him,’ then

he will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' ⁶But if we say, 'It was only humans who told him to baptize,' the people will stone us to death, because most of them believe that John was a prophet {whom God sent}." ⁷So they replied that they did not know who told John to baptize. ⁸Then Jesus said to them, "Just as you will not tell me, I will not tell you who sent me to do those things."

⁹Then Jesus told the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it. Then he went to another country and stayed there for a long time. ¹⁰When it was time to harvest the grapes, this owner sent a servant to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. But {after the servant arrived,} they beat that servant and sent him away without giving him any grapes. ¹¹Later, the owner sent another servant, but they also beat and shamed that servant. They sent him away without any grapes. ¹²Still later, the owner sent yet another servant. The farmers wounded this servant too and forced him to leave the vineyard. ¹³So the owner of the vineyard said to himself, 'What should I do now? I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will probably respect him.' ¹⁴{So he sent his son,} but when the people who were caring for the vineyard saw him coming, they said to each other, 'Here comes the man who will some day inherit this vineyard! Let us kill him! Then the vineyard will be ours!' ¹⁵So they dragged him outside the vineyard, and they killed him. I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do to them! ¹⁶He will come and kill those people who were taking care of the vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it." When the people listening to Jesus heard this, they said, "May a situation like this never happen!" ¹⁷But Jesus looked directly at them and said, "You can say that, but think about the meaning of these words that are written in the Scriptures.

'The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.

¹⁸This stone will break to pieces everyone who falls on it, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'"

¹⁹The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws realized that he was accusing them when he told the story about those wicked people. So they immediately tried to find a way to arrest him. {But they did not arrest him,} because they were afraid of what the people would do if they did so. ²⁰So they watched him carefully. They also sent spies {to talk to Jesus} who pretended to be sincere, but who really wanted to get Jesus to say something wrong. They wanted to {be able to accuse him of encouraging resistance to the Roman government so that they could} turn him over to the governor {of the province}. ²¹One of them said to him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You do that even if important people do not like it. You teach truthfully what God wants us to do. ²²{So tell us what you think about this matter.} Is it right for us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?" ²³But he knew that they were trying to trick him to get him into trouble either with the Jews, who hated to pay those taxes, or with the Roman government. So he said to them, ²⁴"Show me a Roman coin. Then tell me whose picture and name are on it." So they {showed him a coin and} said, "It has the picture and name of Caesar." ²⁵He said to them, "In that case, give to the government what belongs to it, and give to God what belongs to him." ²⁶The spies could find nothing wrong with anything that Jesus said while the people were standing around him. The spies were so amazed at his answer that they did not say anything more.

²⁷After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. Their group of Jews taught that no one would rise from the dead. They also intended to ask Jesus a challenging question. ²⁸One of them said to him, "Teacher, Moses taught us Jews what to do if a man dies who has a wife but no children. His brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child by him. People will then consider that child a descendant of the man who died. ²⁹Well, there were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but before she had any children, he died, leaving her as a widow. ³⁰The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. ³¹Then the third brother married her, but the same thing happened again. In the end, all seven brothers, one by one, married that woman but died without having any children. ³²Afterwards, the woman died, too. ³³Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!" ³⁴Jesus replied to them, "In this world, men marry women, and parents give daughters in marriage to men. ³⁵But the people whom God will consider worthy of being in heaven when he brings them back to life after they have died will not marry. ³⁶{They do not marry}

because they cannot die anymore. Rather, they are like the angels {who live forever}. They are God's children, since God has made them alive again after they have died. ³⁷{Now that I have answered your question about marriage, I will show from Scripture} that God does make people alive again after they have died. Even Moses wrote about this. In the place where he describes meeting God at the burning bush, he records how the Lord called himself 'the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' {God would not have said that if he had not made those men alive again and he were not still their God.} ³⁸After all, he is not the God of people who are dead. He is the God of people who are alive, because to God, everyone remains alive {even after they die}."

³⁹Some of the teachers of the Jewish law {who were there} replied, "Teacher, you have answered very well!" ⁴⁰{The scribes said this} because the people who had been trying to trap Jesus {had stopped asking him difficult questions. He had answered so well that they} were afraid to ask him anything else.

⁴¹So in return, {Jesus asked them a difficult question of his own.} He said, "Why do people say that the Messiah is {only} a descendant of King David? ⁴²Consider that David himself wrote in the Book of Psalms {about the Messiah},

'God said to my Lord,

"Sit here next to me on my right side{, in that position of great honor}.

⁴³{Sit here} while I completely defeat your enemies.'" "

⁴⁴In this psalm, King David calls the Messiah 'my Lord.' {That is a title of great respect.} So how could the Messiah be David's descendant? {It is the descendant who should show great respect to the ancestor.}"

⁴⁵Then, while all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶"Make sure that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the places for the most honored people.

⁴⁷They {also} steal all the property of widows. But to make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time {in public}. God will condemn them strictly for what they have done."

Chapter 21

¹Then Jesus looked up {from where he was sitting} and saw rich people putting their gifts {of money} into the offering boxes {in the temple courtyard}. ²He also saw a poor widow put two small copper coins into one of the boxes. ³And he said {to his disciples}, "The truth is that this poor widow has put more {into the offering box} than all {of these rich people}. ⁴Let me tell you why that is true. All those {rich people} gave a lot of money, but it was extra money that they did not really need. But this widow, who is very poor, gave all the money that she had, even though she really did need it to live on."

⁵Some {of Jesus' disciples} were talking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and decorations that people had given. But Jesus said, ⁶"{Let me tell you what is going to happen to} these things that you are admiring. Someday your enemies will demolish them entirely."

⁷Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will show that these things are about to take place?" ⁸Jesus replied, "Do not let anyone mislead you. For many people will come and each will claim to be me. Each will say about himself, 'I am the Messiah!' They will also say, 'The time is almost here when God will rule as king!' Do not believe what they are saying! ⁹Also, you will hear about wars and people fighting each other. Things like that must happen before the end {of the world} comes. So {when you hear about those things,} do not be afraid.

¹⁰Various people groups will attack each other, and the people of different kingdoms will fight each other. ¹¹And in various places there will be great earthquakes. There will also be famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid. People will see strange things in the sky {that will show that

something very important is going to happen). ¹²But before all these things {happen}, your enemies will seize you and treat you badly. They will bring you to the synagogues{, whose judges will put you on trial} and {put you in the} prisons. Your enemies will also have kings and high government authorities put you on trial because you believe in me. ¹³That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me. ¹⁴So resolve firmly not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves, ¹⁵because I will give you the right words so that you will know what to say. As a result, none of the people accusing you will be able to say that you are wrong. ¹⁶And even your parents and brothers and sisters and {other} relatives and friends will betray you, and they will kill some of you. ¹⁷Most people will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁸But your entire being will be safe {spiritually}. ¹⁹If you go through difficult times and prove that you trust God, after you die your souls will live on in God's presence.

²⁰When you see armies surround {the city of} Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy that city.

²¹At that time those of you who are in {other places in the province of} Judea must escape to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city. ²²{You should run away} because God will punish {the city of Jerusalem} at this time. {When he does that,} what God has said in the Scriptures about this will come true. ²³When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies. There will be great suffering in the land. God will be angry with these people and punish them severely. ²⁴Many of them will die because soldiers will kill them with their weapons. Their enemies will take others as prisoners and send them to many places around the world. The Gentiles will control {the city of} Jerusalem for as long as God allows."

²⁵"At this time, strange things will happen to the sun, the moon, and the stars. And on earth, people groups will become very frightened. They will be as afraid as they would be in a roaring ocean with huge waves. ²⁶People will be so afraid that they will faint because they are waiting for what will happen next in the world. The stars in the sky will move out of their usual places. ²⁷Then all people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds powerfully and with brilliant light. ²⁸So when those terrible things begin to happen, assume a posture of confidence, because God will soon rescue you."

²⁹Then Jesus gave them an example. He said, "Think about the fig trees, and even all the trees. ³⁰When you see that their leaves are sprouting, you know that it is the beginning of summer. ³¹In the same way, when you see these things that I have just described happening, you will know then that God will soon show himself as king. ³²I am telling you the truth. The people who see the first of the signs I have described will definitely live to see all these things happen. ³³You may think of the sky and the land as permanent. They are not, but my words are permanent.

³⁴Be very careful to control yourselves. If you get drunk, your minds will not be alert afterwards. And if you worry about day-to-day matters, you will become distracted. {Then you will not be paying attention to the signs I have told you about, and} I will surprise you when I return. ³⁵{I will come so suddenly that} it will be like when a trap springs closed on an animal. {So you need to be watching for my return,} because it will affect every person in the world. ³⁶So you must be always ready for my coming. Pray that you will be able to stay faithful to me as you experience these difficult things that I have been talking about. That way I, the Messiah, will declare you innocent {when I come to judge the world}."

³⁷Each day Jesus was teaching people at the temple. But every evening he went {out of the city} and stayed all night on the Mount of Olives. ³⁸And early every morning, great crowds of people came to the temple to listen to him {as he taught}.

Chapter 22

¹It was now almost time for the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, which people also called the Passover. ²The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws were looking for a way to have Jesus killed without starting a riot among the {many} people {who thought he was a great man}.

³Then Satan entered into Judas, whose other name was Iscariot. He was one of the 12 disciples. ⁴He went and talked with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard about how he might help them capture Jesus. ⁵They were very pleased {when he offered to do that}. They said they would pay him money {if he did it}. ⁶So Judas agreed, and then he started looking for a way to help them capture Jesus where the crowd would not see it.

⁷Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came. This was the day when Jewish people had to kill the lambs that they would eat for the Passover celebration. ⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John out with these instructions: "Go and prepare the meal for the Passover celebration so that we can all eat it together." ⁹They replied to him, "Where do you want us to prepare the meal?" ¹⁰He answered, "Listen carefully. When you go into the city, a man carrying a large jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹Say to the owner of the house, 'Our teacher says to show us the room where he can eat the Passover meal together with us, his disciples.' ¹²He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be all ready for entertaining guests. Prepare the meal for us there." ¹³So the two disciples went {into the city}. They found everything to be just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared {the meal for} the Passover celebration there.

¹⁴When it was time to eat the meal, Jesus came and sat down with the apostles. ¹⁵He said to them, "I have wanted very much to eat this special Passover supper with you before I die. ¹⁶I tell you, the next time I eat it will be when God gives it its deepest meaning when he rules everywhere as king." ¹⁷Then he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He told {his apostles}, "Take this wine and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸{I want you to do this} because, I tell you, I will not drink wine again until God rules everywhere as king." ¹⁹Then he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them to eat. As he did so, he said, "This bread is my body, which I am about to sacrifice for you. Do this again later to honor me." ²⁰In the same way, after they had eaten the meal, he took the cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant that I will make using my own blood, which will flow out of my wounds for you when I die. ²¹But I want you all to know that the person who will hand me over to my enemies is here eating with me. ²²{I say this} because I, the Son of Man, will indeed die in the way that God has planned. But how terrible it will be for the man who hands me over {to my enemies}!" ²³Then the apostles began to ask each other which of them would actually be prepared to betray Jesus.

²⁴After that, the apostles began to argue among themselves about which one of them they should think was the most important person. ²⁵Jesus responded to them, "The kings of the Gentile nations like to show people that they are powerful. Yet they give themselves the name 'Ones Who Help the People.' ²⁶But you should not be like those rulers! Instead, the most honored people among you should act as if they were the least honored ones. Anyone who leads must act like a servant. ²⁷For you know that the important person is the one who eats at the table, not the servant who brings the food. But I, your leader, have been setting an example for you by serving you while I have been among you

²⁸You are the people who have stayed with me during all the hard things I have suffered. ²⁹So now I am appointing you to important positions in which you will rule, just as my Father has appointed me to rule as a king. ³⁰You will sit and eat and drink with me when I become king. In fact, you will sit on thrones and judge the people of the 12 tribes of Israel."

³¹"Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has asked {God} to {let him} test all of you, the way someone shakes grain in a sieve{, and God has permitted him to do that}. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon. {I have asked God} that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you decide that you truly do believe in me, encourage the other apostles {to believe in me as well}." ³³Peter replied to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison. I am even willing to die with you!" ³⁴Jesus replied, "Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

³⁵Then Jesus asked the disciples, "When I sent you out {to the villages, and you went} without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?" They replied, "No, there was nothing!" ³⁶Then Jesus said, "But, now, if anyone {among you} has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him. And whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one!" ³⁷I tell you this because

what a prophet wrote about me in the Scriptures must take place: 'People treated him like a criminal.' Everything the Scriptures say about me is going to happen. ³⁸The disciples replied, "Lord, look! We have two swords!" He answered, "We will not need more than two."

³⁹Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives, as he usually did. His disciples went with him. ⁴⁰When Jesus came {with his disciples} to the place where he often spent the night, he said to them, "Pray that God will help you not to sin when you are tempted." ⁴¹Then he went about 30 meters from them, knelt down, and prayed. ⁴²He said, "Father, if you are willing, please allow me not to experience the terrible things that are about to happen. But do not do what I want. Do what you want." ⁴³^[1] [Then an angel from heaven came to him and gave him courage. ⁴⁴^[2] He was suffering greatly. So he prayed very intensely. His sweat was falling to the ground like large drops of blood.] ⁴⁵When Jesus got up from praying, he returned to his disciples. He discovered that they were sleeping. They were very sad and this had made them tired. ⁴⁶He {woke them up and} said to them, "This is no time for you to be sleeping! Get up! Pray that {God will help you so that} nothing tempts you to sin."

⁴⁷While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd of people came to him. Judas, one of the 12 disciples, was guiding them. He came up to Jesus to greet him with a kiss on the cheek. ⁴⁸But Jesus said to him, "Judas, how dare you use a kiss to hand me, the Son of Man, over to my enemies!" ⁴⁹When the disciples realized what was happening, they said, "Lord, should we use our weapons {to keep them from arresting you}?" ⁵⁰One of them {drew his sword and} struck the servant of the high priest, but {only} cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "Do not do any more of that!" Then he touched the servant where he had been wounded and healed him. ⁵²⁻⁵³Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guards, and the Jewish elders who had come to arrest him, "It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a robber. For many days I was with you in the temple, but you did not try to arrest me at all! But this is the time you are doing what you want. It is also the time when Satan is doing the evil things as he wants to do."

⁵⁴The Jewish leaders and soldiers seized Jesus and led him away. They brought him to the high priest's house. Peter followed them {from a safe distance} far behind. ⁵⁵Some people lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together. Peter came and sat among them. ⁵⁶A female servant saw Peter sitting there as the fire shone upon him. She looked at him carefully and said, "This man was also with the one they have arrested!" ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Young lady, I do not know him!" ⁵⁸A little later someone else saw Peter and said, "You also are one of those who were with the man they arrested!" But Peter said, "No, mister, I am not one of them!" ⁵⁹About an hour later someone else said loudly, "{The way that} this man {speaks shows that he} is from {the region of} Galilee. So he must certainly have come here with the man they arrested!" ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Mister, that is not true!" Immediately a rooster crowed, while Peter was still speaking. ⁶¹Jesus turned around and looked right at Peter. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him: "This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me." ⁶²And he went out of the courtyard and cried with great sorrow.

⁶³The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. ⁶⁴They put a blindfold on him {so he could not see and then took turns hitting him}. They said to him, "Show us that you are a prophet! Tell us who just hit you!" ⁶⁵They said many other {cruel} things about him, mocking him.

⁶⁶At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They had the soldiers bring Jesus into the Jewish council chamber. ⁶⁷There they said to him, "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" But he replied, "If I say that I am the Messiah, you will not believe me. ⁶⁸But if I ask you whether you think I am the Messiah, you will not answer me. ⁶⁹But from now on, I, the Messiah, will be sitting next to almighty God {and ruling}!" ⁷⁰Then they all asked, "If that is so, are you {saying that you are} the Son of God?" He answered, "Yes, what you are saying is true." ⁷¹Then they said to each other, "We ourselves have heard him say {that he is equal to God}! And so we certainly do not need any more people to testify against him {on a charge of blasphemy}!"

22:43 ^[1]

22:44 ^[2]

Chapter 23

¹Then the whole group got up and took Jesus to Pilate{, the Roman governor}. ²They accused him {in front of Pilate}. They said, "We have seen this man {causing trouble by} misleading our people. He has been telling them to not pay the taxes that Caesar, the Roman emperor, has imposed. Also, he has been saying that he is the Messiah, a king!" ³Pilate then asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is just as you have asked me." ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, "This man is not guilty of any crime." ⁵But the group from the Jewish ruling council kept accusing Jesus. They said, "He is trying to get the people to riot! He has been teaching his ideas throughout all of {the region of} Judea. He started doing that in {the region of} Galilee, and now he is doing it here as well!"

⁶When Pilate heard what they said, he asked, "Does this man come from {the region of} Galilee?" ⁷When Pilate found out that Jesus was from Galilee, where Herod Antipas ruled, he sent Jesus to him. Herod was also in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, because he had wanted to see Jesus for a long time. This was because Herod had heard many things about Jesus, and he wanted to see him perform a miracle. ⁹So he asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not reply to any of them. ¹⁰And the chief priests and some experts in the Jewish laws stood near Jesus, accusing him very strongly {of committing many crimes}. ¹¹Then Herod and his soldiers insulted Jesus and made fun of him. They put expensive clothes on him {to pretend that he was a king}. Then Herod sent him back to Pilate. ¹²Until that time the two men had been very hostile to each other, but on that day Herod and Pilate became friends.

¹³Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd that was still there. ¹⁴He said to them, "You brought this man to me, saying that he has been leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after examining him while you were listening, I conclude that he is not guilty of doing any of the things you said he did. ¹⁵Also, Herod sent him back to us {without punishing him}. That means that he too {concluded that he was not guilty}. So it is clear that this man has not done anything for which he deserves to die. ¹⁶So I will {tell my soldiers to} whip him and then set him free." ¹⁷[¹⁷] [{Pilate said this because} he had to set one prisoner free at every Passover celebration.] ¹⁸But the whole crowd shouted together, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us instead!" ¹⁹Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city {of Jerusalem} to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes. ²⁰But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. ²¹But they kept on shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" ²²Pilate then spoke to the crowd a third time. "No! He has not committed any crime! He has not done anything for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him, and then I will set him free." ²³But the people in the crowd kept shouting to insist that Pilate execute Jesus on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate. ²⁴So Pilate declared that he would do what they wanted. ²⁵Then Pilate set free the man whom the crowd was asking him to release. That man was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! Pilate then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

²⁶Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene {in Africa}. He was coming into Jerusalem from the countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They {took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they} put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. ²⁷Now a large crowd was walking behind Jesus. In the crowd were many women who were beating on their chests {to show their grief} and wailing {sorrowfully} for him. ²⁸But {instead of accepting their sympathy,} Jesus turned to these women and said, "You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep over {the terrible things that are going to happen to} you and your children! ²⁹For I want you to know that there will {soon} be a time when people will say, 'How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!' ³⁰Then the people in this city will say, 'We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!' ³¹Right now it is difficult for people to do bad things to others, just as it is difficult to set fire to fresh wood. But later, people will easily be able to do terrible things to others, just as it is easy to set fire to dry wood."

³²Two other men, who were criminals, were also walking with Jesus to the place where the Romans would execute them. ³³When they got to the place whose name was The Skull, there the soldiers crucified Jesus, nailing him to a cross. They did the same thing to the two criminals. They put one of them at the right side of Jesus and the other at his left side. ³⁴^[2] [But Jesus said, "Father, please forgive these people. They do not realize what they are doing."] Then the soldiers divided his clothes and gambled with something like dice to determine which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁵Many people stood nearby, watching. They were making fun of Jesus. The Jewish leaders did the same thing. They said, "He saved other people! If God has really chosen him to be the Messiah, he should save himself!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him and offered him some sour wine. ³⁷They said to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸On the cross above his head, the soldiers also fastened a sign that stated, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who was hanging {on a cross next to Jesus also} insulted him. He said, "If you really were the Messiah, you would save yourself, and you would save us too!" ⁴⁰But the other criminal scolded him {for saying that}. He told him, "You should be afraid of God {punishing you}! You are also dying on a cross{, and soon God will judge you}. ⁴¹The two of us deserve {to die}. They are punishing us as we deserve for the evil things that we did. But the man you are insulting did nothing wrong!" ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, please think about me and treat me well when you begin to rule as king!" ⁴³Jesus replied, "I want you to know that today you will be with me in paradise!"

⁴⁴By then it was about noontime. But it became dark throughout that whole area until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁵There was no light from the sun. And the {thick} curtain {that closed off the Most Holy Place} in the temple split into two pieces. ⁴⁶When that happened, Jesus shouted loudly, "Father, I put my spirit into your care!" After he said that, he stopped breathing and died.

⁴⁷When the centurion {who was commanding the soldiers} saw what happened, he said, "Indeed, this man did nothing wrong!" What he said honored God. ⁴⁸When the crowd of people who had gathered to see these men die saw what had actually happened, they went back to their homes, hitting their chests to show that they were sorrowful. ⁴⁹{But when the rest of the crowd left,} all of Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had come with him from {the region of} Galilee, kept watching what happened from where they were standing, some distance away.

⁵⁰There was a man named Joseph {who lived in Jerusalem}. He was a good and righteous man who was a member of the Jewish Council. ⁵¹But he had not agreed with the other Council members when they decided to kill Jesus and when they planned how to do it. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea. He was waiting expectantly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. ⁵²Joseph went to Pilate and asked Pilate to permit him to take Jesus' body and bury it. {Pilate gave him permission,} ⁵³So Joseph took Jesus' body down {from the cross}. He wrapped it in a linen cloth. Then he put Jesus' body in a burial chamber that someone had cut into a rock cliff. No one had ever put a body in that chamber before. ⁵⁴This happened on the day when the Jewish people got ready for their day of rest. It was soon going to be sunset, the start of the Sabbath. ⁵⁵The women who had come with Jesus from {the district of} Galilee followed {Joseph and the men who were with him}. They saw the burial chamber, and they saw how the men laid Jesus' body inside it. ⁵⁶Then the women went back to where they were staying in order to prepare spices and ointments {to put on Jesus' body}. However, they stopped working when the Sabbath began, just as the Jewish law required.

23:17 ^[1]

23:34 ^[2]

Chapter 24

¹Very early in the morning on Sunday, those women went to the burial chamber. They brought with them the spices that they had prepared {to put on the body of Jesus}. ²{When they arrived,} they discovered that somebody

had rolled away the stone {that had been closing off the entrance} to the burial chamber. ³They went into {the burial chamber}, but the body of Jesus was not there! ⁴They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! ⁵This made the women very frightened. They bowed down low to the ground. The two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury the bodies of dead people! ⁶He is not here. No, he has come back to life! Recall that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you, ⁷'They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. Those men will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But two days later, I will become alive again.'" ⁸The women recalled what Jesus had told them. ⁹So they left the burial chamber and went to the 11 apostles and the other disciples of Jesus and told them what happened. ¹⁰The women who told these things to the apostles were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them. ¹¹But the apostles thought this report was foolishness, so they did not believe the women. ¹²However, Peter decided {to see whether the story was true}. He ran to the burial chamber. He stooped down {and looked inside}. He saw the linen cloths {in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there}. So he left the tomb, puzzling over what had happened.

¹³That same day two of Jesus' disciples were walking to an outlying village named Emmaus. It was about ten kilometers from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about all the things that had happened {to Jesus}. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing {those things}, Jesus himself approached them and started walking with them. ¹⁶But God prevented them from realizing that it was Jesus. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "What have you two been talking about while you were walking?" They stopped, and they had very sad expressions on their faces. ¹⁸But then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person who is visiting Jerusalem who does not know about the events that have happened there in recent days!" ¹⁹He said to them, "What events?" They replied, "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was a prophet. God enabled him to perform great miracles and to teach wonderful messages. Most people thought he was wonderful. ²⁰But our chief priests and leaders handed him over {to the Roman authorities}. They sentenced him to die, and they killed him by nailing him to a cross. ²¹We were hoping that he was the one who would free us Israelites from our enemies! But this does not seem possible now, since three days have passed since the Romans executed him. ²²In spite of this, some women from our group amazed us. Early this morning they went to the chamber {where Jesus was buried}, ²³but the body of Jesus was not there! They came back and told us they had seen some angels in a vision. The angels said that Jesus was alive! ²⁴Then some of those who were with us {when the women came and said this} went to the burial chamber. They saw that things were exactly as the women had reported. But they did not see Jesus." ²⁵Then Jesus said to them, "You two foolish men! You are so slow to believe all that the prophets have written about the Messiah! ²⁶You should certainly have known that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer all those things {and die}, and then receive great honor from God!" ²⁷Then Jesus explained to them all the things that the Scriptures said about himself. He started with what Moses wrote, and then he explained what all the prophets had written.

²⁸When they had nearly reached the village where the two men were going, it appeared that Jesus was going to keep walking down the road. ²⁹But they pleaded with him {not to do that}. They said, "Stay with us tonight, because it is late in the afternoon and it will soon be dark." So he went in {to the house} to stay with them. ³⁰When they all sat down to eat, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and began to give some to the two men. ³¹And then God enabled them to recognize him. But immediately he disappeared! ³²They said to each other, "While we were walking along the road and he was talking with us and enabling us to understand the Scriptures, we got so excited inside! {It all made sense that the Messiah would have to suffer but then receive great honor.}" ³³So they left immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the 11 apostles and some others who had gathered together with them. ³⁴The apostles told those two men, "It is true that Jesus has become alive again. He has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized Jesus as he broke some bread for them.

³⁶As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" ³⁷But {they were not peaceful.} They were startled and afraid because they thought that they were seeing

a ghost! ³⁸He said to them, "You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt {that I am alive}. ³⁹Look at {the wounds in my hands} and my feet! That way you can be sure that it is really I myself. Ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I have, and you can touch me to prove that my body is real." ⁴⁰After he said that, he showed them {the wounds in} his hands and his feet. ⁴¹They were so glad that they could still hardly believe {that he was really alive}. So he said to them, "Do you have something here that I could eat?" ⁴²So they gave him a piece of roasted fish. ⁴³While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, "I will repeat what I told you while I was with you before. God was going to make happen everything that he said about me{, the Messiah.} throughout all of the Scriptures." ⁴⁵Then he enabled them to understand the {things that} the Scriptures {said about him}. He said to them, ⁴⁶"This is what you can read in the Scriptures: that the Messiah would suffer {and die}, but on the third day after that, he would become alive again. ⁴⁷{The Scriptures also say that} those who believe in the Messiah would go and announce on his behalf that God will forgive people who stop sinning. I want you to do this, starting here in Jerusalem and going to every people group in the world. ⁴⁸You {must tell people that you} saw everything happen to me that the Scriptures said would happen to the Messiah. ⁴⁹And I am going to send the Holy Spirit to you, as my Father promised. But you must stay in this city until God gives you the power {of the Holy Spirit}."

⁵⁰Then Jesus led them outside {the city} until they came near {the village of} Bethany. There he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹As he was doing that, he left them and went up to heaven. ⁵²After they worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem very joyfully. ⁵³Each day they went to the temple and spent time worshiping God there.

John

Chapter 1

¹The Word existed before the universe existed. The Word was with God. The Word also was God. ²He, the Word, was with God before the universe existed. ³God made everything through him. God made every single thing in the universe with him. ⁴The Word gives eternal life and that eternal life is {God's good and true} light {that he revealed} to humans. ⁵{God} revealed {his good and true} light to the evil world, and that evil world did not vanquish it.

⁶God sent a man named John {who was known as John the Baptizer}. ⁷He came in order to testify to people about {Jesus, who is} the light. {He testified} so that everyone might trust in the light by means of his {testimony}. ⁸John himself was not that light, but {he came} in order to tell people about the light. ⁹That true light was {Jesus,} who revealed God's truth and goodness to everyone. {He was} that light {that} was coming into the world.

¹⁰The Word was in the world, and he created the whole universe. Nevertheless, {the people of} the world did not recognize him. ¹¹The Word came to his own people, {the Jews,} but they rejected him. ¹²But he gave to everyone who accepted him and trusted in him the right to become God's children. ¹³These children of God were not {spiritually} born by means of {normal human} birth, nor by human desire, nor by the desire of their fathers. Rather, they were {spiritually} born by God.

¹⁴The Word became a real human being and temporarily lived here {where we live}. We have seen him display his glorious nature. {That is} the glorious nature of the Unique Son {who came} from the Father. He fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings.

¹⁵John the Baptizer was telling people about the Word. And he shouted {to those around him}, "I told you that someone would come after me {and that} he is much more important than I am because he existed {long} before me." ¹⁶{We believers know the Word fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings} because all of us have received one gracious act in place of another from those things that he is full of. ¹⁷{This is} because God gave his laws {to the Israelites} by Moses. But God's kind acts and true message came into {full} existence by Jesus the Messiah. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. But Jesus, the Unique One, is God. He is close to {God} the Father, and he has revealed the Father.

¹⁹This is what John the Baptizer testified when the Jewish {leaders} sent {some} priests and Levites from {the city of} Jerusalem in order to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰{At that time} John emphatically confessed, "I am not the Messiah!" ²¹Then they asked him, "{If that is so,} then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "No." They asked again, "Are you the Prophet {whom God said would come}?" John answered, "No." ²²So these {priests and Levites} asked John once more, "Who are you? {Tell us} so that we can report {what you say} to those {leaders} who sent us. Who do you claim to be?" ²³John told {them}, "I am the person shouting in the desolate area to prepare yourselves to receive the Lord when he comes. {I am whom} the prophet Isaiah foretold."

²⁴These {priests and Levites} whom {the leaders in Jerusalem} sent {to John} were Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, then why are you baptizing {people}?" ²⁶John replied, "I am baptizing {people} with water, but there is someone now among you whom you do not know. ²⁷He follows after me, but I am not important enough even to untie his sandals."

²⁸These events occurred at the village of Bethany over {on the east side of} the Jordan River. {That is the place} where John was baptizing {people}.

²⁹The day after {that happened,} John saw Jesus coming toward him. Then he said to the people, "Look! {He is} the Lamb of God! He will sacrifice himself to forgive the sins of the {people in this} world. ³⁰This man is the one about whom I said, 'Someone will come after me who is more important than I am, because he existed {long} before me.' ³¹I did not know who he was {at first}. Nevertheless, I have been baptizing {people} with water for the very purpose of revealing him to {the people of} Israel."

³²And John testified and said, "I saw God's Spirit coming down from heaven appearing like a dove. Then the Spirit remained on Jesus. ³³I did not know who he was {at first}, but God sent me to baptize {people} with water and told me, 'The man on whom you see my Spirit come down and remain is the man who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I have seen {this} and I testify to you that {this man, Jesus,} is the Son of God."

³⁵The day after {that happened,} John the Baptizer was again with two of his students. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" ³⁷Then John's two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned around and saw them coming behind {him}, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi (which means 'teacher' {in Aramaic}), where are you lodging?" ³⁹He replied, "Come with me, and you will see!" So they came and saw where Jesus was lodging. They stayed with him that day because it was getting late (it was about 4:00 p.m.).

⁴⁰One of those two disciples who had heard what John had said and followed Jesus was {named} Andrew. {He was} Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹Andrew first {went and} found his brother Simon. {When he came to him,} he said, "We have found the Messiah!" (Messiah is "Christ" in Greek.) ⁴²Andrew took Simon to Jesus. When Jesus looked at Peter, he said, "You are Simon. Your father's name is John. {From now on} your name will {also} be Cephas." ({Cephas is} "Peter" in Greek {and means} "rock".)

⁴³The day after {that happened} Jesus decided to leave {that area}. He went to the {region of} Galilee and found a man {named} Philip. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Philip was from the city of Bethsaida {in Galilee}. {This is also the city that} Andrew and Peter were from. ⁴⁵{Then} Philip {went and} found Nathaniel. {When he came to him,} he said, "We have found the {Messiah} whom Moses wrote about in the law {God gave the Israelites} and {whom} the prophets {said would come}. {The Messiah is} Jesus. His father's name is Joseph. He is from {the town of} Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathaniel replied, "From Nazareth? Certainly nothing good can come out of that town!" Philip replied, "Come and see {for yourself}!" ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said to him, "Look! {Here is} an honest Israelite! He never deceives {anyone}!" ⁴⁸Nathaniel asked him, "How do you know what kind of man I am?" Jesus replied, "I saw you before Philip called you, when you were sitting {by yourself} under the fig tree." ⁴⁹Then Nathaniel declared, "Teacher, you must be the Son of God! You are the King of Israel {whom we have been waiting for}!" ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Do you trust in me {just} because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see me do things that are much greater than that!" ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, "I am telling you the truth: {Just like the vision your ancestor Jacob long ago saw,} you will see heaven opened up, and you will see God's angels going up and coming down on me, the Son of Man."

Chapter 2

¹Two days later, there was a wedding in Cana, {which is a town in the region} of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there. ²And someone also invited Jesus and his disciples to the wedding. ³{The hosts served wine to those attending the wedding and} they drank all the wine they had. {So} Jesus' mother said to him, "They are out of wine. {Please do something about it.}" ⁴Then Jesus said to her, "Madam, what does that have to do with me or you? {The chosen} time {for me to begin} my {most important work} has not arrived yet." ⁵Jesus' mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you {to do}." ⁶{There were six {empty} stone jars placed there. They held water {so that the people could wash themselves according to} Jewish religious cleansing laws. Each jar could hold 80 to 120 liters {of water}.) ⁷Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled the jars {completely} to the top. ⁸Then he told them, "Now, take {some water} out of a jar and bring it to the director of the wedding feast." So the servants did that. ⁹Then the director of the feast tasted the water, which had now become wine. (He did not know where the

wine had come from, although the servants who had taken out the water knew.) And he called the bridegroom {to himself}. ¹⁰Then he told the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the best wine first and serves the cheap wine later when the guests have drunk a lot {and can't tell the difference}. However, you have saved the best wine until now." ¹¹That was the first of the miraculous signs that Jesus did. He did it in {the town of} Cana, {which is in the region} of Galilee. There he showed how great he is. So his disciples trusted in him.

¹²{Some time} after {doing} this {miracle,} Jesus and his mother and brothers, along with his disciples, went down to {the town of} Capernaum. And they stayed there for a few days.

¹³Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Celebration, so Jesus went up to {the city of} Jerusalem. ¹⁴There in the temple {courtyard} he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons {for those making sacrifices there}. {He also saw} men sitting at tables exchanging money {for temple money}. ¹⁵So Jesus made a whip from some braided leather strips, and he used it to drive all {those people} out from the temple {along with} the sheep and the cattle. He also scattered the coins of the moneychangers on the ground and flipped their tables over. ¹⁶He told those who were selling pigeons, "Take these pigeons out of here! Do not turn my Father's house into a marketplace!" ¹⁷{This event} reminded his disciples about what someone had written {in the scriptures long before}, "I love your temple so much, {O God,} that I would die for it."

¹⁸The Jewish {leaders} then responded by asking Jesus, "What miracle can you do for us {to prove that you have authority from God} to do these things that you are doing?" ¹⁹Jesus replied to them, "{If} you destroy this temple, then in three days I will rebuild it." ²⁰So the Jewish {leaders} said, "It took 46 years to build this temple. {Are you saying that} you are going to rebuild this {entire} temple in {just} three days?" ²¹However, the temple Jesus was speaking about was his own body, {not the temple building}. ²²As a result {of this statement}, his disciples remembered these things that he had said after God had raised Jesus from the dead. Then they believed both what the scriptures said and what Jesus himself had said.

²³At a later time, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Celebration, during {the days of} the celebration, many {people} trusted in him because they saw the miracles he kept on doing. ²⁴Nevertheless, because Jesus knew what all people were like, he did not trust them. ²⁵Jesus {also did not trust them} because he did not need anyone to tell him about mankind. {This is} because he knew what people {think and want}.

Chapter 3

¹Now there was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of {a strict Jewish religious group called} the Pharisees. He was a member of the highest Jewish governing council. ²He visited Jesus at night. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. {We know this} because no one could do these miracles you are doing unless God is helping him." ³Jesus replied to Nicodemus and said, "I am telling you the truth: No one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born again." ⁴Then Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother's womb {and be born} a second time!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born again by water and the Spirit. ⁶If a human being gives birth to a person, {that person} is a human being. But those who are born {again} by the {work of God's} Spirit have a new spiritual nature {that God makes within them}. ⁷Do not be astonished because I told you that you must be born again. ⁸The {Holy Spirit is like} the wind that blows wherever it wants {to blow}. Although you can hear the sound of the wind, you do not know where the wind came from or where it is going. {Just as you don't understand these things,} so {also do you not understand} everyone who is born {again} by the {work of God's} Spirit. ⁹Nicodemus answered him, "How is this possible?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "You are {an important religious} teacher among {the people of} Israel, so you should understand what I am saying! ¹¹I am telling you the truth: my disciples and I say the things that we know {are true}, and we are telling you the things that we have witnessed. Yet you people {to whom we say these things} reject what we are saying. ¹²Since you people do not trust {what I say} when I tell you about things {that happen on this} earth, you {certainly} will not trust {what I say} when I tell you about things {that happen in} heaven! ¹³I, the Son of Man, am the only one who

has gone up to heaven, and {I am} the only one who has come down {to earth} from heaven. ¹⁴{Long ago, when the Israelites were wandering} in the wilderness, Moses lifted up a {bronze model of a poisonous} snake {on a pole and all who looked up at it were saved from the snakes}. In the same way, people must lift me, the Son of Man, up {on a cross}. ¹⁵{They will lift me up} so that whoever looks up and trusts in me will live forever {with me in heaven}.

¹⁶{This is} because God loved the world's people in this way, so that he gave his Unique Son in order that anyone who trusts in his Son would not die but would live forever. ¹⁷{This is true} because God did not send {me,} his Son, into the world in order to declare the world's people guilty. Rather, {God sent me} in order to save the world's people by me. ¹⁸God does not declare guilty anyone who trusts in his Son. But God has already declared guilty everyone who does not trust in his Son because they did not trust in the name of the Unique Son of God. ¹⁹Now God's judicial ruling is as follows: {the one who is} the light entered the world, but people loved evil instead of him because they do evil deeds. ²⁰{They love the darkness} because every person who continually does evil deeds hates {the one who is} the light and will never come to him. {They avoid the light} so that {the light} might not reveal what they do. ²¹But the person who continually does true deeds comes to {the one who is} the light, so that {the light} might show {everyone} what he does {and so that everyone might know} that God was helping him do these deeds."

²²After those things {happened}, Jesus and his disciples entered the region of Judea. He stayed there for a while with his disciples and baptized many people.

²³John the Baptizer was also baptizing {people} near {the town of} Aenon, {which is} near {the town of} Salim {in the region of Samaria}. {He was baptizing people there} because there was much water in that place and people kept coming {to John} to be baptized. ²⁴{John could do this} because John's enemies had not yet put him in prison. ²⁵Then some of John's disciples started arguing with a Jewish man about Jewish religious cleansing laws. ²⁶Those who were arguing came to John and said, "Teacher, {there was} a man who was with you when you were baptizing people on the other side of the Jordan {River}. You had testified about who {he was}. Look! {Now} he is baptizing people and many people are going out to him!" ²⁷John answered, "Nobody can receive anything unless God gives it to him. ²⁸You are surely witnesses to me saying that I am not the Messiah, but I am the one whom God has sent before the Messiah. ²⁹The bride belongs to the bridegroom. {I am like} the friend of the bridegroom. {I} stand and listen to him and am very happy because {I} hear the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, {because the bride is going to the bridegroom}, I am extremely joyful. ³⁰{Jesus, the bridegroom,} must become more influential, and I, {the bridegroom's friend,} must become less influential.

³¹Jesus comes from heaven, and he is greater than everyone and everything. Those {like myself} who are from the earth can only speak {with the limited perspective of someone} from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is greater than everyone and everything {on the earth}. ³²Jesus speaks truthfully about the things he has seen and heard {in heaven}, but very few {people} accept what he says. ³³{However,} whoever believes what Jesus says has verified that God is truthful. ³⁴{This is} because this {Jesus} whom God has sent says God's words. {We know he says God's words} because God surely gives his Spirit {to him} without limit. ³⁵{God} the Father loves the Son and has given him authority over everything. ³⁶Whoever trusts in God's Son will live forever {with him in heaven}. Whoever does not obey the Son {of God} will never have {eternal} life. Rather, God will continually be furious with him."

Chapter 4

¹Later, {the religious group called} the Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John {the Baptizer} and that he was baptizing more {people} than John {was baptizing}. Jesus {also} found out that the Pharisees had heard {this}. ²{Jesus did not actually baptize {anyone}, but his disciples were baptizing {people}.}

³{When he found out that the Pharisees were aware of him,} Jesus left {the region of} Judea and returned once

more to {the region of} Galilee. ⁴Now {to get to the region of Galilee} he had to go through {the region of} Samaria.

⁵Next, they arrived at a city named Sychar {in the region of Samaria}. Sychar was near the plot of ground that Jacob

had given to his son Joseph {a long time ago}. ⁶{Jacob's well was in that area.} After {arriving at Sychar} Jesus was very tired because of his long journey, so he sat down {to rest} next to {Jacob's} well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came out {to the well} {to lower a bucket on a rope} to take out {some} water. Jesus said to her, "{Please} give me {some water} to drink." ⁸{He said this} because his disciples had left {him by himself} and had gone into the city in order to buy food. ⁹And the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink." ({She asked this} because Jews usually won't have anything to do with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus replied to her, "If you had known the gift that God wants to give you, and {if you had known} who {I am} who is requesting a drink from you, you would have asked me {for a drink}, and I would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman replied, "Sir, you do not have a bucket {with which to draw the water up out of the well,} and this well is deep. {Since you can't get the water out of this well,} where did you get this living water from? ¹²You are surely not greater than our father Jacob. He {dug this well} and gave it to us. He, his sons, and his livestock drank {water} from it as well." ¹³Jesus replied to her, "Everyone who drinks water {from this well} will become thirsty again. ¹⁴But anyone who drinks the water that I will give him will never become thirsty again. Rather, the water that I will give him will become a spring of water inside him {that fills him up} and causes him to live forever {in heaven}." ¹⁵The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, please give me some of this water in order that I may never become thirsty {again} or have to come to this well to draw water {again}."

¹⁶Jesus told her, "Go get your husband and bring him here." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus told her, "You are right in saying that you have no husband, ¹⁸because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are currently {living with} is not your husband. What you have said {about not having a husband} is true."

¹⁹The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped {God} {right here} on this mountain, but you {Jews} say that we must worship God at {your temple} in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus told her, "Madam, believe me {when I say} that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father. ²²You people {here in Samaria} worship {the God} whom you do not know. We {Jews} worship {the God} whom we know. {This is true} because the way to be saved {from your sins} comes from among the Jews. ²³Nevertheless, the time is coming and has now arrived when those who truly worship {God} will worship the Father spiritually and truthfully. {This is} because the Father indeed searches for such people to worship him. ²⁴God is a spiritual being, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually and truthfully." ²⁵The woman said to Jesus, "I know that the Messiah will come. (He is the one called "Christ" in Greek.) When he comes, he will tell us everything {that we need to know}." ²⁶Jesus told her, "I, who am speaking to you {now}, I am the Messiah!"

²⁷Just at that moment, his disciples came back {from the city}. They were astonished because Jesus was talking {alone} with a woman {whom he didn't know}. However, no one {dared} to ask him, "What do you want {from her}?" or "Why are you talking with her {at all}?"

²⁸At that time the woman left her water jar there and returned to the city. She said to the men {of the city}, ²⁹"Come and meet this man who told me so many things that I have done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?" ³⁰Those men left the city and came to Jesus.

³¹{While the woman was gone,} Jesus' disciples, {who had just returned with the food,} pleaded with him {to eat}. They said, "Teacher, {please} eat [something]!" ³²Jesus told them, "I have sustenance that you know nothing about!" ³³So they were saying to one another, "{Surely} no one {else} could have brought him {something} to eat, could they?" ³⁴Jesus told them, "This is what sustains me: It is to do what my Father who sent me wants and to complete my Father's work. ³⁵{At this time of the year} you usually say, 'There are four months left, and then {we will} harvest {the crops}.' Listen to what I'm telling you. Look and see that {these people are like} fields that are now ready for harvest! ³⁶The one who harvests {these crops} receives payment and collects fruit, {which is people receiving} life forever {in heaven}. The result is that those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together. ³⁷What I'm going to say is true: One person sows the seeds, and another person harvests the crops. ³⁸I sent you {disciples of mine} to gather the harvest from a crop that you did not plant. Others have worked very hard {to plant the crop}, but you are now joining {them} in their work."

³⁹Now many Samaritans who lived in the city {of Sychar} trusted in Jesus because of what the woman had told them. She said, "He told me so many things that I have done." ⁴⁰When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to remain with them. So he stayed there {with them} for two more days. ⁴¹Many more of them trusted in Jesus because of what he proclaimed {to them}. ⁴²The townspeople told the woman, "We believe {in Jesus now,} but not just because of what you told us {about him}. {We believe} because we have heard {his message} for ourselves. {Now} we know that this man truly is the one who saves {the believers in} the world {from their sins}."

⁴³After he stayed for two days {with the Samaritans}, Jesus left {the city of Sychar} and entered {the region} of Galilee. ⁴⁴{Jesus {wanted to go to Galilee} because he himself confirmed that a prophet does not receive honor in the place where he grew up {and he did not want publicity}.} ⁴⁵Since this is true, when he arrived in {the region of} Galilee many of the people there {merely} welcomed him. {They welcomed him} because they had seen all the {amazing} things he had done in Jerusalem during the {recent Passover} celebration, which they also had gone to. ⁴⁶Next, Jesus went back again to {the town of} Cana in {the region of} Galilee. {That was} where he had turned water into wine. There was an official of the king who lived {nearby} in {the city of} Capernaum and had a son who was very sick. ⁴⁷When that official heard that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus {in Cana} and asked him to come down {to Capernaum} and heal his son because his son would die soon." ⁴⁸Jesus then told him, "You people will only trust in me {as the Messiah} if you see {me perform} wonderful miracles!" ⁴⁹The official of the king said to him, "Sir, please come down {to my home in Capernaum} before my son dies!" ⁵⁰Jesus told him, "Go {home}. Your son will live." The man trusted what Jesus told him and he started to go {back home}. ⁵¹As the official was traveling down {to his home in the city of Capernaum}, his servants met him {along the road}. They told him, "Your child is going to live." ⁵²He asked his servants, "At what time did my son start getting better?" They answered him, "At 1:00 PM yesterday his fever went away." ⁵³And the {boy's} father recognized that {his son had recovered} at the {exact} time that Jesus had told him that his son would live. So this same man along with everyone who lived in his house trusted in Jesus.

⁵⁴That was the second great miracle that Jesus did. {He did it during the time that} he came to {the region of} Galilee after leaving {the region of} Judea.

Chapter 5

¹After Jesus did this, the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus walked up to {the city of} Jerusalem {to celebrate the festival}. ²{There is a place} called the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, {which is one of the gates going into the city}. There is a pool beside {that gate} called Bethesda in the language used by the Jews. {Next to the pool are} five porches with roofs. ³Many people were lying on these porches. They were people who were ill, unable to see, unable to walk, or unable to move. ⁴^[1] [{They were lying there} because an angel from the Lord would occasionally come down and aggrivate the water. Whoever was the first person to step into the water after {the angel} aggravated it was healed from whatever illness or infirmity that was afflicting him.] ⁵There was a man lying near this {pool called Bethesda} who had been sick for 38 years. ⁶Jesus saw this man lying {near the pool} and he knew that he had been {lying} there for a long time. He asked the man, "Do you want your health to get better?" ⁷The ill man answered him, "Sir, I don't have anyone who can put me into the pool when {an angel} stirs the water. By the time I can put myself into the pool, someone else has {already} gone down into the pool {and been healed} before me, {so that I cannot be healed}." ⁸Jesus told him, "Stand up! Pick up the mat {that you have been lying on} and walk!" ⁹Then Jesus healed the man at once, and the man picked up the mat {that he had been lying on} and walked.

{Now this happened on {the Jewish day for rest known as} the Sabbath. ¹⁰Because {it was the Jewish day for rest}, the Jewish {leaders} said to the man whom Jesus had healed, "Today is a day for rest. You are not allowed to carry your mat {on this day because it is work}." ¹¹The man whom Jesus had healed answered them, "The man who healed me told me to pick up the mat {that I had been lying on} and walk." ¹²The Jewish {leaders} asked him, "Who told you to pick up your mat and walk?" ¹³However, the man whom Jesus had healed did not know who had healed him because Jesus had left {the man} without being noticed since that area was crowded.

¹⁴Later, Jesus found the man {whom he had healed} in the temple and told him, "Look, you are well now! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse {than your previous illness} might happen to you." ¹⁵That man went away and told the Jewish {leaders} that the man who had healed him was Jesus. ¹⁶So the Jew {leaders} started persecuting Jesus because he was miraculously healing {people} on the Jewish day for rest. ¹⁷Jesus gave this answer to them, "{God,} my Father, is working today, so I am also working." ¹⁸As a consequence {of him saying this}, the Jewish {leaders} were trying to kill Jesus even more {than they had tried before}. {They wanted to kill him} because he was not only disobeying {their rules for} the day for rest, but also because he was claiming that he was equal with God by saying that God was his own Father.

¹⁹Because of {these accusations} Jesus replied to the Jewish {leaders}, "I am telling you {people} the truth: {I,} the Son, can do nothing on my own authority. I can only do what I perceive that {God,} the Father, is doing. Whatever the Father does, {I,} the Son, also do. ²⁰{This is true} because the Father loves {me,} the Son, and makes known to me everything that he is doing. The Father will also make known to me {miraculous} deeds {that will be} even greater than the miracles {that I have already done} in order that you might be astonished {by them}. ²¹{This will happen} because I, the Son, give {eternal} life to anyone I want in the same way that the Father resurrects those who have died and gives them life {again}. ²²{This is true} because the Father does not judge anyone. Rather, he has given all authority to judge {people} to {me,} the Son. ²³{The Father did this} in order that everyone would honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor my Father who sent me. ²⁴I am telling you {people} the truth: Anyone who accepts {and obeys} my teachings and trusts {God} who sent me will live forever {with me in heaven} and God will not judge him {as guilty}. Instead, that person has gone from being {spiritually} dead to being {spiritually} alive.

²⁵I am telling you {people} the truth: A time is coming and in fact is here already, when those who have died will hear {my} voice, {the voice of} the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. ²⁶{This is true} because as the Father is able to make people alive, in the same way he has also given {me,} the Son, the ability to make {people} alive. ²⁷The Father has authorized me to judge {all mankind}, because I am the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not be surprised {that the Father has done} this because there will be a time when everyone who has died will hear my voice. ²⁹Then they will come out {of their graves}. {God will} raise up those who have done good {to give them eternal} life. But {God will} raise up those who have done evil to condemn and punish {them} forever. ³⁰I can do nothing on my own. I judge according to what I hear {from the Father}, and I judge in a just manner. {I judge justly} because I do not try to do what I want. Rather, {I do} what {my Father} who has sent me wants.

³¹If I {alone} were {the only one} to be a witness about myself, {according to the law of Moses} my witness would not be trustworthy. ³²{Nevertheless,} there is someone else who testifies about me, and I know that what he testifies about me is trustworthy. ³³You {Jewish leaders} sent {messengers} to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth {about me}. ³⁴However, I do not need anyone to be a witness {for me}. Nevertheless, I am saying this {about John the Baptizer} in order that God might save you. ³⁵John the Baptizer {proclaimed God's truth to you} like a burning and shining lamp. You were willing to rejoice for a while in the light {that was the truth that he proclaimed}. ³⁶However, the witness that I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave {about me}. {This is} because {this witness is} the miraculous works that {God} the Father has allowed me to do. These very works that I am doing are proof that the Father has sent me. ³⁷Furthermore, my Father who sent me is the very one who has given testimony about me. None of you have ever heard him speak or seen what he looks like. ³⁸You also do not obey the Father's teachings. {I know this is true} because you do not trust me, the very person he has sent! ³⁹You carefully study the Scriptures because you believe that by studying them you will be able to live forever {in heaven}. It is those very Scriptures that explain who I am. ⁴⁰Yet still you refuse to be my disciples in order that you might live {forever in heaven}.

⁴¹I do not accept honor from anyone. ⁴²However, I know that you do not love God {at all}. ⁴³I have come with my Father's authority, but still you do not accept me. If someone else were to come with his own authority, you would accept him. ⁴⁴You cannot possibly trust in {me} when you are honoring each other instead of desiring the one and only God to honor you!

⁴⁵Do not think that I am the one who will accuse you before my Father. Moses, the {very} person you have hoped {would defend you}, is {actually} the person who will accuse you. ⁴⁶{He will accuse you} because if you had trusted Moses, {but you do not,} {then} you would trust me because Moses explained about me {in the law}. ⁴⁷Since you do not even trust what Moses wrote, you cannot possibly trust what I have said to you!"

5:4 ^[1]

Chapter 6

¹Some time after these things happened, Jesus crossed over to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee, {which some people also call the Sea} of Tiberias. ²A large crowd followed him because they had seen the miraculous signs he was performing, {that is,} healing people who were very ill. ³Jesus walked up on a steep hillside and sat down {there} with his disciples. ⁴{Now at that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place.} ⁵Jesus then looked up and saw a very large crowd {of people} walking toward him. He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread in order to feed all these people?" ⁶{He asked Philip this question in order to test his {faith}, because Jesus already knew what he was going to do {about the problem}.} ⁷Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in 200 days of work, it would not be enough {money to buy} bread to give each person {in this crowd} even a little piece {to eat}." ⁸Another disciple of his, Simon Peter's brother Andrew, told Jesus, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five little loaves of barley bread and two small fish. Yet, these {few loaves and fish} are certainly not enough to feed all these {people}!" ¹⁰Jesus told {his disciples} to make the people sit down. Thus about 5,000 men sat down. {There was a lot of grass in that place {for them to sit down on}.} ¹¹Jesus then took the little loaves {of barley bread}, and he thanked {God for the food}. {Then} he {and his disciples} gave the loaves to the people who were sitting {on the grass} in order to eat. {He did} the same with the {two} fish as well. The people ate all {the fish and bread that} they wanted {to eat}. ¹²When everyone had eaten until they were full, Jesus told his disciples to collect all the leftover {uneaten} pieces {of barley bread} in order that none of it would be wasted. ¹³Thus his disciples collected {the pieces}, and they filled 12 large baskets with the broken pieces that the people had left over from the five little loaves of barley bread.

¹⁴Because {of this}, when the people saw this {miraculous} sign that Jesus had performed {in front of them}, they said, "Surely he is the Prophet whom {God promised} to send into the world!" ¹⁵When Jesus knew that the people were planning to grab him in order to force him to be {their} king, he left {them} again and went up the hillside to be completely alone.

¹⁶When it was evening, Jesus' disciples walked down {the hillside} to the Sea {of Galilee}. ¹⁷{They} got into a boat and started to sail across the sea to the town of Capernaum. {It had already become dark and Jesus had still not joined them.} ¹⁸Because the wind was blowing strongly, it was causing the sea to be very turbulent. ¹⁹After Jesus' disciples had rowed {the boat} around four-and-a-half or five-and-a-half kilometers {out into the sea}, they saw Jesus walking on the water and approaching the boat. They were terrified! ²⁰Jesus told them, "It is I, Jesus! Stop being afraid!" ²¹They were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as {he was with them in the boat}, their boat arrived at the place where they were going.

²²The day after {Jesus had fed the crowd}, the crowd {of people} that had stayed on the other side of the sea realized that there had been only one boat there {the day before}. {They also knew} that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples. ²³{People came from the city of Tiberias in other boats. {They put their boats} near the place where {the crowd} had eaten the bread after the Lord Jesus had thanked God {for it}.} ²⁴So when the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and sailed to {the city of} Capernaum to look for Jesus.

²⁵{The crowd} found Jesus {in Capernaum} on the side of the Sea of Galilee that is opposite {from where he had fed them}. They asked him, "Teacher, {we know you didn't come in a boat,} so when did you arrive here {at Capernaum}?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs that I performed. Rather, {you are looking for me} only because you ate until you were full of the

loaves of bread {that I gave you}. ²⁷Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, {work} for the food that will bring you life forever {in heaven}! {That food} is the bread that I, the Son of Man, will give you. {I alone can give it to you} because God my Father approves of me."

²⁸Then the crowd asked Jesus, "What works should we do in order to please God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "The work that God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one whom he has sent." ³⁰The crowd asked him, "Then what miracle will you do in order {for us} to see it and trust in you? What will you do {for us}?" ³¹Our ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, just as the prophets wrote: 'God gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus answered them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, who is {now} giving you the true bread out of heaven. ³³{This is true} because the true bread from God has come down from heaven and gives {eternal} life to the people in the world."

³⁴{The crowd did not understand what he meant}, so they said to Jesus, "Sir, please give this bread to us all the time." ³⁵Jesus told the crowd, "{Like food sustains physical life} I am the bread that gives {eternal} life. {Unlike with food or drink}, anyone who trusts in me will surely be satisfied forever. ³⁶Nevertheless, I have {already} told you that, even though you see me, you still do not trust me. ³⁷All the people my Father gives to me will come {and be my disciples}, and I will surely never drive away any of them. ³⁸{I will never do that} because I have not come down from heaven in order to do what I want. Rather, {I have come down} in order to do what {my Father} who sent me wants {me to do}. ³⁹This is what {my Father} who sent me wants: {He wants me} to keep all of those whom he has given to me. {He also wants} me to make these ones alive again {on the last day {when I judge everyone}}. ⁴⁰{This is true} because this is {also} what my Father wants: {He wants} everyone who recognizes who I, the Son, am, and trusts in me to live forever {with me in heaven}. I will make these ones alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}."

⁴¹The Jewish {leaders} then started to grumble about Jesus because he had said that he was the {true} bread that had come down out of heaven. ⁴²They said, "This is just Jesus, Joseph's son! We know who his parents are. He cannot possibly have come down out of heaven as he claims!" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves {about what I just said}. ⁴⁴Only those whom my Father who sent me causes to come {and be my disciples} are able to do so. I myself will make those people {who come to me} alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. ⁴⁵The Prophets wrote that God will teach everyone. Everyone who listens to and learns from my Father will come {and be my disciples}. ⁴⁶No one has seen {God} my Father other than me. I am the one who came from God. I alone have seen him. ⁴⁷I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will live forever {with me in heaven}. ⁴⁸I am the {true} bread that gives {eternal} life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, but they still died. ⁵⁰{But} this bread {that I am talking about} came down out of heaven in order that someone would eat it and {that person's spirit} would never die. ⁵¹I {truly} am this bread that gives {eternal} life and came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever {with me in heaven}. My body is also this bread. I will give up my body for the sake of the {eternal} life of {everyone in} the world."

⁵²The Jewish {leaders} then started arguing with each other. They said, "This man surely cannot give his body to us in order for us to eat it!" ⁵³So Jesus told them: "I am telling you the truth: You must eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood. {If you do not do these things, then} you will never have {eternal} life. ⁵⁴Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever {with me in heaven}. I will also make that person alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. ⁵⁵{This is so} because my flesh is true {spiritual} food and my blood is true {spiritual} drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will have a close relationship with me, and I {will have a close relationship} with them. ⁵⁷My Father makes everyone alive. {He} has sent me {here} and I can make {people} alive because he has enabled me {to do so}. In the same way, those who feed on me will live {forever} because of what I will do {for them}. ⁵⁸I am this bread that has come down out of heaven. {This bread is} not like {the bread that} the {Israelite} ancestors ate {in the wilderness} but {still eventually} died. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will live forever {with me in heaven}." ⁵⁹Jesus said these statements {to the Jewish leaders} in a synagogue while he was teaching in {the city of} Capernaum.

⁶⁰After they heard {what he had said}, many of Jesus' disciples said, "What he is teaching is difficult to accept. Indeed, no one can accept it!" ⁶¹{Although no one told} him, Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling about what he had said. {So} he asked them, "Did my teaching offend you?" ⁶²{If this teaching has offended you,} then {would you also be offended} if you saw me, the Son of Man, ascending to {heaven} where I was formerly? ⁶³The Holy Spirit is the only one who can give anyone eternal life. Human nature is useless {in this matter}. What I have taught you comes from the Holy Spirit and gives eternal life. ⁶⁴Nevertheless, some of you do not believe {what I have said}. (Jesus {said this} because {he} knew since he began {his work} who would not believe him and who would {eventually} betray him.)

⁶⁵Then Jesus said, "Because {some of you do not believe me}, I told you {earlier} that only those to whom God the Father has given the ability to come {and be my disciple} will be able to {do so}."

⁶⁶After {Jesus said these things}, a lot of his disciples went back {to doing what they had been doing before they met him} and stopped being his disciples. ⁶⁷Because {so many left him}, Jesus asked his twelve disciples, "{Surely} you do not also want to leave me, {do you}?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter replied, "Lord, {if we were to leave you}, there is no one else we could go to! {Only} you teach the message {that allows us} to live forever {in heaven}!" ⁶⁹We trust in you, and we know for certain that you are the Holy One who has come from God!" ⁷⁰Jesus answered them, "I surely chose all you twelve men, but one of you is under the control of Satan!" ⁷¹{When Jesus said this} he was talking about Judas, Simon Iscariot's son because he was the one among the Twelve disciples who would later betray Jesus.)

Chapter 7

¹After those things {happened}, Jesus walked around in {the region of} Galilee because he did not want to walk around in {the region of} Judea. {He avoided Judea} because the Jewish {leaders there} were trying to find a way to kill him. ²{Now at that time the Jewish Shelters Celebration was about to take place.} ³Jesus' brothers told him, "Leave here and go to {the region of} Judea in order that your disciples can also observe you doing miraculous works. ⁴{Do your miraculous works in Judea} because no one who wants to be famous does anything secretly. Since you are doing all these miracles, reveal who you {claim to be} to everyone {by doing miraculous works}!" ⁵{Jesus' brothers said this} because not even they believed he was the Messiah. ⁶Because {they did not believe in him,} Jesus told them, "This is not the right time for me {to go to Jerusalem}, but you can go {there} whenever you want. ⁷No one in the world can hate you. However, everyone hates me because I declare that they do evil deeds. ⁸You go {to Jerusalem} for the celebration. I am not going to the celebration yet because now is {not} the right time for me to go." ⁹After saying that {to his brothers}, Jesus stayed a little longer in the {region of} Galilee.

¹⁰However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. ¹¹Because {Jesus had secretly entered Jerusalem,} the Jewish leaders tried to find him at the celebration. They asked {people}, "Where is that man?" ¹²The crowds were quietly speaking a lot about Jesus. Some people said, "He is a good man!" But others said, "No! He deceives the crowd!" ¹³Nevertheless, the people were afraid of the Jewish leaders, so they didn't speak about Jesus in public.

¹⁴About halfway through the Shelters Celebration, Jesus entered the temple {courtyard} and started teaching {the people there}. ¹⁵Because of this, the Jewish leaders were shocked {at his teaching}. They said, "This man has not received religious training. He cannot possibly know the scriptures {so well}!" ¹⁶Jesus replied to them, "What I teach does not come from myself. On the contrary, it comes from God who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone wants to do what God wants, then that person will know that what I am teaching has come from God and not only by my own authority. ¹⁸Anyone who speaks on his own authority {only} wants to glorify himself. However, anyone who wants to glorify the person who sent him speaks the truth and acts righteously. ¹⁹Moses did indeed give you laws {from God}. None of you completely obeys those laws. {Since that is true,} why are you trying to kill me {for supposedly disobeying those same laws that you don't obey}?"

²⁰Some people in the crowd replied, "A demon is controlling you! No one is trying to kill you!" ²¹Jesus replied to the crowd, "{Because} I did one miraculous healing on the day for rest, all of you are shocked. ²²Because {some works like healing would occur on the day for rest}, Moses gave you a law about circumcision. {That law states that you must circumcise your sons exactly seven days after they are born.} ({Circumcision} didnt actually begin with Moses, but {this rite} began with your forefathers, {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob}.) {Because of that law,} sometimes you must {work} on the day for rest by circumcising someone. ²³Since you {sometimes} circumcise someone on the day for rest in order to avoid disobeying the law of Moses, you shouldn't be angry with me for {doing a good work like} healing someone on that day! ²⁴Stop judging me according to what you have seen! Rather, judge me according to what God says is right."

²⁵Some of the people {in the crowd} who dwelled in Jerusalem then said, "This is the man that our leaders are trying to kill! ²⁶Look! He is saying these things publicly, but our leaders are not saying anything to oppose him. Can it be that our leaders really know that he is the Messiah? ²⁷But {this man cannot be the Messiah!} We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

²⁸Jesus then spoke loudly while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. He said, "{Yes,} you know me, and you know where I have come from. But I have not come {here} on my own authority. Rather, the one who sent me is the real God, and you do not know him. ²⁹I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me."

³⁰Because {Jesus said these things}, the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, but no one could seize him because it was not yet the right time for him {to die}. ³¹In contrast {to the Jewish leaders}, many in the crowd of people trusted in Jesus. They kept saying, "When the Messiah comes, he surely will not be able to do more miraculous signs than this man!" ³²{Some of} the Pharisees overheard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. Then they and the ruling priests sent temple guards to arrest him.

³³Because {they did this}, Jesus said, "I will only be with you for a little while {longer}. {Soon} I will go back to {God} who sent me. ³⁴You will search for me, but you will not find me. You will not be able to come to the place where I will be." ³⁵So the Jewish leaders said to each other, "Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Will he {actually} go to those Jews who are spread throughout the world outside of Israel? Will he even teach the people {there} who aren't Jews? ³⁶What did he mean when he said that we will search for him, but we will not find him, and we will not be able to come to the place where he will be?"

³⁷Now on the final and most important day of the {Shelters} Celebration, Jesus stood up {in the temple courtyard} and spoke loudly. He said, "Anyone who is thirsty should come to me and drink {what I will give them}! ³⁸This is what {the prophets wrote in} the scripture about anyone who trusts in me: 'Water that gives {eternal} life will abundantly flow from that person's innermost being.'" ³⁹{Now Jesus said this about the {Holy} Spirit, whom {God} was going to give to those who trusted in Jesus. {He said this} because {At that time God had not yet sent} the {Holy} Spirit {to dwell within those who trusted in him} because Jesus had not yet received honor {by his death, resurrection, and return to heaven}.)

⁴⁰After some people among the crowd heard what Jesus had said, they said, "He is truly the Prophet {whom God had said would come}!" ⁴¹Some other {people in the crowd} said, "He is the Messiah!" However, other {people in the crowd who mistakenly thought that Jesus was born in Galilee} said, "But the Messiah cannot possibly come from the {region of} Galilee. ⁴²{The prophets wrote in} the scriptures that the Messiah must come from the descendants of {King} David and {that he must come} from the village of Bethlehem, where David came from!"

⁴³Thus {the people in} the crowd divided {into opposing groups} on account of Jesus. ⁴⁴{Some of the people {in the crowd} wanted to arrest him. However, no one seized him.)

⁴⁵The temple guards then returned to the ruling priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not {arrest him and} bring him {here}?" ⁴⁶The temple guards replied, "No one has ever spoken like this man has!" ⁴⁷Because {the guards said that,} the Pharisees replied {by asking}, "Can it be that he has deceived you as well? ⁴⁸Surely, none of the members of our highest governing council or us Pharisees have trusted in him! ⁴⁹However, this crowd {of people} does not know {God's} laws {and God} has cursed them!"

⁵⁰Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the man who had come to Jesus {at night to speak with him} in the past. {He had done this} even though he was one of the Pharisees, {which was a group that usually opposed Jesus}.) He told the Jewish religious leaders, ⁵¹“Our Jewish laws surely do not {allow us to} condemn someone without first listening to him and learning about what he has done.” ⁵²They replied to him {insultingly}, “Surely, you are not from the {region of} Galilee as well! Are you? Read through the scriptures carefully! {If you do that,} you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee.”

⁵³^[1] [Then they all {left and} went to their own homes.

7:53 ^[1]

Chapter 8

¹^[1] Jesus went to the Mount of Olives {and stayed near there that night}. ²At dawn the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple {courtyard} and many people came to him. ³{Some of} the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman {to him}. They had apprehended her while she was committing adultery. They made her stand up in the midst {of this group}. ⁴The priests wanted to test Jesus, in order to be able to accuse him {of breaking the law of Moses before the highest Jewish governing council}. So they said to him, “Teacher, we apprehended this woman while she was committing adultery, the very act {itself}! ⁵Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must kill such women with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say {we should do}?” ⁶However, Jesus bent down and wrote {something} on the ground with his finger. ⁷While they continued to question him, he got up and told them, “Let the one among you who has never sinned throw the first stone at her {and lead the rest to kill her}!” ⁸Then Jesus stooped down again and wrote {something} on the ground with his finger. ⁹{After he did this,} those Jewish leaders {who were questioning him} started walking away, one by one. The older ones left first and then the younger ones. Then only Jesus was there with the woman in the midst {of the people}. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and asked her, “Where are the men {who were accusing you}? Has no one condemned you {to be punished}?” ¹¹The woman replied, “There is no one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “I do not condemn you {to be punished} either. Leave, and from now on do not sin {like this} anymore!”]

¹²Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, “I am the one who gives {God's good and true} light to {the people in} the world. Anyone who becomes my disciple will never walk in {sinful} darkness {again}. Rather, {that person} will have {God's good and true} light that gives {eternal} life. ¹³The Pharisees then told him, “You are the only witness for yourself! {Since the law of Moses requires at least two witnesses,} what you say cannot be true!” ¹⁴Jesus replied, “Even if I were the {only} witness for myself, what I say is {still} true because I know where I came from and {I know} where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and {you do not know} where I am going. ¹⁵You judge {people} according to human standards. {However,} I have not come to judge anyone {in that manner}. ¹⁶Even when I {do} judge {people}, I will judge {them according to} the true {standard} because I do not judge {people} on my own. Rather, I and {my} Father who sent me, {will judge people together}. ¹⁷{Moses} even {wrote} in your law that when {at least} two witnesses say the same thing, then what they say is true. ¹⁸I am my own witness, but {my} Father who sent me is also a witness for me. {Therefore, what I say is true}.”

¹⁹Because {Jesus said his father was a witness for him,} the Pharisees asked him, “Where is your father?” Jesus replied, “You do not know me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father, {but you do not}.” ²⁰He said these things {about himself} while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. {He said them} at the place {in the temple courtyard} where people brought money offerings. Nobody apprehended him because it was not yet the right time for him {to die}.

²¹Jesus then told the people again, “I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die {without God forgiving you for} sinfully {rejecting me}. You will not be able to come to {the place} where I am going.” ²²The Jewish {leaders} then said {among themselves}, “Perhaps he plans to kill himself, and that is {what he means} when he says that we will not be able to come to {the place} where he is going.” ²³Jesus told them, “You are from {this earth} below, but I am from {heaven} above. You belong to this {wicked and rebellious} world. I do not belong

to this world. ²⁴Because of this I told you that you will die {without God forgiving you for all} the sins {that you have committed}. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am {God, as I say I am}."

²⁵Because {he said that}, they asked him, "Who are you?" Jesus replied, "That is what I have been telling you ever since the beginning! ²⁶I could say many things about you and judge you, {but I won't do those things at this time}. Rather, I will tell the people in the world only what I have heard from the one who sent me. He always says the truth."

²⁷{They did not understand that Jesus was telling them about his Father {in heaven}.} ²⁸So Jesus told them, "When you have lifted me up {to kill me}, the Son of Man, you will know that I am {God}, and {you will know} that I do not do anything on my own authority. Rather, I only say what {my} Father has taught me {to say}. ²⁹{My Father} who sent me is {always} with me. He has {never} abandoned me because I {always} do {only} the things that delight him." ³⁰While Jesus was saying these things, many {more people} believed that he {was the Messiah}.

³¹Jesus then told the Jews who {now} believed that he {was the Messiah}, "If you obey what I teach you, {then} you are my genuine disciples. ³²{Furthermore,} you will know {God's} truth, and {believing that} truth will free you {from what has enslaved you}." ³³They answered him, "We are the descendants of Abraham. We have never been anyone's slaves! Why do you say that we need to be free? ³⁴Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: Anyone who sins {is controlled by his sinful desires like} a slave {is controlled by his master}. ³⁵Slaves do not remain as {members of their master's} family forever, {but may be freed or sold}. {However,} a son is a member of the family forever. ³⁶So if the Son frees you {from being slaves to sin}, you will absolutely be able to refrain {from sinning}. ³⁷I know that you are Abraham's {physical} descendants. However, you are trying to kill me because you refuse to trust what I say. ³⁸I am telling {you about} the things that my Father has shown me. Therefore {I say that}, you do what {your} Father has told you {to do}."

³⁹They replied to him, "Abraham is our ancestor." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's descendants, you would be doing the {same} things he did. ⁴⁰I have been telling you the true {things} that God told me, but you are trying to kill me. Abraham did not do {something like} that. ⁴¹You are doing the {same} things that your {real} father did." They told him, "We are not illegitimate children, {like you are}! We have {only} one Father, {and that is} God." ⁴²Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, {which he is not,} you would love me because I came from him and have come to this world. {This is true} because I did not come on my own authority. Rather, {I came because} God sent me. ⁴³Do you know why you do not understand what I say? It is because you do not accept {and obey} what I have told you! ⁴⁴You belong to your father, the devil, and you desire to do what he desires. He has been murdering {people} since the time {people} first {sinned}. He has rejected what is true because he never speaks those true things. Whenever he lies, he is doing what is natural for him to do because he is a liar. He is even the origin of lying. ⁴⁵Yet you do not believe me because I tell you what is true! ⁴⁶{Since I have never sinned,} none of you can prove that I have. Since I tell you what is true, there is no good reason for you to not believe what I say! ⁴⁷Those who belong to God accept {and obey} what he has said. Since {this is true,} you do not accept {and obey} what God has said because you do not belong to God."

⁴⁸The Jews {opposing Jesus} replied to him, "We are {certainly} correct when we say that you are one of the Samaritans, {whom we hate,} and that a demon is controlling you!" ⁴⁹Jesus replied, "A demon is not controlling me! On the contrary, I honor my Father {in heaven}, and you dishonor me! ⁵⁰I do not desire to persuade people to praise me. There is someone {else} who desires {to do that} and judges {whether you or I am telling the truth}. ⁵¹I am telling you the truth: Anyone who obeys my teaching will surely never die!"

⁵²The Jews {opposing Jesus} said to him, "Now we are sure that a demon is controlling you! Abraham and the prophets died {long ago}! Yet you say that anyone who obeys your teaching will surely never die! ⁵³You are surely not greater than our ancestor Abraham! He died and all the prophets also died. {So} who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴Jesus replied, "If I persuade people to praise me, that {praise} would be worthless. My Father is the one who praises me. He is the one whom you say is your God. ⁵⁵Although you do not know God, I do know him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like {each of} you. In contrast {to you}, I know him and I {always} obey what he

says. ⁵⁶Your ancestor Abraham was overjoyed {to think} that he could see me {come to the world}. {God allowed him} to see me {come} and he was happy."

⁵⁷Because {Jesus said this}, the Jews {opposing him} told him, "{Abraham died a long time ago and} you are not even fifty years old! How can you have seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus told them, "I am telling you the truth: I was {God} before Abraham was born!" ⁵⁹Because {he was claiming to be God,} the Jews {opposing Jesus} picked up rocks to throw at him {to kill him}. But Jesus hid {in the crowd} and left the temple {courtyard}.

8:1 ^[1]

Chapter 9

¹While Jesus was walking along {the path}, he saw a man who had been blind since {the day} he was born. ²His disciples asked him, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind when he was born? Did this man or his parents sin?" ³Jesus replied, "It was neither the sin of this man nor the sin of his parents {that caused him to be blind when he was born}. Rather, {He was blind when he was born} so that I might show {people} the {miraculous} works God will do in him. ⁴While I am still with you, we must do the {miraculous} works that {my Father} who sent me wants {us to do}. Just like day is followed by night when people cannot work, a time will come when it is too late for us to do what God wants {us to do}. ⁵While I am still {living} in this world, I am the one who gives {God's good and true} light to {the people in} the world."

⁶When he said this, he spat on the dirt and made mud by mixing his saliva {with the dirt}. Then he spread that mud on the blind man's eyes. ⁷Then Jesus said to the blind man, "Go and wash {the mud off} in the pool of Siloam!" ('Siloam' means 'sent' {in Aramaic}). So the man left and washed {the mud off in that pool}. Then he went {home} when he was able to see. ⁸The man's neighbors and others who had seen him in the past and knew that he was a beggar said, "This is surely the man who used to sit here and beg!" ⁹Some {people} said, "Yes, he is that man." Other {people} said, "No, but he just looks like that man." However, the man himself said, "Yes, I am the man {who was blind}!" ¹⁰So they asked him, "How is it that you can see now?" ¹¹He replied, "The man people call Jesus made mud {with dirt and his saliva} and spread it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to {the pool of} Siloam and wash {the mud off}. So I went {there} and washed {the mud off}. Then I was able to see {for the first time}." ¹²They asked him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I do not know {where he is}."

¹³{Some of the people there} took the man who used to be blind to {some of} the Pharisees. ¹⁴{Now the day when Jesus made the mud {with his saliva} and enabled the man to see was the Jewish day for rest.) ¹⁵Then {the man was questioned} for a second time. {This time} the Pharisees as well asked him about how he was now able to see. He told them, "The man placed mud on my eyes and I washed {it off}, and now I {am able to} see {for the first time}." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees then said, "{We know that} this man has not come from God because he does not follow the rules for the Jewish day for rest." {Some} other {Pharisees} said, "Surely a sinful man could not do the kinds of miraculous signs that this man does!" So {the Pharisees} disagreed with each other {regarding who Jesus was}. ¹⁷So the Pharisees asked the blind man again, "What do you say about this man, since {you say that} he is the one who enabled you to see?" The man said, "He must be a prophet."

¹⁸Because {the man believed that Jesus was a prophet}, the Jewish leaders did not believe that the man had been blind and then became able to see until {after} they summoned the man's parents {in order to question them}. ¹⁹They asked his parents, "Is this man your son? Do you say that he was blind when he was born? {If that is so,} then how is he able to see at this time?" ²⁰His parents replied, "We are certain that this man is our son. We are also certain that he was blind when he was born. ²¹Nevertheless, we do not know how he is able to see at this time. We also do not know who enabled him to see. Ask him. He is old enough to speak on his own behalf." ²²{The Jewish leaders had previously agreed among themselves that they would ban anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah from {entering} the Jewish meeting place. Because of this, the man's parents were afraid of them and told them those things.) ²³That is {also} why they said {to the Jewish leaders}, "Ask him. He is old enough."

²⁴So the Jewish leaders summoned the man who had been blind a second time. They told him, "Glorify God {by speaking only the truth}! We ourselves are certain that this man {who you say healed you} is sinful." ²⁵The man {whom Jesus healed} replied, "I do not know if he is sinful or not. One thing I {do} know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see." ²⁶They then asked him, "What did he do to you {in order to heal you}? How did he enable you to see?" ²⁷He replied, "I have already told you {the answers to those questions}, but you did not listen {to what I said}. Why do you want me to tell you again? Could it be that you also desire to become his disciples?" ²⁸Then they spoke insultingly to him: "You are that man's disciple! As for us, we are Moses's disciples! ²⁹We are certain that God spoke to Moses {long ago}. As for this man, we do not {even} know where he came from!" ³⁰The man replied, "I am amazed! You do not {even} know where he came from, but he is the one who enabled me to see! ³¹We are certain that God does not respond to {the prayers of} sinful people. Rather, he responds to {the prayers of} people who worship him and who do what he wants {them to do}. ³²Never before has anyone ever heard that someone enabled a man to see who was blind when he was born! ³³If this man had not come from God, he could not do even one {miracle like that}!" ³⁴The Jewish leaders replied to him, "You were born {blind} entirely as a result of {your parents'} sins! How dare you teach us!" Then they banned him from the Jewish meeting place.

³⁵Jesus heard that the Jewish leaders had banned the man he had healed from the Jewish meeting place. When he {searched for him and} found him, he asked him, "Do you trust the Son of Man?" ³⁶The man answered, "Sir, who is he? {Please tell me,} so that I may trust him." ³⁷Jesus told him, "You have {already} seen him. {I am} that {very} person who is talking to you now." ³⁸The man said, "Lord, I trust {that you are the Son of Man}." Then he {went down on his knees} and worshiped Jesus.

³⁹Jesus said, "I have come into this world in order to judge {its people}. {The result will be} that the people who realize they do not perceive God's truth may perceive it, like a blind person becoming able to see. {Another result will be that} the people who {think they} perceive God's truth will not perceive it, like a person who sees and becomes blind." ⁴⁰When some of the Pharisees who were near Jesus heard him say this, they asked him, "{Do you think that} we also cannot perceive {God's truth}, like blind people?" ⁴¹Jesus replied, "If you {recognized that you are spiritually} blind, you would not be guilty for sin. However, because you claim to {perceive God's truth, like someone who} sees, you are still guilty for your sin.

Chapter 10

¹"I am telling you the truth: Anyone who enters into the sheep pen by any way other than the pen's gate is a thief or bandit {who has come to steal the sheep}. ²The man who enters {the sheep pen} through the gate is the shepherd {who takes care} of the sheep. ³The man who guards the gate {when the shepherd is away} opens {the gate} for the shepherd {when he comes}. The sheep hear {the sound of} the shepherd's voice. He summons by name {each of} the sheep that belong to him and leads them out {of the pen}. ⁴After the shepherd has brought out {of the pen} all of the sheep that belong to him, he walks in front of them. His sheep follow him {from behind} because they recognize {the sound of} his voice. ⁵His sheep will never follow someone whom they do not know. Rather, they will run away from him because they do not recognize the voices of people they do not know."

⁶Jesus told this illustration {from the work that shepherds do} to the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they did not understand what {the illustration} meant. ⁷So Jesus spoke to them again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which the sheep {enter into the sheep pen}. ⁸All the leaders who came before me {without God's authority} were thieves and bandits. However, the {true} sheep did not obey them. ⁹I myself am the gate {to heaven}. God will save {from eternal punishment} anyone who comes {to him} by trusting in me. {Whoever trusts in me} will be like a sheep who walks around {safely} and finds food. ¹⁰Your leaders are like thieves who come only to steal, kill, and destroy {the sheep}. I have come to give {the sheep} eternal life which will be full {of blessings}.

¹¹I myself am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd is willing to die {in order to protect and to save} his sheep, {and so am I willing to die for my disciples}. ¹²{Suppose that} someone hires a man who is not a shepherd to protect sheep that do not belong to that man. When he sees a wolf coming {to kill the sheep}, he leaves the sheep

and runs away, so the wolf snatches some of them and causes some others to scatter. ¹³{He runs away} because he was {only protecting the sheep} in order to receive money. He does not care about {what happens to} the sheep. ¹⁴I myself am like a good shepherd. {Just like a good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him,} I know those who belong to me, and they know me. ¹⁵{We know each other} in the same way that my Father and I know each other. I am willing to die for {the benefit of} those sheep {who belong to me}. ¹⁶There are also sheep that belong to me and are from a different sheep pen. {They are people who are not Jews.} I must also bring them {to myself}. They will respond to what I say, and {all those who belong to me} will be {united like} one flock, and I will be {their} one shepherd. ¹⁷My Father loves me because I will willingly die in order that I may make myself alive again. ¹⁸Nobody is forcing me to die. Rather, I myself choose to die. I have authority to willfully die and I have authority to make myself alive again. That is the work my Father has commanded me to do."

¹⁹The Jewish leaders divided {into opposing groups} again on account of what Jesus had said. ²⁰Many of the {Jewish leaders} said, "A demon is controlling him and he is crazy! Do not listen to him!" ²¹{Some} other {people} said, "What he is saying is not something a man controlled by a demon would {ever} say. Surely a demon cannot {possibly} enable a blind person to see!"

²²The time for the {Temple} Dedication Celebration in Jerusalem had come. It was in the winter. ²³Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's Porch. ²⁴The Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, {then} tell us plainly {so that we can know}." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you {still} do not believe me. The miraculous deeds I do by my Father's authority tell you {what you need to know} about me. ²⁶However, you {people still} do not believe in me because you do not belong to me. You are like sheep {that are not part of my flock}. ²⁷{Just like sheep obey the voice of their shepherd,} my people respond to what I say. I know them, and they are my disciples. ²⁸I enable them to live forever {with God in heaven}. No one can ever destroy them, and {no one can ever} take them away from me. ²⁹My Father gave them to me. He is greater than anyone and no one is able to take them away from him. ³⁰My father and I are united."

³¹The Jewish {leaders} again picked up stones in order to throw them at him and kill him. ³²Jesus said to them, "You have seen me do many miraculous good deeds that my Father told me to do. Which one of them are you going to kill me with stones for?" ³³The Jewish {leaders} replied, "We do not want to kill you with stones because you did a good deed. Rather, {we want to kill you} because you blaspheme God by claiming to be God {even though} you are {just} a man!" ³⁴Jesus replied to them, "In your scriptures a prophet wrote that God said, 'I have said that you are gods.' ³⁵Since God called those to whom he spoke 'gods' and no one can prove that the Scripture is false, ³⁶why do you say that I am blaspheming {God} because I said that I am the Son of God? {I am} the one whom my Father specially selected {to belong to him} and sent into this world. ³⁷If I am not doing the {miraculous} deeds that my Father wants {me to do}, {then} you should not trust me. ³⁸However, because I am doing these {miraculous} deeds, you should trust {what} these deeds {reveal about me} even though you do not trust me. {You should do that} in order to learn and comprehend that my Father and I are completely united."

³⁹Because {he said these things}, the Jewish {leaders} tried again to arrest Jesus, but he got away from them.

⁴⁰Then Jesus went back over {on the east side of} the Jordan {River}. {He went} to the place where John {the Baptizer} had baptized {people} at the beginning {of his ministry}. Jesus stayed there {for a while}. ⁴¹Many {people} came to Jesus {there}. They said, "John the Baptizer never performed a {miraculous} sign, but everything that John said about this man is true!" ⁴²Many {people} trusted in him in that place.

Chapter 11

¹A man named Lazarus became {very} ill. He lived in the village of Bethany where his {older} sisters Mary and Martha {also lived}. ²{This} is {the same} Mary who {later} would pour perfume on the Lord and would wipe {the oil off of} his feet with her hair. {It was} her brother Lazarus who was ill. ³So the two sisters sent {someone to tell Jesus

about Lazarus}. They said, "Lord, the one whom you love is {very} ill. {Please come!}" ⁴When Jesus heard about {Lazarus' illness,} he said, "This illness will not end in {Lazarus'} death. Rather, the purpose of this illness is to reveal how great God is. {Lazarus became ill} in order that the illness may reveal how great I, the Son of God, am." ⁵{Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus.} ⁶So when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, he deliberately remained where he was for two {more} days.

⁷Then after {those two days} Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go back to {the region of} Judea." ⁸His disciples said, "Teacher, the Jewish leaders {in Judea} currently want to kill you with stones! You surely should not return there again!" ⁹Jesus replied, "{You know that} there are 12 hours of daylight. The person who walks during the daytime will walk safely because the light allows him to see {where he is going}. ¹⁰However, when a person walks during the night, he will stumble because there is no light to allow him to see {where he is going}."

¹¹After saying these things, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I will go there to wake him up." ¹²So his disciples told him, "Lord, if he is sleeping, then he will get well." ¹³{Jesus was {really} speaking about Lazarus' death, but his disciples thought that he was talking about actual sleep.} ¹⁴So Jesus told them clearly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And I rejoice that I was not there {when he died}. {I let this happen} so that you may trust in {me}. {This is} for your benefit. Rather (than staying here,) let us go to where he is." ¹⁶So Thomas, whom they called 'The Twin,' said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go {with the Teacher} in order that we may die with him."

¹⁷So when Jesus arrived {in the village of Bethany,} he learned that people had already put Lazarus' {dead body} in a tomb four days {before then}. ¹⁸{Jerusalem was only about three kilometers away from {the village of} Bethany.} ¹⁹Many Jewish people came to Martha and Mary {in Bethany} in order to console {both of} them concerning their {younger} brother {Lazarus' death}. ²⁰When Martha heard {someone say} that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. Mary {did not go with her} but stayed in the house. ²¹When Martha {met Jesus}, she said to him, "Lord, if you had {only} been here {sooner}, my brother would not be dead!" ²²However, even now {that he is dead} I am certain that God will do for you whatever you ask him {to do}." ²³Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again." ²⁴Martha told him, "I am certain that my brother will live again when God raises all dead people on the last day {when he judges everyone}." ²⁵Jesus told her, "I am the one who causes {dead people} to live again. {I am} the one who gives {people eternal} life. Whoever trusts in me will live {forever}, even if his {body} dies. ²⁶All those who receive {eternal} life and trust in me will surely live forever. Do you believe {that} this {is true}?" ²⁷Martha told him, "Yes, {I do,} Lord! I {do indeed} believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. {You are} the one whom God promised would come into this world."

²⁸After she said that, she returned {to the house} and secretly summoned her {younger} sister Mary. She told {Mary}, "The Teacher has arrived, and he is summoning you." ²⁹When Mary heard what her {older} sister said, she rose quickly and went out {to meet} Jesus. ³⁰{At that time Jesus had not yet entered the village {of Bethany}. Rather, he was still at the place where Martha had met him.} ³¹The Jewish people who were comforting Mary in her house saw her rise quickly and go outside, so they followed her. {They} thought that she was going to the tomb {where they had buried Lazarus} in order to grieve there.

³²When Mary arrived at the place where Jesus {had spoken to Martha} and saw him, she threw herself down on the ground in front of his feet. She told him, "Lord, if you had {only} been here {sooner}, my brother would not be dead!" ³³When Jesus saw her grieving, and the Jewish people with her also grieving, he became extremely agitated. ³⁴He asked, "Where have you entombed his body?" They told him, "Lord, come and see {where he is}." ³⁵Jesus started crying. ³⁶So the Jewish people {who were with Mary} said {among themselves}, "See how much he loved Lazarus!" ³⁷However, others among them said, "He could enable the blind man to see. But maybe he didn't have enough power to prevent this man from dying!"

³⁸Jesus then was emotionally agitated again when he came to the tomb. (It was a cave, and a large rock was covering its entrance.) ³⁹Jesus said, "Remove the rock {from the cave's entrance}." {However,} Lazarus' sister Martha told him, "Lord, by this time his body will smell bad because he died four days ago." ⁴⁰Jesus told her, "I surely told you that if you trusted me, you would see how great God is!"

⁴¹So some people removed the rock {from the cave's entrance}. Jesus looked up {toward heaven} and said, "Father, I thank you for listening to me. ⁴²I know that you always listen to me. Nevertheless, I said that for the sake of the crowd {of people} who are standing here. {I said this} in order that they might be confident that you sent me."

⁴³After he said that {prayer}, he shouted loudly, "Lazarus, come out {of the tomb}!" ⁴⁴The man who had died came out {of the tomb}! {The people who prepared him for burial} had wrapped his feet and hands with strips of cloth and had wrapped a cloth around his face. {So} Jesus told the people {standing there}, "Take off {the strips of cloth that bind him}. Allow him to go."

⁴⁵As a result, many of the Jewish people who had come {to comfort} Mary and who had witnessed what Jesus had done trusted him. ⁴⁶Nevertheless, some of the people {there} went to the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the ruling priests and the Pharisees gathered together the members of the highest Jewish ruling council. They were saying to each other, "What are we going to do {about this man}? He is performing many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸If we allow him to keep doing these {miracles}, everyone will trust in him {and make him their king}. Then the Roman {army} will come and destroy both our temple and our people!"

⁴⁹One {member} of this council was Caiaphas. {He was} the high priest for that year. He told them, "You people know nothing! ⁵⁰You do not realize that it would be {much} better for you to have one man die on behalf of the people {than} let {the Romans} kill all of the Jewish people." ⁵¹{Caiaphas did not say this because he thought of it himself. Rather, since he was the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish people. ⁵²{He was also prophesying that Jesus would die,} not only for the Jewish people, but also in order to gather into one people all the children of God who have dispersed themselves {throughout the world}.) ⁵³So from {the day that Caiaphas prophesied} forward, the Jewish council made plans to kill Jesus.

⁵⁴Because of that, Jesus no longer traveled around publicly among his Jewish {opponents}. Instead, he left Jerusalem and went to a town called Ephraim that is in the region near the desolate area. He remained there with his disciples {for a while}.

⁵⁵At that time the Jewish Passover Celebration was about to take place. Many {people} went up to Jerusalem from the region. {They came} before the Passover {Celebration began} in order to clean themselves {according to the Jewish rules for attending the celebration}. ⁵⁶The people {who came to Jerusalem for the Passover Celebration} were searching for Jesus. While they were standing in the temple {courtyard}, they asked each other, "What do you think? He will surely not come to the Passover Celebration!" ⁵⁷{Some time earlier} the Jewish ruling priests and the Pharisees had made a command that anyone who found out where Jesus was must report {his location to them}, so that they could arrest him.

Chapter 12

¹Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover Festival began. Bethany was the village where Lazarus lived, the man Jesus made alive again after he had died. ²There in Bethany, they gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha made preparations for the dinner, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating. ³Then Mary took a bottle of expensive perfume (called nard) and, to honor Jesus, she poured it out on his feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The beautiful smell of the perfume filled the entire house.

⁴However, one of his apprentices, Judas Iscariot, (he was the one who broke the trust Jesus had in him, and soon he would give Jesus up to his enemies)—he objected and said, ⁵"We should have sold this perfume for three hundred days' wages and given the money to the poor." ⁶He said this, not because he cared about the poor people, but because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would take money for his own use whenever he wanted. ⁷Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone! She bought this perfume for the day when I would die and they would bury me. ⁸There will always be poor people among you, so you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be with you much longer, so it is good that she showed right now how much she appreciates me."

⁹A large crowd of Jews in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there. They came not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had made alive. ¹⁰Then the chief priests decided it was necessary to put Lazarus to death, as well, ¹¹for it was because of him that many of the Jews were no longer believing in what the chief priests were teaching; instead, they were putting their trust in Jesus.

¹²The next day the large crowd that had come for the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³So they cut branches from palm trees and went out to wave them to welcome him as he came into the city. They were shouting, "Hosanna! Praise God! God bless the One who comes in the Name of the Lord! Welcome, King of Israel!" ¹⁴When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat on it, riding into the city. By doing this, he fulfilled what had been written in scripture:

¹⁵"Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.

Look! Your King is coming.

He is riding on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶When this happened, his apprentices did not understand that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. However, after Jesus had finished his work and had received again his full powers as God, they looked back and remembered what the prophets had written about him and what people had done to him.

¹⁷The crowd that was following along with Jesus kept telling others what they had seen: That Jesus had called Lazarus out of the tomb and had made him alive again. ¹⁸The other crowd of people, those who went out of the city gate to meet Jesus, did so because they heard he had done great things to show them his power. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to each other, "See! We are gaining no advantage here. Look! The whole world is following him!"

²⁰Among those who went up to Jerusalem to worship God during the Passover Festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in the district of Galilee. They had something to ask him; they said, "Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?" ²²So Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, "It is time for God to show the people everything that I, the Son of Man, have done and to tell them all that I have said. ²⁴I am telling you the truth: Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the earth and dies, it remains only one seed; but after it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce a harvest of much wheat. ²⁵Anyone who tries to live to please himself will fail, but anyone who does not live to please himself in this world will keep his life forever. ²⁶If anyone wants to serve me, he must also follow me because my servant must be where I am. The Father will honor everyone who serves me.

²⁷Now my soul is greatly troubled. Should I say, 'Father, save me from this time when I will suffer and die!?' No, for this is the very reason I came into this world. ²⁸My Father, show how powerful you are in all you have said, in all you have done, and in all you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already displayed my nature, my words, and my works; and I will do it again!" ²⁹The crowd that was there heard the voice of God, but some said it was just thunder. Others said an angel had spoken to Jesus. ³⁰Jesus replied to them, "The voice you heard speaking was God's voice. However, he spoke not for my benefit, but for yours! ³¹Now is the time for God to judge the world. Now is the time when he will drive out Satan, the one who rules this world. ³²As for me, when people raise me high on a cross, I will draw everyone to myself." ³³He said this to let the people know how he would die.

³⁴Someone in the crowd answered him, "We understand from the scriptures that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will die? Who is this 'Son of Man'?" ³⁵Jesus answered, "My message is like a light that will shine on you for just a little longer. Live in that light while you have my light, or the darkness will overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going! ³⁶Trust in that light while you have the light; then you will belong to the light.

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid from them. ³⁷Although Jesus had done many miracles, most of the people did not believe what he had told them. ³⁸This was to make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago:

“Lord, who has believed anything that they have heard from us?

The Lord has shown us how he can powerfully rescue us!” ³⁹Yet, they could not trust in him for the reason that Isaiah had written: ⁴⁰“The Lord has made them so they cannot see,

and he has made them stubborn;

they cannot even see with their eyes,

If they could, they would understand;

they would repent and pray for me to forgive them.

For this reason, I cannot heal them!”

⁴¹Isaiah wrote those words long ago because he understood that the Messiah would serve God powerfully.

⁴²Although this was true, many of the leaders of the Jewish people put their trust in Jesus. Nevertheless, they greatly feared that the Pharisees would ban them from the synagogues, so they did not speak out about trusting in Jesus. ⁴³They preferred that other people praise and respect them rather than that God would praise them.

⁴⁴Jesus shouted out to the crowd that had gathered, “Those who put their trust in me are not only putting their trust in me but also are putting their trust in {my Father} who sent me. ⁴⁵When you see me, you are also seeing {my Father} who sent me. ⁴⁶I have come into the world as the light of the world; whoever puts his trust in me will not remain in the darkness.

⁴⁷I do not judge those who listen to my words but refuse to obey me. I did not come into this world to condemn the people of the world. Instead, I came to save them from being punished for their sins. ⁴⁸Yet, there is something that will condemn those who reject me and do not follow my message. They are condemned by the message I have spoken to them. ⁴⁹When I taught about God, I was not merely saying what I thought. {My} Father who sent me, gave me clear instructions on what I should say and how I should say it. ⁵⁰I know that the Father’s most important instructions are the ones that teach people how to live forever, and I have said exactly what my Father has told me to say.”

Chapter 13

¹It was now the day before the Passover Festival was to begin. Jesus knew it was time for him to leave this world and to return to his Father. He showed how much he loved those who were with him here in this world, and he loved them until the end of his life. ²Before Jesus and his apprentices had their evening meal, the devil had already put the thought into the mind of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he would hand Jesus over to his enemies. ³Yet Jesus knew that his Father had given him complete power and authority over everything. He also knew that he himself had come from God and would soon return to God. ⁴Jesus got up from the dinner. He took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵He poured out some water into a basin and began to wash the apprentices’ feet and to wipe them dry with the towel.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” ⁷Jesus replied to him, “You do not understand now what I am doing for you, but later you will understand.” ⁸Peter said, “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus replied to him, “If I do not wash you, then you have nothing to do with me.” ⁹So Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, wash not only my feet! Wash my hands and my head also!” ¹⁰Jesus said to him, “One who has taken a

bath needs only to wash his feet. The rest of his body is already clean. You are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹He knew who was going to hand him over. That is the reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹²After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at his place again and said, “Do you understand what I have done for you? ¹³You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘Lord. You are right to say this, for that is what I am. ¹⁴If I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to serve each other by doing things like washing each other’s feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow in order that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I am telling you the truth: A servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who has sent him. ¹⁷Since you now know these things, God will be pleased with you if you do them.

¹⁸I am not saying this about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. However, what is written in scripture must come true: ‘The one who ate my food with me as a friend, he has turned against me and treated me like an enemy.’

¹⁹I am telling you this now before he hands me over so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am God. ²⁰I am telling you the truth: If you receive the one I send to you, you are also receiving me; and whoever receives me, is also receiving {my Father} who sent me.”

²¹After Jesus said this, he was disturbed within himself. He solemnly declared, “I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to hand me over to my enemies.” ²²The apprentices looked at one another. They were confused about which of them he was talking about. ²³One of his apprentices, John, the one whom Jesus especially loved, was at the table next to Jesus. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to John that he should ask Jesus which apprentice he was talking about. ²⁵So John leaned back against Jesus and asked him quietly, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl.” Then he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered in to him and took control of him. Jesus said to him, “Whatever you need to do, do it quickly.” ²⁸No one else at the table knew why Jesus had said that to him. ²⁹Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him to go and buy some things needed for the Passover Festival. Others thought Jesus was telling Judas to give something to the poor. ³⁰After receiving the bread, immediately Judas went out. It was night.

³¹After Judas left, Jesus said, “Now God will make people know what I, the Son of Man, am doing. I, the Son of Man, will make people know what God is doing as well, and people will praise him for it. ³²Since I, the Son of Man, make God known to people and since I honor him, God will also honor me. God will do this immediately.

³³You whom I love as though you were my children, I will continue with you only a short time longer. Then you will look for me, but I will not be here. Just like I told the Jewish leaders, I am telling you now, that where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴I will give you this new command: You must love one another, just as I have loved you. ³⁵If you love one another, all people will know that you are my apprentices.”

³⁶Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot come with me now; but you will come later.” ³⁷Peter said, “Lord, why can I not come with you now? I am ready to die for you!” ³⁸Jesus answered, “You say that you are ready to die for me. I am telling you the truth: The rooster will not crow in the morning before you will say three times that you do not know me!”

Chapter 14

¹“Do not be upset or anxious. You are trusting in God; trust also in me. ²Where my Father lives there are many places to live. If that were not true, I would have told you. I will go there to prepare a place for you. ³And because I will go there to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me, so that where I am, there you may be with me. ⁴You know where I am going, and you know the way.”

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way to where my Father is. I am the one who reveals the truth about God, and the one who gives eternal life to people. I am the only one who can enable people to come to my Father. There is no other way. ⁷If you really knew who I was, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him, and it is as though you have seen him"

⁸Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be all we will ever want!" ⁹Jesus said to him, "Philip, I have been with you so long, and still you do not know me. Those who have seen me, have seen my Father. So why do you say 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am joined to my Father and that my Father is joined to me? The things I have told you—I did not think of these things; rather, it is my Father who has sent me to tell you all of these things, for my Father is joined to me and works through me. ¹¹Trust me because I have told you that I am joined to the Father and that the Father is joined to me, or else trust me because of all the signs and mighty acts you have seen me do. ¹²I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the things that I do. He will do even greater works because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do. I will do this in order that everyone might honor the Father and that they might know the Father because of everything that I, his Son, do. ¹⁴If you ask the Father for anything because you belong to me, I will do it.

¹⁵If you love me, you will live as I have taught you. ¹⁶Then I will ask the Father to give you another gift, and he will send you another Helper, one who will come alongside you to be with you forever. ¹⁷He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God. The unbelieving people in this world will never welcome Him. The world cannot see him or know him. You know him because he lives with you and he will be joined to you. ¹⁸I will not abandon you and leave you with no one to care for you; I will come to you. ¹⁹Soon the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live. ²⁰When you see me again, you will know that I am joined to my Father and that you are joined to me and I to you. ²¹Everyone who has heard my commandments and obeys them, they are the ones who love me. And the ones who love me, my Father will love them, too; I will love them and I will reveal myself to them."

²²Then Judas (not Iscariot, but the other apprentice with the same name) spoke to Jesus. He said, "Lord, how will you reveal yourself just to us and not to the whole world?" ²³Jesus replied to him, "This is how you can tell whether people love me: Whether they do what I have told you to do. Any people like this, my Father will love them. He and I will come to them and live with them. ²⁴As for those who do not love me, they will not obey what I have told them to do. The things I have told you are not things that I have decided to say on my own; instead, they are things that {my} Father has sent me to tell you. ²⁵I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But my Father will send the Holy Spirit. He is the one who will encourage you. He will come with my authority. He will teach you all of God's truth that you need to know. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. ²⁷As I leave you with peace, it is my peace that I am giving to you. I give you a kind of peace no one and nothing that belongs to this world can give you. So do not be upset or anxious; and do not be afraid.

²⁸You heard me say to you that I am going away and will later come back to you. If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going back to the Father because the Father is greater than I am. ²⁹I have told you these things now before they happen so that, when they do happen, you will continue to trust me. ³⁰I will not be able to talk with you much longer because Satan, the ruler of this world is coming. But he has no control over what happens to me, ³¹and I will do what the Father has commanded me to do. This is so that the world will know forever that I love the Father. Come, let us go from here."

Chapter 15

¹"I am like a genuine vine (not like those Jewish leaders who do not teach the truth). My Father is like a gardener who works to take care of a vineyard. ²Every branch in me that does not grow fruit—my Father cuts it off and takes it away. As for every branch that gives good fruit, he makes it clean by pruning it so that it may produce even more fruit. ³You are already pure because of the message I spoke to you. ⁴Remain joined to me, and I will remain joined

to you. As the branch cannot bear any fruit on its own, neither can you bear fruit unless you stay joined to me and depend upon me for everything.

⁵I am like the vine; you are like the branches. If you remain joined to me and I remain joined to you, you will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing at all. ⁶The gardener cuts off and throws away useless branches. Then, after they dry up, he picks them up and throws them into a fire and burns them. Similarly, everyone who does not stay joined to me, God will get rid of. ⁷If you stay joined to me and live by my message, you can ask God for anything, and he will do it. ⁸When you bear much fruit, it causes people to honor my Father. By doing that you will show that you are my apprentices.

⁹I have loved you just as my Father has loved me. Now keep living in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love. ¹⁰If you obey what I have commanded you, you will be acting in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love, just like I have obeyed what my Father has commanded me and I act in a way that is appropriate for someone whom he loves. ¹¹I told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and so that you may rejoice to the fullest extent. ¹²What I command you to do is this: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than a person who gives up his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you not only listen to my commands but also live by them. ¹⁵I no longer call you my servants, for the servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, for everything I heard from my Father I made it all known to you so that you also could understand it. ¹⁶You did not decide to become my apprentices. Instead, I chose you, so that you should go out and bear much fruit and so that your fruit should last forever. As a result, everything you ask my Father using my authority, he will do for you. ¹⁷This is what I command you to do: Love one another.

¹⁸If the world despises you, you should realize that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the unbelievers in this world, the world would love you, and you would love what they love and do what they do. But you do not belong to them; instead, I chose you to come out from among them. That is the reason the unbelievers in this world despise you. ²⁰Remember when I taught you this: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' Since they have made me suffer, you can be sure they will make you suffer also. If any of them have received my teachings and followed them, they will also follow what you teach them. ²¹The unbelievers in this world will do horrible things to you because you represent me and because they do not know {my Father} who has sent me to you. ²²If I had not come and spoken God's message to them, they would not have been guilty of rejecting me and my message. However, now I have come and told them God's message, and they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴If I had not done those things among them, those things in which I showed my power, things that no one else has ever done, they would not have been guilty of sin. Yet now that they have seen me, they hate me, and they hate my Father, too. ²⁵These words were written in their law and have now come true: 'They hated me for no reason.'

²⁶When I send you the Helper, he is the one who will come from the Father and who will comfort you. He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God and me. He will tell everyone who I am, and he will show everyone all that I have done. ²⁷You also must tell everyone what you know about me because you have been with me the whole time from the very first days when I began to teach the people and to do miracles."

Chapter 16

¹I told you these things so that you would not stumble or stop trusting in me because of the difficulties you must face. ²Difficult days are ahead. Your enemies will stop you from worshiping in the synagogues. However, something even worse will happen. The days are coming when people will put you to death and think that they are pleasing God. ³They will do such things because they have never known who I really am, nor who my Father is. ⁴I have told you these things so that at the time when these hardships come, you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you these things at the beginning because I was with you then.

⁵"Now I am going back to {my Father} who sent me. Yet none of you dares to ask me, 'Where are you going?'

⁶Because I have said these things to you, now you are very sad. ⁷I tell you the truth, it is good for you that I am

going away. Unless I go away, the Helper who comforts you will not come. If I go away, I will send him to you.

⁸When the Helper comes, he will convict them of the sins they have committed; he will show them that they do not reach God's standard of goodness; and he promises them that God will judge them because they did what God commanded them not to do. ⁹He will tell people that their greatest sin is that they do not believe in me. ¹⁰He will tell people that because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me, you will know that I am the one who was truly righteous. ¹¹He will tell people that the fact that God has already determined that he will punish Satan, the one who rules this world, shows that some day God will also punish those who do not belong to him.

¹²I have many more things I want to tell you. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to live well knowing these things. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth you need to know. He will not speak from his own authority, but whatever he hears he will tell you, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. ¹⁴The Spirit will honor me by telling you who I am and showing you what I have done. He will explain to you everything he heard from me. ¹⁵Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Spirit will take whatever he receives from me and will explain it to you.

¹⁶In a little while, you will not see me. Then after a little while, you will see me again." ¹⁷So some of his apprentices said to one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'In a little while, you will not see me,' and 'after a little while, you will see me again' and what does he mean by 'because I am going back to my Father'?" ¹⁸They kept asking, "What does he mean by saying, 'after a little while'? We do not understand what he is saying."

¹⁹Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to the apprentices, "Why are you asking each other what I meant? I said that in a little while, you would not see me; and then after a little while, you would see me again. ²⁰I am telling you the truth: You will cry and grieve, but those who belong to this world will rejoice. You will go through great sadness, but your sadness will change into joy. ²¹This is like a woman who is suffering the pains of labor when giving birth. After her baby is born, she forgets her anguish because of the joy she has that her child has been born into the world. ²²You, like her, have sorrow now, but I will see you again and God will give you great joy, joy no one can take from you. ²³On that day, you will have no more questions to ask me. I am telling you the truth: Whatever you ask the Father, he will give it to you when you ask because you are joined to me. ²⁴Up until now, you have not asked for anything like that. Ask and you will receive it, and God will give you such joy that fills everything.

²⁵I have been speaking these things using language of parables, but there will soon be a time when I will no longer use that kind of language. Instead, I will tell you all about my Father in language that you can clearly understand. ²⁶At that time you will make your requests to God in my name and according to God's purposes. I will not have to ask the Father to meet your needs, ²⁷for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have put your trust in me and because you know that I came from God. ²⁸I came from the Father, and I entered this world. Very soon I will be leaving this world, and I am going back to my Father."

²⁹Then his apprentices said, "Finally! Now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative language. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need to ask you questions. This is why we gave you our trust, and we know for certain that you came from God."

³¹Jesus replied to them, "Do you now finally put your trust in me? ³²Look! The time is coming when others will scatter you everywhere! Each one will go toward his own home, and you will leave me. However, I will not be alone because the Father is always with me. ³³I have told you these things in order that you may have inner peace because of your relationship with me. In this world you have trials and sorrows, but be brave! I have conquered the world!"

Chapter 17

¹After Jesus said these things, he looked up to the sky and said, "Father, it is time for you to announce to everyone and to tell them who I, your Son, am, and to show them all that I have done. Do this so that I, your Son, may reveal

you to everyone who you really are, the great King who can do anything. ²You gave me authority over all people, in order that I might enable all those whom you chose to come to me to live eternally. ³This is everlasting life: To know you, Father—you, who are the only true God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent into the world. ⁴I have brought all kinds of people to you to show them all about you. I did this by finishing the work you gave me. ⁵Father, give me honor by bringing me into your own presence, as we were before the time we created the world.

⁶Those whom you chose from everyone in this world to belong to me—I have taught them who you really are and what you are like. They belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have believed in what you said to them, and they have obeyed it. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸I gave them the message that you gave me. They accepted it, and now they know for sure that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me. ⁹I am praying for them. I am not praying for those who belong to this world, those who continue to oppose you. I am praying for those whom you gave me because they belong to you. ¹⁰All I have belongs to you, and all you have is mine. They know who I am, and they sincerely tell the truth about who I am. ¹¹I am not staying in the world any longer. However, they are staying in the world. I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them safe; keep them belonging to yourself by the same power that you gave to me so that they may be united together, just as we are. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them safe and watched over them by your own power. Not one of them was lost, except the one whom you had destined for destruction, as the scriptures foretold long ago.

¹³Now I am coming to you, Father. I have said these things while I am here in the world so that I may give them my complete joy. ¹⁴I have spoken your messages to them, and the world has hated them and would not listen to your message. The world hated them because, like me, they do not belong to this world, but they have another home. ¹⁵I am not asking for you to take them out of this world, but instead for you to protect them from the harm that the evil one can do to them. ¹⁶They do not belong to those in this world who are opposed to you, just like I also do not belong to them. ¹⁷Set my apprentices apart so that they may completely belong to you, by enabling them to live in accordance with what is true. Your message is true. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹I dedicate myself to completely belong to you for their sakes, so that they also may dedicate themselves completely to you.”

²⁰“I am praying not only for these apprentices here, but also I am praying for those who will trust in me when they hear their message. ²¹I pray that they may all be united, just as you and I are united. Father, you are united to me, and I am to you—may they also be united to us. Do this so that the world will know you sent me. ²²I have shown them who I am, and they have seen what I have done. I have taught them this so that they may be united together, as you and I are united. ²³I am united with them and you are united with me. I have done this so that they may be perfectly united together and so that the unbelievers may know that you sent me and that you love them, just as you love me.

²⁴“Father, I want these whom you have given to me to be with me always where I am so that they can see the splendor and majesty you will give to me when I am with you. You do this because you have loved me from before the time we created the world.

²⁵O Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these with me here know that you have sent me to them. ²⁶I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do this so that you may love them like you love me and so that I may be united with them.”

Chapter 18

¹When Jesus finished his prayer, he went with his apprentices and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a grove of olive trees, and they entered it.

²Judas, the one who was about to hand Jesus over to his enemies, knew where the place was because Jesus often went there with his apprentices. ³So Judas came to that grove. He was leading a troop of Roman soldiers and some Temple guards who had been sent by the Pharisees and chief priests. They were carrying torches and lamps and weapons. ⁴Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, so he went forward and asked them, "Who are you looking for?" ⁵They replied to him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus said to them, "I am that person." (Now Judas, the one who was handing him over, was standing with them.) ⁶When Jesus said to them, "I am that person," they swiftly moved back and fell to the ground because of his power. ⁷So he asked them again, "Who are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." ⁸Jesus replied to them, "I told you that I am that person. Since I am the one you are looking for, let these other men go. ⁹This happened in order to fulfill the words he had said when he was praying to his Father, "I did not lose even one of those you gave me."

¹⁰Then Simon Peter drew out a short sword and struck the high priest's servant, a man named Malchus, and cut off his right ear. ¹¹Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath! Of course I will suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me to do."

¹²Then the group of soldiers, along with their captain and some of the temple guards, seized Jesus and tied him to prevent him from escaping. ¹³Then they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. ¹⁴It was Caiaphas who had advised other leaders that it would be better that one man should die for the people than that all the people should perish.

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did one other apprentice. The other apprentice was known to the high priest, so he had permission to enter the high priest's courtyard when the soldiers took Jesus. ¹⁶Peter had to stop outside at the gate. So the other apprentice went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷That servant girl said to Peter, "You are one the apprentices of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ¹⁸It was cold, so the high priest's servants and temple guards made a charcoal fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also there with them. He was standing and warming himself.

¹⁹The high priest questioned Jesus about his apprentices and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to everyone. I have always taught in the Jewish preaching places and in the temple, in the places where our people come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹So why are you asking me these questions? Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They know what I said." ²²When Jesus said these things, one of the temple guards standing near him struck him hard with his hand. He said, "That is not the right way to answer the high priest." ²³Jesus replied to him, "If I had said something wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me!" ²⁴Then Annas sent Jesus, who was still tied up, to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. Another person said to him, "You are one of the apprentices of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ²⁶One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, "Surely I saw you in the olive tree grove with the man they have arrested, did I not?" ²⁷Peter again denied it, and immediately a rooster crowed.

²⁸Then the soldiers led Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. It was early morning. Pilate was not a Jew, so Jesus' accusers thought that if they entered his headquarters, they would defile themselves and be unable to celebrate the Passover Festival. So they did not go in. ²⁹So Pilate came out to talk to them. He said, "Of what are you accusing this man?" ³⁰"If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!" they replied. ³¹Then Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him by your own law." Then the Jewish leaders said, "We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that." ³²They said this in order to make true what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

³³Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ³⁴Jesus replied, "Are you asking because you yourself want to know, or did others tell you to ask me this

question?" ³⁵Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew! Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done wrong?" ³⁶Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting to keep me from being handed over to my Jewish opponents, but my kingdom is not of this world." ³⁷Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "Yes, what you have said about my being a king is correct. I was born to become a king, and I came into this world to tell people the truth about God. Everyone who believes the truth pays attention to what I say." ³⁸Pilate asked him, "How can anyone know what the truth is?"

After Pilate asked that question, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He said to them, "I find he has broken no law. ³⁹However, you Jews have a custom where every year during the Passover Festival, you ask me to release one man who is in prison. So would you like me to release for you the man who you Jews say is your king?" ⁴⁰They shouted again, "No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Chapter 19

¹Then Pilate sent for Jesus. He had his soldiers beat him severely using whips. ²The soldiers also took some branches with thorns and wove them to make something like a crown. Then they put it on his head. They also put a purple robe on him. They did these things to ridicule him by pretending that he was a king. ³They mocked him and said, "Hooray for the King of the Jews!" and they struck him over and over again.

⁴Pilate came outside again and said to the people, "Look, I am bringing him out to you so that you can know that I find no reason to punish him." ⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Look, here is the man!" ⁶When the chief priests and temple guards saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him! As for me, I find no reason to punish him." ⁷The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, "We have a certain law that says he ought to die because he claimed to be the Son of God." ⁸When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid of what would happen to himself if he commanded the soldiers to kill Jesus. ⁹He entered his headquarters once more and called the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then he said to Jesus, "From where do you come?" However, Jesus did not answer him. ¹⁰So Pilate said to him, "Will you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I also have authority to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all, if God had not given it to you. So the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a worse sin."

¹²From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Roman emperor Caesar! Anyone who makes himself a king, stands opposed to Caesar." ¹³When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down in front of him in the judgment seat, the place where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was called "The Stone Pavement," and in Hebrew it was "Gabbatha." ¹⁴Now it was the day before the Passover Festival, the day of preparation. It was almost noontime when Pilate said to the Jews, "See, here is your king!" ¹⁵They shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your king?" The chief priests replied, "We have no king but Caesar!" ¹⁶Then at last Pilate agreed to do what they wanted, and he told the soldiers to crucify Jesus. Then the soldiers took Jesus away.

¹⁷He went out, carrying his own cross by himself to the place called "The Place of a Skull," which in Hebrew is called "Golgotha." ¹⁸There they crucified him, and at the same time they also nailed two other men who were both criminals to their crosses. One was on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹Pilate also told someone to write a notice on a board and fasten it to Jesus' cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' ²⁰Many Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. ²¹The chief priests went back to Pilate and said,

"You should not have written, 'King of the Jews', but rather, 'This man said that he is the King of the Jews'." ²²Pilate replied, "What I told them to write is what they have written, and I will not change it."

²³After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. However, they kept his tunic separate. This tunic had been woven from top to bottom from one piece of cloth. ²⁴So they said to each other, "Let us not tear it. Instead, let us decide who will keep it as one piece by casting lots for the one who will get it." When this happened it made the scripture come true that said,

"They divided my clothes among them.

They cast lots for my clothing."

Indeed the soldiers did those things.

²⁵Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near his cross.

²⁶When Jesus saw his mother standing there and John, the apprentice whom he especially loved, standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Mother, here is the one who will act like a son to you." ²⁷And he said to the apprentice, "Here is your mother!" So from that very moment, that apprentice took her to live in his home.

²⁸A little later, Jesus knew that everything that God sent him to do had now been done, and in order to make come true one final thing that the scriptures had foretold, he said, "I am thirsty!" ²⁹A jar of sour wine stood there, so they took a short branch from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it, and they dipped in the sour wine and held it up to Jesus' mouth. ³⁰After Jesus drank the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and died.

³¹This was the day of preparation for the Passover (and the next day was a very special day of rest for the Jews). It was against their law to allow dead bodies to remain on the crosses on the holiday, so they went to Pilate and asked him to break the legs of the three men so that the men would die quickly and their bodies would be taken down. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other, the two men who had been crucified with Jesus. ³³When they came to Jesus, they saw he was dead already. So they did not break his legs.

³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out of his body. ³⁵The one who saw this bears witness—his testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth—so that you may put your trust in Jesus. ³⁶These things happened in order to fulfill what was written in scripture: "No one will break any of his bones."

³⁷And they fulfilled another scripture that read: 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

³⁸After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, an apprentice of Jesus, but a secret apprentice because he was afraid of the Jews, went to Pilate and asked him if he might take away Jesus' body. Pilate gave Joseph permission, so he came and took away the body of Jesus. ³⁹Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus at night, also came and brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloe spices to prepare the body for burial. The spices weighed about 33 kilograms. ⁴⁰They took the body of Jesus and wrapped strips of linen cloth around it, putting the spices under the strips of cloth. They did this according to the Jewish customs about burying bodies in caves. ⁴¹Now in the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden, and at the edge of the garden was a newly-made burial cave in which no one had been buried. ⁴²The Passover was about to begin that evening, and they chose this tomb because it was close at hand and because they could bury Jesus quickly. So they laid Jesus there.

Chapter 20

¹Now on Sunday, the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb very early in the day, while it was still dark. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the entrance to the cave. ²So she ran to Jerusalem, where Simon Peter and the other apprentice—the one whom Jesus loved—were staying, and told them, "They have taken the Lord's body from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put it!" ³When they heard this, Peter and the other apprentice rushed out to the tomb. ⁴They were both running, but the other apprentice

was faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down and looked into the cave; he saw the strips of linen lying there, but he hesitated to go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was running behind him, arrived there, but he went inside the tomb. He, too, saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, ⁷but he also saw the cloth cover that had been on Jesus' head, folded and put aside, separate from the linen strips. ⁸Then the other apprentice also went inside; he saw these things and began to believe that Jesus had truly become alive again. ⁹Before this happened, they did not understand from what the prophets had written in the scriptures, that he had to become alive again after he died.

¹⁰So the apprentices went back to their homes. ¹¹Mary was left standing just outside the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the cave. ¹²She saw two angels dressed in white robes sitting on the very place where Jesus' body had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away the body of my Lord, and I do not know where they have put it!" ¹⁴After she said that, she turned around and saw someone standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵He said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" She thought the man speaking to her was the gardener, and she said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you have put his body, and I will take it." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet gone up to heaven to be with my Father. Go to my apprentices and tell them, 'I am about to return to heaven to be with my Father and your Father, to the one who is my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the apprentices and announced, "I have seen the Lord"—and she reported to them what Jesus had said to her.

¹⁹On that Sunday evening, the first day of the week, the doors were locked, and the apprentices were staying inside because they were afraid that the Jewish authorities might arrest them. Suddenly Jesus came and stood in the middle of their group; he said to them, "May God give you peace." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The apprentices were very happy when they saw the Lord! ²¹Jesus said to them again, "May God give you peace. Just as the Father sent me, now I am sending you." ²²After he said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of anyone, God will forgive them. If you do not forgive another's sins, they will be held against them."

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the twelve apprentices, who was called "The Twin," was not with the other apprentices when Jesus came to them. ²⁵The other apprentices told him, "We have seen the Lord." However, he said to them, "Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers in the holes made by the nails, and unless I put my hand into the gaping wound on his side, I will never put my trust in him."

²⁶Eight days later, his apprentices were again inside the house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and he said to them all, "May God give you peace." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and put out your hand and place it in my side! Stop doubting that it is I; put your trust in me." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Now you believe that I have risen because you see me. Yet God gives great happiness to those who have not seen me and still believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other works of power and miracles that proved who he is. His apprentices witnessed them, but they were so numerous that I have not written them all down in this book. ³¹Nevertheless, I have written these so that you may have complete confidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that by trusting in him, you may have everlasting life in his name.

Chapter 21

¹After that, Jesus appeared to the apprentices by Lake Tiberias (also known as Lake Galilee). He made himself known in this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called The Twin), Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other apprentices, were together. ³Simon Peter said to the others, "I am going fishing."

They said, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴In the morning as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the apprentices did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "My friends, do you have any fish?" They said, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Throw your net out off the right side of the boat and you will find some." They cast it as he told them, and they caught so many fish in the net that they were unable to pull the net into the boat! ⁷John, the apprentice whom Jesus especially loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard him say this, he tucked up his outer garment around himself (he had worn almost nothing while working), and jumped into the water. ⁸The other apprentices came to shore in the boat, pulling behind the net full of fish. They were not far from shore, only ninety meters away. ⁹When they got to shore, they saw a charcoal fire ready and hot, with fish cooking on it, and there was some bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught!" ¹¹Simon Peter got back in the boat and dragged the net to the shore, full of large fish. There were 153 of them. Even so, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast!" None of the apprentices dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the apprentices after God had brought him back from the dead.

¹⁵When they finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others love me?" Peter said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶Jesus said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Be a shepherd to my sheep." ¹⁷Jesus said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" Peter said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." ¹⁸I am telling you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on and you walked about wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone will dress you and will lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to honor God. Then Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

²⁰Peter turned around and saw John, the apprentice whom Jesus especially loved following them. He was the one who had leaned close to Jesus at the table and said, "Lord, who is going to hand you over to your enemies?"

²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what is going to happen to this man?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern! You follow me." ²³So the report circulated among the brothers and sisters that this disciple was not going to die. Yet Jesus did not say that he would not die. He said only, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern!"

²⁴I, John, am the apprentice who is bearing witness about all these things, and I have written them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵Jesus did many other things, so many that if they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

Acts

Chapter 1

¹Dear Theophilus,

In the first book that I wrote for you, I told about many of Jesus' actions and teachings. ²{I told you about those things} up to the moment when God took Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus went to heaven, he gave instructions to his chosen apostles as the Holy Spirit guided him. ³Even though the Romans executed Jesus on a cross, God made him alive again. Jesus then went to his apostles {and other disciples} and proved to them in many convincing ways that he truly was alive again. He met with them at different times over a period of 40 days. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere.

⁴One time while Jesus was with his disciples, he told them, "I want you to stay here in the city of Jerusalem and wait until God our Father sends his Spirit to you. As I told you, he promised that he would do that. ⁵John baptized people in water, but within a few days God is going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

⁶One day when the apostles were meeting together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become our king so that we Israelite people will have our own king once again?" ⁷He replied to them, "You do not need to know when that will happen. God my Father alone has decided {when he will make me king}." ⁸But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he will enable you to tell people about me powerfully. You will do this here in the city of Jerusalem. You will do it in the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. But you will also do it all over the world. ⁹After he said that, he started to rise up {into heaven} while they watched. But then a cloud blocked their view so that they could no longer see him.

¹⁰While the apostles were still staring toward the sky as Jesus was going up, suddenly two angels in human form stood beside them. Their clothes shone brightly. ¹¹One of the angels said, "You men who come from Galilee, you do not need to look up at the sky any longer! Some day this same Jesus, whom God took from you up into heaven, will come back {to earth}. He will return in the same way that you just now saw him go up to heaven."

¹²Then {after the two angels left}, the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. ¹³After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room {in the house} where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. They also included another man named James, who was the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, who was the son of yet another man named James. ¹⁴All of the apostles prayed together regularly and frequently. Others who prayed with them included the women who had traveled with Jesus; Mary, who was Jesus' mother; and his younger brothers.

¹⁵Now about 120 people were meeting together at that place. At one of the meetings, Peter stood up among his fellow believers {because he was going to say something important}. He said, ¹⁶"You who believe as I do, there are words that King David wrote in the Scriptures long ago that had to happen as he said they would. The Holy Spirit, who knew that Judas would show Jesus' enemies where to find him and arrest him, inspired David to write those words. ¹⁷But Jesus had chosen Judas, along with the rest of us, to serve as an apostle. {So we need to find someone else to take his place.}"

¹⁸This is how Judas died. The Jewish leaders gave Judas money for betraying Jesus. He used that money to buy a field{and he went to that field to kill himself because he felt so badly about what he had done to Jesus}. He fell down onto that field from a high place and landed with such force that his abdomen burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹The news about this spread widely among the people of Jerusalem. When they heard about

it, they gave that field a new name. In their Aramaic language it was Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood."
{They gave it that name because it was where someone had died.}

²⁰Peter also said, "What happened to Judas is like what we read in the book of Psalms: 'May his home become empty, with no one living in it.' These other words in the Psalms also refer to him: 'Let someone else take over his work as a leader.'"

²¹"So we need to identify all the men who were with us during the whole time when the Lord Jesus was with us.

²²{They need to have been with us} from the time when John the Baptizer began his work until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. One such man must {replace Judas and} join us in telling people about Jesus and how God caused him to live again after he died."

²³So the apostles and other believers suggested two men who could replace Judas. One man was Joseph the son of Sabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. ²⁴⁻²⁵Then they prayed: "Lord Jesus, Judas stopped being an apostle. He sinned and went to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every man thinks in his own heart, so please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas."

²⁶Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them. The lot indicated that Matthias was the one to replace Judas. So he became an apostle along with the other 11 apostles.

Chapter 2

¹On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place {in the city of Jerusalem}. ²Suddenly, they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a wind blowing loudly. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. ³Then they saw what looked like burning flames. These flames separated from one another and came to rest on each of the believers. ⁴Then all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had never learned. The Spirit was making it possible for them to do that fluently.

⁵At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem {to celebrate the Pentecost festival}. They were Jewish people who sincerely worshiped God. They had come from many different countries around the world. ⁶When they heard this loud noise, a large crowd {of these Jews} gathered {at the place where the believers were}. The people in the crowd were amazed because they were each hearing the believers speak in their own languages. ⁷They were all completely amazed and they said to each other, "Listen, all these people who are speaking have come from Galilee. {So they cannot possibly know our languages!}" ⁸But all of us hear them speaking our own native languages! ⁹Some of us are people from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam. Others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. ¹⁰There are some people here from the regions of Phrygia and Pamphylia, from the country of Egypt, and from the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. ¹¹They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who have chosen to believe and practice what Jews believe. And others of us are from the island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. And yet we can hear these people speaking in all our different languages about the mighty works that God has done!" ¹²The people wondered {about what was happening} and did not know what to think {about it}. So they asked one another, "What is happening here?" ¹³But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, "{These people are talking like this because} they have drunk too much wine!"

¹⁴In response, Peter stood up with all the other apostles and spoke loudly to the crowd of people. He said, "You Jewish people and all of you others who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me and I will explain to you what is happening!" ¹⁵Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day!" ¹⁶Instead, what has happened to us is the {miraculous} thing that the prophet Joel wrote about {long ago}. He wrote: ¹⁷

'During the last days,' God says, 'I will give my Holy Spirit to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will tell people my messages. I will give visions to the young men, and I will give inspired dreams to the old men. ¹⁸During

those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, both men and women, so they can tell people my messages. ¹⁹I will cause things to happen in the sky that will make people marvel. I will cause things to happen on the earth that will show that great events are going to take place. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. ²⁰In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before the momentous time when I, the Lord God, come to judge everyone. ²¹But even though I am coming to judge and punish sin, I will save all those who repent and ask me to forgive their sins.”

²²{Peter continued speaking. He said,} “You Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by enabling him to do many amazing miracles. These showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. ²³Even though you knew that, you urged people who do not obey God’s law to take action to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. However, God had already planned for that to happen, and he knew what the results would be, so he allowed it. ²⁴Jesus died, but God caused him to become alive again and no longer dead, because it was not possible for him to stay dead.

²⁵Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said,

‘I knew that you, Lord God, would always be there to protect me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. ²⁶Because of that, I am happy and I joyfully praise you, O God. And I am completely confident {that you will cause me to become alive again after I die}. ²⁷I am confident because I know that you will not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because you have chosen me for a special purpose. ²⁸You have shown me how to live again. You will make me very happy because you will be with me {forever}.’”

²⁹{Peter continued,} “You who are Jews like me, I can tell you confidently that our ancient ruler, King David, died and that his subjects buried him. In fact, his body is still here now at the place where they buried him. ³⁰So we know that King David was not talking about himself in this psalm. Instead, he was a prophet, and he knew that God promised to him that one of his descendants would become king after him. ³¹A long time ago, David knew what God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow him to remain in a grave. God would not even let him be dead long enough for his body to begin to decompose.

³²After this man Jesus had died, God made him alive again. All of us who are standing here before you can testify to this. {We all saw him alive after he had died.} ³³So we are not babbling drunkenly. Instead, this is what has happened. God has greatly honored Jesus by giving him a position next to him in heaven. Jesus has received the Holy Spirit from God his Father, just as God promised. And now Jesus has generously given us the Holy Spirit, and God has confirmed that gift by doing this miracle that you are witnessing. ³⁴We know that David was not speaking about himself, because David did not go up into heaven {as Jesus did}. Besides that, David himself said this about the Messiah:

‘The Lord God said to my Lord the Messiah, “I will honor you by giving you a position next to me ³⁵while I completely defeat your enemies.”’”

³⁶{Peter ended by saying,} “So I want every Israelite to know definitely that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed.”

³⁷When the people heard what Peter said, they knew they had done wrong. The people asked him and the other apostles, “Can you men tell us what God wants us to do?”

³⁸Peter answered them, “Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in what Jesus, the Messiah, has done for you, we will baptize you, showing that God has forgiven your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit. ³⁹You will receive the Holy Spirit because God has promised to give him to you and to your children and to all others whom the God we worship leads to have faith in Jesus. That includes all those who live far away from here.” ⁴⁰Peter said many more things and spoke strongly to them. He told them, “Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people {who have rejected Jesus}!”

⁴¹So the people who believed Peter's message received baptism. There were about 3,000 of them who joined the group of believers that day. ⁴²They continually obeyed what the apostles taught. They met many times together with the other believers, and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

⁴³Throughout Jerusalem people came to have a great awe for God, because the apostles were doing many kinds of miraculous deeds. ⁴⁴All of those who believed in Jesus met regularly together. They also kept sharing what they had with one another. ⁴⁵From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they owned. They did this so that they could give some of the money they made to other believers. They gave those believers as much as they needed. ⁴⁶Every day they kept gathering to worship together in the temple courtyard, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They ate together happily and with genuine affection. ⁴⁷As they did so, they kept praising God, and the other people who lived in Jerusalem greatly respected them. {As those things were happening,} every day the Lord Jesus saved more people and those people joined with the other believers.

Chapter 3

¹One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when people prayed there. ²There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the Beautiful Gate at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day so that he could ask those who were going into the temple area to give him some money.

³As Peter and John were approaching that gate, he saw them and asked them to give him some money. ⁴When they heard the man speak to them, Peter and John looked directly at him, and Peter said to him, "Look at us!" ⁵So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them. ⁶Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but I will do what I can do for you. I heal you by the power of Jesus the Messiah, that man who came from the city of Nazareth. So get up and walk!" ⁷Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. The man realized immediately that his feet and ankles were going to be strong enough to support him. ⁸So the man jumped {the rest of the way} up {by himself} and started walking! He went into the temple area with Peter and John, leaping for joy and praising God as he walked!

⁹All the people who were there saw him walking and heard him praising God. ¹⁰They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate that led into the temple area and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed that he could now walk. ¹¹The man would not let go of Peter and John. The three of them were in Solomon's Porch{, a covered walkway within the temple area}. As the amazing news of the man's healing spread through the crowd, more and more people came running over to see them.

¹²When Peter saw that a crowd was gathering around them, he said to the people, "You Israelites, it should not surprise you that this man can now walk. But you should not be looking at us as if we were so godly that we made him walk by our own power! ¹³{Let me tell you what has really happened.} God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We Israelites are descendants of those men, so the covenant includes us. God honored that covenant by sending Jesus to be the Messiah. {We told this man that the power of Jesus could heal him, and} God has now glorified Jesus by doing this miracle. But when Jesus was living among us, you turned him over to the Romans for trial. Pilate, the Roman governor, {knew that Jesus was innocent and} wanted to set him free. But you gathered in front of Pilate and shouted that he should not release him. ¹⁴Rather than have Pilate release Jesus to you, even though Jesus was the Messiah, you rejected him and asked Pilate to set free a killer instead! ¹⁵So you are responsible for the death of Jesus, the one who gives people life. But God brought him back to life after he died. We can testify that we saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. ¹⁶You recognize this man whom you see standing here. {He is the man who used to beg for alms at the Beautiful Gate.} He is now strong enough to stand on his own because he believed in what Jesus could do. Yes, it is because he trusted in Jesus that he is now completely healthy. All of you saw this happen.

¹⁷“Now, my countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. ¹⁸God said through the prophets ahead of time that the Messiah he would send would suffer and die. And now, by what has happened, he has fulfilled what the prophets said. ¹⁹So stop living sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him. Then God will completely forgive you for sinning against him. ²⁰If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will send back to earth the Messiah whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. ²¹Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God causes all that he created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. ²²For example, {the prophet} Moses said this {about the Messiah}: ‘The Lord our God will make one of you Israelites a prophet like me. You must do everything he tells you to do. ²³Those who do not do what that prophet tells them will no longer belong to God’s people. God will destroy them.’” ²⁴{Peter continued,} “In fact, all the prophets have told about what would happen during the times we are now living in. Those prophets include Samuel and the ones who lived after him, who all spoke about these events before they happened. ²⁵What the prophets said long ago applies to you today. And the solemn agreement that God made to bless our ancestors also extends to you, their descendants. He said to Abraham {about the Messiah}, ‘I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.’” ²⁶So when God sent Jesus to the earth as the Messiah, he had him come to you Israelites first. God intended for the Messiah to bless you by getting you to stop doing things that were wrong.”

Chapter 4

¹While Peter and John were still speaking to the people, several men walked up and confronted them. They included priests who served in the temple, the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. ²These men were very angry because the two apostles were teaching the people. They were telling the people that what God did for Jesus shows that God causes people to live again after they die. ³So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. They did this because it was already evening and the Jewish council would have to wait until the next day to question them. ⁴However, many people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about five thousand.

⁵The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council. They all assembled in one place in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas, the former high priest, was there. Caiaphas, the new high priest, was also there. And so were John and Alexander and other men who were related to the high priest. ⁷They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, “Who gave you the right or the ability to do this?”

⁸As the Holy Spirit gave him power, Peter said to them in response, “You fellow Israelites who rule us and all of you elders, listen to me! ⁹Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk. You want to know how he became able to walk. ¹⁰So we want this whole council and all the other Israelites to know what has happened. This man is able to stand before you because Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, healed him. You were responsible for the Romans executing Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But God brought Jesus back to life after they executed him.

¹¹Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth is the one of whom the Scriptures say,

‘The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building.’

And you are those builders{, because you rejected Jesus}. ¹²{So you should no longer reject him, because} only Jesus can save us. For God has given us no other person in the world who can save us {from the guilt of our sins}!”

¹³The Jewish leaders recognized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also realized that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had

spent time with Jesus. ¹⁴They also saw the man who had become able to walk again standing there with Peter and John. So they were not able to say anything to contradict them.

¹⁵The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and this man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other {about Peter and John}. ¹⁶They said, "There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! The news of the amazing miracle that they have done has spread widely in Jerusalem. So we cannot tell people that it did not happen! ¹⁷However, we must not allow any more people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man." ¹⁸So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring the two apostles into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they were completely forbidden to speak or teach about Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John told them in response, "In order to obey your command, we would have to disobey God{, who commanded us to tell everyone about Jesus}. We will let you decide whether you think God would want us to obey you instead of him. ²⁰But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about what we saw Jesus do and what we heard him teach."

²¹Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them. But then they let them go without punishing them. The leaders knew that throughout Jerusalem people were praising God for what had happened {to the man who could not walk, and they did not want to upset the people}. ²²The people were praising God because {this was a remarkable miracle}. The man whom Peter and John had healed by doing this miracle was over forty years old, {and he had never before walked in his life}.

²³After Peter and John left the council, they met with the others who believed in Jesus and told them everything that the people on the ruling council had said to them. ²⁴When the others who believed in Jesus heard this, they prayed together aloud to God, "O Lord! You made the sky, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. ²⁵Your Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

'Why did the people groups of the world become angry
and why did they plan uselessly {against God}?

²⁶The kings in the world prepared to fight,
and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.'

²⁷What David said is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with people who were Israelites and people who were not, joined together in this city of Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. They opposed him even though he had done nothing wrong and even though you, God, had sent him as the Messiah. ²⁸{But when they opposed Jesus,} they did no more than you allowed because it was what you had decided long ago would happen. ²⁹So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus without being afraid at all! ³⁰Use your power to do great healings and many other miraculous deeds that will show the authority you have given to Jesus, your chosen Messiah!"

³¹When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting started to shake. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to tell people about Jesus as God had commanded, and they did that with great courage.

³²Those in the group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they believed and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he was the sole owner of anything. Instead, they shared what they had with one another. ³³The apostles continued to preach powerfully that God had caused the Lord Jesus to live again after he died. And God was helping all the believers very much. ³⁴Here is one way God was helping them. No one among the believers was lacking anything. This was because other believers who owned fields or houses would sell some of their property to help them. They would bring the proceeds from the sale

³⁵and they would give it to the apostles. Then the apostles would give out the money to the believers who needed it. ³⁶Now there was a man named Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Levi and who came from the island of Cyprus. The apostles called him Barnabas. In the language of the Jews, that name means a person who always encourages others. ³⁷Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him and he brought the money to the apostles {for them to give to other believers}.

Chapter 5

¹Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias. He was married, and his wife's name was Sapphira. They also sold some land. ²He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land. His wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the apostles.

³Then Peter said, "Ananias, you have allowed Satan to control you so completely that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. You kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. {You did not give us all of it.}

⁴Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So you should never have thought about doing such a wicked thing. You were not just trying to deceive people! No, you were trying to deceive God himself!" ⁵When Ananias heard the things Peter told him, he immediately fell down dead. And everyone who learned {about Ananias' death} felt a great awe for God. ⁶When Ananias died, some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

⁷About three hours later, his wife came in. But she did not know that Peter confronted her husband about the lie they had told and that her husband had died as a result. ⁸Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." ⁹So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing when you agreed to try to deceive the Holy Spirit! This is what will happen to you as a result. {God struck your husband dead as a punishment and} some young men are just coming back from burying him. God is also going to strike you dead, and they will take your body out and bury it as well." ¹⁰Immediately Sapphira fell down dead right in front of Peter. Just then the young men came back in. When they saw that she had also died, they carried her body out and buried it next to her husband's body.

¹¹All the believers in Jerusalem felt a great awe for God because of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Everyone else who heard about these things also felt great awe for God.

¹²God was enabling the apostles to do many amazing miracles {that showed the truth of what they were preaching} among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch. ¹³All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to meet with the believers. However, those people continued to speak very highly of them. ¹⁴Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. ¹⁵Because the apostles were doing such amazing miracles, people started bringing those who had various diseases right into the streets and placing them on stretchers and mattresses there. They were hoping that when Peter walked by his shadow might touch some of them, because if even that happened, God would heal them. ¹⁶Large crowds of people were also coming to the apostles from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing those who had various diseases and those whom evil spirits were tormenting, and God healed all of them.

¹⁷However, the high priest became very resentful {that such large crowds were coming to the apostles}. Many priests who were members of the Sadducee group were also very resentful of them. They joined together with the high priest to work against the apostles. ¹⁸So they commanded the temple guards to arrest the apostles and to put them in the public jail. ¹⁹{The high priest and his allies kept the apostles in jail overnight so that they could question them in the morning.} But that night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and led the apostles outside. Then the angel told them, ²⁰"Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people about the eternal life that Jesus can give them. Do not leave anything out, even though the Sanhedrin has commanded you not to say certain things." ²¹So when the apostles heard what the angel said, they went to the temple

courtyard and began to teach the people once more about Jesus. By then it was about dawn. Around that same time, the high priest and the other priests who were working with him gathered together in the Jewish council chamber. From there they summoned the other council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. Once the whole council was present, they sent guards to the jail to get the apostles. ²²But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that the apostles were not there. So they returned to the council and told the members, ²³"We saw that the jail doors were very safely locked and that the guards were keeping watch in front of the doors. But when we opened the doors {and went in to get those men}, none of them were inside the jail." ²⁴When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard that, they were greatly confused. They wondered what the consequences would be.

²⁵Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! The men you put in jail have somehow gotten into the temple courtyard. And they are telling the people there about Jesus!" ²⁶So the officer in charge of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers. They brought the apostles back {to the council room}. But they did not treat them roughly. They were afraid that if they did that, the people would try to kill them by throwing stones at them.

²⁷After the captain and his officers had brought the apostles to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members. Then the high priest questioned them intensely. ²⁸He said to them, "We ordered you very clearly not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty for that man's death!" ²⁹But Peter, speaking for himself and the other apostles, replied, "We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do!" ³⁰You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to live again after he died. ³¹God has honored Jesus more than he has honored anyone else. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has enabled us Israelites to stop sinning and he has forgiven us for the sins we committed. ³²We tell people about these things that we saw happen to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true." ³³When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they became so angry {with the apostles} that they wanted to kill them.

³⁴But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught the Jewish laws, and the Jewish people respected him highly. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the apostles out of the room for a short time. ³⁵{After the guards had taken the apostles out,} he said to the other council members, "You leaders of the people of Israel, you must think carefully about what you are going to do to these men. ³⁶Some years ago a man named Theudas led a revolt against the government. He claimed that he was a great man, and about four hundred men joined him. But the Romans captured and executed him, and all those who had joined him went back to where they came from. So this revolt did not succeed. ³⁷After that, during the time when the Romans were recording the names of people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled. He convinced some people to rebel with him. But he too died, and all those who had joined him went off in different directions. ³⁸Based on these examples, let me offer some advice. Do not kill these men! Set them free! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. ³⁹But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them. You may even discover that you are working against God!" The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said. ⁴⁰They told the temple guards to bring the apostles and beat them. {So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them.} Then the council members commanded the apostles not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they let them go.

⁴¹So the apostles left the council chamber. As they did, they even rejoiced that God had honored them by allowing people to treat them badly because they were testifying to Jesus. ⁴²Every day after that, the apostles went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

Chapter 6

¹During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The non-native Jews began to complain about the native-born Israelites because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

²So, after the twelve apostles had heard what they were saying, they summoned all the other believers in Jerusalem to meet together. Then the apostles said to them, "We would not be doing right if we stopped preaching and teaching God's message in order to distribute food to people!" ³So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know that the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. ⁴As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to preach and teach the message about Jesus."

⁵What the apostles recommended pleased all of the other believers. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas had accepted the Jewish religion before he had believed in Jesus. ⁶The believers brought these seven men to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed for those men and placed their hands on the heads of each one of them to cause them to do that work.

⁷So the believers continued to tell many people the message from God. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were many Jewish priests who were obeying the message about how they should trust in Jesus.

⁸God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people that showed that the message about Jesus was true. ⁹However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews from a group that regularly met together in a synagogue that was called the Freedmen's Synagogue, and also people from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

¹¹So they secretly persuaded some men to falsely accuse Stephen. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." ¹²So they made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. Then they all seized Stephen and took him to the Jewish council. ¹³They also brought in some men and paid them money so they would give false testimony. They said, "This fellow keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. ¹⁴What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy this temple and will tell us to obey different customs than Moses taught our ancestors."

¹⁵All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

¹Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" ²Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please listen to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. ³God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living, and go into the land which I will direct you to.' ⁴So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land in which you and I are now living.

⁵At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that he would later give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

⁶Later God told Abraham, 'Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years, and during that time their leaders will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves.

⁷But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves,' said God. 'After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.'

⁸Then God commanded that every male in Abraham's household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham's son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac's son, Jacob, was born. Jacob was the father of the twelve men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

⁹You know that Jacob's older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God helped Joseph. ¹⁰He protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh's property.

¹¹While Joseph was doing that work, there was a time when there was very little food in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan also could not find enough food. ¹²When Jacob heard people report that there was grain that people could buy in Egypt, he sent Joseph's older brothers to go there to buy grain. They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home. ¹³When Joseph's brothers went to Egypt the second time, they again bought grain from Joseph. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh learned that Joseph's people were Hebrews and that those men who had come from Canaan were his brothers. ¹⁴Then after Joseph sent his brothers back home, they told their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob's family consisted of seventy-five people. ¹⁵So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. Later on, Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there. ¹⁶Their bodies were brought back to our land and were buried in the tomb that Abraham had bought from Hamor's sons in the city of Shechem.

¹⁷Our ancestors had become very numerous when it was almost time for God to rescue them from Egypt, as he had promised Abraham that he would do. ¹⁸Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt long before his own time. ¹⁹That king tried to get rid of our ancestors in cruel ways. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to throw their newborn babies outside their homes so that they would die.

²⁰During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. So his parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. ²¹Then they had to put him outside the house, but Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as though he were her own son. ²²Moses was taught all the learning that the people in Egypt knew, and when he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

²³One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided that he would go and visit his relatives, the Israelites. ²⁴He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man, and he avenged the Israelite man by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses thought that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. ²⁶The next day, Moses saw two Israelite men fighting each other. He tried to make them stop fighting by saying to them, 'Men, you two are fellow Israelites! You must stop hurting each other!' ²⁷But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away and said to him, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge over us! ²⁸You probably want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday!' ²⁹When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to Midian land. He lived there for some years. He got married, and he and his wife had two sons.

³⁰One day forty years later, the Lord God appeared as an angel to Moses. He appeared in the flame of a bush that was burning in the desert near Mount Sinai. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed because the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, ³²'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worship.' Moses was so afraid that he began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. ³³Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. ³⁴I have certainly

seen how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I have come down to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

³⁵This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people, but whom they rejected by saying, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He is the one whom an angel in the bush commanded to do that. ³⁶Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt in order to show that God was with him, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. ³⁷This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' ³⁸It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness; he was with the angel who had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. It is Moses to whom God had the angel on Mount Sinai give him our laws, and he was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one who received from God words that tell us how to live eternally and passed them on to us.

³⁹However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰So they told his older brother Aaron, 'Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!' ⁴¹So they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol, and they sang and danced because of what they themselves had made. ⁴²So God stopped correcting them. He abandoned them to worship the sun, moon and stars in the sky. This agrees with the words that one of the prophets wrote:

God said, 'You Israelite people, when you repeatedly killed animals and offered them as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness, you certainly were not truly offering them to me! ⁴³On the contrary, you carried with you from place to place the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even farther than Babylon country.'

⁴⁴"While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. ⁴⁵Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time that they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. ⁴⁶David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a house where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. ⁴⁷But instead, God told David's son Solomon to build a house where people could worship him."

⁴⁸"However, we know that God is greater than everything, and he does not live in houses that people have made. It is like the prophet Isaiah wrote:

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰God said, "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. I myself have made everything both in heaven and on the earth. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!"

⁵¹"You people are extremely stubborn toward him! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! ⁵²Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Messiah would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Messiah has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him! ⁵³You are the people who have received God's laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!"

⁵⁴When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

⁵⁵But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see heaven open, and I see the Son of Man in human form standing where God rules!"

⁵⁷When the Jewish council members and others heard that, they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him, and immediately, they all rushed at him. ⁵⁸They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily, and they put their clothes on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul, so that he could guard them. ⁵⁹While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

⁶⁰Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

Chapter 8

¹⁻²Then some men who revered God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned greatly and loudly for him.

On that same day people started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. The apostles remained in Jerusalem.

³While they were killing Stephen, Saul was there approving that they should kill Stephen. So Saul also began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered houses one by one, he dragged away men and women who believed in Jesus, and then he put them into prison.

⁴The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus. ⁵One of those believers, whose name was Philip, went down from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Messiah. ⁶Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to his words. ⁷For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who were paralyzed and many others who were lame were healed. ⁸So, many people in that city greatly rejoiced.

⁹There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" ¹⁰All the people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "This man is the Great Power of God." ¹¹They continued to listen to him carefully because, for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. ¹²But then they believed Philip's message of the good news about when God would show himself as king and about Jesus the Messiah. The men and the women who believed in Jesus were baptized. ¹³Simon himself believed Philip's message and was baptized. He began to constantly accompany Philip, and he was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing, things that showed Philip was speaking the truth.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶For it was clear that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Simon saw that the Spirit was given to people as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles, ¹⁹saying, "Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that everyone on whom I place my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God's gift with money! ²¹You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because your heart is not right with God! ²²So stop thinking wickedly like that, and plead that the Lord, if he is

willing, will forgive you for what you wickedly thought in your heart to do! ²³Turn away from your evil ways, because I perceive that you are extremely envious of us, and you are a slave of your continual desire to do evil!"

²⁴Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!"

²⁵After Peter and John told people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus and declared to them the message of the Lord, they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way they preached the good word about Jesus to people in the district of Samaria.

²⁶One day an angel, whom the Lord God had sent, commanded Philip, "Get ready and go south along the road that extends from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza." That was a road in a desert area. ²⁷So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. The man was an important official who took care of all the funds for the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen Candace. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God, ²⁸and he was returning home and was seated, riding in his chariot. As he was riding, he was reading aloud in the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹God's Spirit told Philip, "Go near to that chariot and keep walking close to it!" ³⁰So Philip ran to the chariot and heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹He answered Philip, "No! I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me!" Then the man said to Philip, "Please come up and sit beside me." ³²The part of the Scriptures that the official was reading was this: "He is as calm as a sheep that people lead to the place where they are going to kill it, or as a lamb stands in silence while its wool is being cut off.

³³He will be humiliated. He will not receive justice for justice will be taken away from him. No one will be able to tell about his descendants—for he will have no descendants—because they will take away his life on this earth."

³⁴The official asked Philip concerning these words that he was reading, "Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵So Philip replied to him; he began with that scripture passage, and he told him the good message about Jesus.

³⁶While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, "Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me, because I do not know of anything that would prevent me from being baptized." ³⁷^[1] [Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized." The Ethiopian answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] ³⁸So the official told the driver to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. But although he never saw Philip again, the official continued going along the road, very happy.

⁴⁰Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the message about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. And he was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

8:37 ^[1]

Chapter 9

¹Meanwhile, Saul angrily continued to threaten to kill those who followed the Lord. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem ²and requested him to write letters introducing Saul to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in Damascus. The letters asked them to give Saul power to seize any man or woman who followed the way that Jesus had taught, and to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them.

³While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. ⁴Immediately he fell down to the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you trying to hurt me?" ⁵Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus,

whom you are hurting. ⁶Now stand up and go into the city! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do.”

⁷The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. They heard the Lord speak, but they did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a follower of Jesus named Ananias. The Lord Jesus made him see a vision and said to him, “Ananias!” He replied, “Lord, I am listening.” ¹¹The Lord Jesus told him, “Go to Straight Street to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul of Tarsus, because he is praying to me at this moment. ¹²Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him in order that he might see again.” ¹³Ananias answered, “But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many evil things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you! ¹⁴The chief priests have given him power to come here to Damascus in order to arrest all those who believe in you!” ¹⁵But the Lord Jesus told Ananias, “Go to Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me in order that he might speak about me to non-Jewish people and their kings and to the Israelite people. ¹⁶I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me.” ¹⁷So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. He is the same one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you in order that you might see again and that you might be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Instantly, things like fish scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he stood up and was baptized. ¹⁹After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

²⁰Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told them that Jesus is the Son of God.

²¹All the people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, “We can hardly believe that this is the same man who pursued the believers in Jerusalem and who has come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!” ²²But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. So the Jewish leaders in Damascus could not think how to disprove what he said.

²³Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. ²⁴During each day and night, those Jews were continually watching the people passing through the city gates in order that, when they saw Saul, they might kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. ²⁵So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

²⁶When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with other believers. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him because they did not believe that he had become a believer. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen the Lord Jesus and how the Lord had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. ²⁸So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem, and he spoke boldly to people about the Lord Jesus.

²⁹Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. But they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. ³⁰When the other believers heard that the Jews were planning to kill him, some of them took Saul down to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship going to Tarsus, his hometown.

³¹So the groups of believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria lived peacefully because no one was persecuting them anymore. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were continuing to honor the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was enabling many other people to become believers.

³²While Peter was traveling throughout those regions, once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years because he was paralyzed. ³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah heals you! Get up and roll up your mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. ³⁵Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on Sharon Plain saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

³⁶In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. ³⁷During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body according to the Jewish custom. Then they covered her body with cloth and placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

³⁸Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!" ³⁹Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where Dorcas' body was lying. All the widows there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. ⁴⁰But Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. ⁴²Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle and, as a result, many people believed in the Lord Jesus. ⁴³Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon, who made leather from animal skins.

Chapter 10

¹There was a man whose name was Cornelius who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was an officer who commanded 100 men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. ²He always tried to do what would please God; he and his entire household were non-Jews who habitually worshiped God. He sometimes gave money to help poor Jewish people, and he prayed to God regularly.

³One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" ⁴Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel, who was sent from God, answered him, "You have pleased God because you have been praying regularly to him and you often give money to help poor people. Those things have been like a memorial offering to God. ⁵So now command some men to go to Joppa and tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. ⁶He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." ⁷When the angel who spoke to Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. ⁸He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to city of Joppa to ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

⁹About noon the next day, those three men were traveling along the road and were coming near Joppa. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, Peter saw a vision. ¹¹He saw the sky open and something like a large sheet descending, being lowered to the ground, with its four corners raised up. ¹²Inside the sheet were all kinds of creatures. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. ¹³Then he heard God say to him, "Peter, stand up, kill some of these and eat them!" ¹⁴But Peter replied, "Lord, surely you do not really want me to do that, since I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or something that we must not eat!" ¹⁵Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, "I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do

not say that it is not acceptable to eat!" ¹⁶This happened three times. Immediately after that, the sheet with the animals and birds was then pulled back into the sky.

¹⁷While Peter was trying to understand what that vision meant, the men who had been sent by Cornelius arrived. They asked people how to get to Simon's house. So they found his house and were standing outside the gate.

¹⁸They called and asked if a man named Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, God's Spirit said to him, "Listen! Three men are here who want to see you. ²⁰So get up and go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!" ²¹So Peter went down to the men and said to them, "Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?" ²²They replied, "Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God, and all of the Jewish people who know about him say that he is a very good man. An angel said to him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa to see Simon Peter and bring him here so that you can hear what he has to say.'" ²³So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. ²⁴The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. ²⁵When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. ²⁶But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, "Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!"

²⁷While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter and the others entered the house and saw that many people had gathered together there. ²⁸Then Peter said to them, "You all know that any of us Jews think we are disobeying our Jewish laws if we associate with those who are descendants of non-Jewish parents or if we even visit in their homes. However, God has shown me in a vision that I should not say anyone is so defiled and unclean that God would not accept him. ²⁹So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

³⁰Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago, I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. ³²So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon, whose other name is Peter, to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' ³³So I immediately sent some men who asked you to come here, and I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us, in order to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

³⁴So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. ³⁵Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. ³⁶You know the message that God sent to us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that he would cause people to have peace with him because of what Jesus the Messiah has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. ³⁷You know what he did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He began to do those things after John had been proclaiming to people that they should turn away from their sinful behavior before he baptized them. ³⁸You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, always doing good deeds and healing people. He was healing all the people whom the devil was causing to suffer. Jesus was able to do those things because God was always helping him."

³⁹"We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the country of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. ⁴⁰Then God raised him back to life on the third day after he died, and he made sure that many people would see him alive after he was brought back to life. People were sure it was him who had died, and now they saw with their own eyes, and were fully convinced, that he was alive again. ⁴¹At that time God did not let everyone see him, only those he selected to spend time with him and to eat a meal together in those first days just after God raised him back to life. ⁴²God commanded us to preach to the people

and he told us to tell them that he appointed Jesus to be the judge of everyone one day, a day that is sure to come. He will judge all those who will still be living and all those who have died before that time. ⁴³All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God could forgive whatever sins they have done, because of what this man, Jesus, had done for them."

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking those words, suddenly the Holy Spirit came down on all those people from other nations who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had generously given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations too. ⁴⁶The Jewish believers knew that God had done that because they were hearing those people speaking languages that they had not learned and telling how great God is. Then Peter said ⁴⁷to the other Jewish believers who were there, "God has given them the Holy Spirit just like he gave him to us Jewish believers, so surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!" ⁴⁸Then Peter told those non-Jewish people that they should be baptized as believers in Jesus the Messiah. So they baptized all of them. After they were baptized, they requested that Peter stay with them several days. So Peter and the other Jewish believers did that.

Chapter 11

¹The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard people say that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. ²But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who wanted all followers of the Messiah to be circumcized. When Peter returned from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. ³They said to him, "Not only was it wrong for you to visit in the homes of uncircumcized non-Jews, you even ate with them!"

⁴So Peter began to explain exactly what had happened. ⁵He said, "I was praying by myself in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw that something like a large sheet was being lowered from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶As I was looking intently into it, I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ⁷Then I heard God commanding me, 'Peter, get up, kill and eat them!' ⁸But I replied, 'Lord, you surely do not really want me to do that, because I have never eaten anything that our laws say that we must not eat!' ⁹God spoke from heaven to me a second time, 'I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.' ¹⁰This same thing happened two more times, and then the sheet with all those animals and birds was pulled up into heaven again.

¹¹At that exact moment, three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. ¹²God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers also went with me to Caesarea, and then we went into that non-Jewish man's house. ¹³He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how you and everyone else in your house will be saved.' ¹⁵As I started to speak, the Holy Spirit suddenly came down on them, just like he had first come on us during the Pentecost festival. ¹⁶Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit that he had given to us after we had believed in the Lord Jesus the Messiah. So I could not possibly tell God that he did wrong when he gave them the Holy Spirit!"

¹⁸After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God, saying, "Then it is clear to us that God has also accepted the non-Jews so that they will have eternal life, if they turn from their sinful behavior."

¹⁹After Stephen died, many of the believers left Jerusalem and went to other places because they were suffering there in Jerusalem. Some of them went to Phoenicia, some went to the Island of Cyprus, and others went to Antioch, a city in Syria. In those places they were continually telling people the message about Jesus, but they told only other Jewish people. ²⁰Some of the believers were men from the Island of Cyprus and Cyrene city in north Africa. They went to Antioch and were also telling non-Jewish people about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lord God was

powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in the Lord.

²²The group of believers in Jerusalem heard people say that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he got there, he realized that God had acted kindly toward the believers. So he was very happy, and he was encouraging all of the believers to continue to trust completely in the Lord Jesus. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled, one who trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many people there believed in the Lord Jesus.

²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus city in Cilicia to look for Saul. ²⁶After he found him, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers. So, during a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there and taught large numbers of people about Jesus. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁷During the time that Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch, some believers who were prophets arrived there from Jerusalem. ²⁸One of them, whose name was Agabus, stood up in order to speak. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a famine in many countries. (This famine happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.) ²⁹When the believers there heard what Agabus said, they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give.

³⁰They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

Chapter 12

¹It was about this time that King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. The king did that because he wanted to make the believers suffer. ²He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John, so the soldier did that. ³When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast. ⁴After they arrested Peter, they put him in prison. They commanded four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. He then planned to execute Peter.

⁵So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were praying earnestly to God that he would help Peter. ⁶The night before Herod planned to bring Peter out from prison to have him executed publicly, Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers, with two chains binding him. Two other soldiers were guarding the prison doors. ⁷Suddenly, an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter, and a bright light shone in his cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up and said, "Get up quickly!" While Peter was getting up, the chains fell off from his wrists. However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening. ⁸Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and put on your sandals!" So Peter did that. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!" ⁹So Peter put on his cloak and sandals and followed the angel out of the prison cell, but he had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming. ¹⁰Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate opened by itself, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared. ¹¹Then Peter finally realized that what had happened to him was not a vision, but that it had really happened. So he thought, "Now I really know that the Lord God sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and also from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

¹²When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John, whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow. ¹³When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl named Rhoda came to find out who was outside the door. ¹⁴When Peter answered her, she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she did not open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She announced to the other believers that Peter was

standing outside the door. ¹⁵But one of them said to her, "You are crazy!" But she continued saying that it was really true. They kept saying, "No, it cannot be Peter. It is probably his angel." ¹⁶But Peter continued knocking on the door. So when someone finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they were completely amazed! ¹⁷Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had led him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

¹⁸The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter became terribly upset because they did not know what had happened to him. ¹⁹Then Herod heard about it. So he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then he questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter and commanded them to be led away to be executed. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea down to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

²⁰King Herod had been furiously angry with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Then one day some men who represented them came together to the city of Caesarea in order to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that the people in their cities wanted to make peace with him. They wanted to be able to trade with the people that Herod ruled, because they needed to buy food from those regions. ²¹On the day that Herod had planned to meet with them, he put on very expensive clothes that showed that he was king. Then he sat on his throne and formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. ²²Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "This man who is speaking is a god, not a man!" ²³Herod let the people praise him instead of praising God. So, immediately, an angel from the Lord God caused Herod to become seriously ill. Many worms ate his intestines. Soon he died very painfully.

²⁴The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

²⁵When Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea, they left Jerusalem and returned to the city of Antioch, in the province of Syria. They took John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

Chapter 13

¹Among the group of believers in Antioch in the province of Syria there were prophets and those who taught people about Jesus. They were: Barnabas; Simeon, who was also called Niger; Lucius, who was from Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with King Herod Antipas; and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Choose Barnabas and Saul to serve me and to go and do the work that I have chosen them to do!" ³So they continued to fast and pray. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul and prayed that God would help them. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

⁴The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went down from Antioch to the city of Seleucia by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the Island of Cyprus. ⁵While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message from God about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

⁶The three of them went across the entire island to the city of Paphos. There they met a magician whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. ⁷He was with the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸However, the magician, whose name is translated Elymas in the Greek language, tried to stop them. He repeatedly tried to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. ⁹Saul now called himself Paul. The Holy Spirit caused Paul to look intently at the magician. Paul said, ¹⁰"You are serving the devil, and you try to stop everything that is good! You are always lying to people and doing other evil things to them. You must stop saying that the truth about the Lord God is false! ¹¹Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You

will become blind and you will not be able to see the sun for a while." At once he became blind, as though he were in a dark mist, and he groped about, searching for someone to hold him by the hand and lead him. ¹²When the governor saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. He was amazed by what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about the Lord Jesus.

¹³After that, Paul and the men with him went by ship from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At Perga, John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. ¹⁴Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia in the province of Galatia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

¹⁶So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand so that the people would listen to him. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! ¹⁷God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people, and he caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things in order to lead them out of slavery. ¹⁸Even though they repeatedly disobeyed him, he endured their behavior for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. ¹⁹He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan, and he gave their land to the Israelites to possess forever. ²⁰All of these things happened about 450 years after their ancestors had gone to Egypt."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. Those leaders continued to rule our people, and the prophet Samuel was the last judge to rule them. ²¹Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for 40 years. ²²After God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, 'I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.'"

²³"From among David's descendants, God brought one of them, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us, just as he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. ²⁴Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. ²⁵When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he was saying, 'Do you think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send? No, I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I am not even important enough to take the sandals off of his feet.'"

²⁶"Dear brothers, and all you who are descendants of Abraham, and you non-Jewish people among you who also worship God, please listen! It is to all of us that God has sent the message about how he saves people. ²⁷The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They did not understand the messages of their own prophets even though they heard the prophets read aloud to them every Sabbath. What the prophets predicted long ago was made true when they condemned Jesus to death. ²⁸Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things, but even though they could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die, they asked Pilate, the governor, to condemn Jesus to death. ²⁹They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets long ago had written that the people would do to him. They killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. Then his body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. ³⁰However, God raised him from the dead. ³¹For many days he repeatedly appeared to his followers who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

³²"Right now we are proclaiming to you this good message. We want to tell you that God has fulfilled what he promised to our Jewish ancestors! ³³Now he has done this for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. That is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm, when God was speaking about sending his Son:

'You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.'

³⁴God has raised the Messiah from the dead and will never let him die again. God said to our Jewish ancestors, 'I will surely help you, as I promised David that I would do.' ³⁵In another Psalm of David, he also says about the Messiah: 'You will not allow the body of your holy one to decay.' ³⁶While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. And when he died, his body was buried, as his ancestors' bodies had been buried, and his body decayed. So he could not have been speaking about himself in this Psalm. ³⁷But Jesus was the one God raised from the dead, and his body did not decay."

³⁸"Therefore, my fellow Israelites and other friends, it is important for you to know that God can forgive you for your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. He will even forgive you for those things that you could not be forgiven for by the laws that Moses wrote. ³⁹All people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that displeased God. ⁴⁰So then be careful that God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! ⁴¹The prophet wrote that God said,

'You who ridicule me, you will certainly be astonished when you see what I am doing, and then you will be destroyed. You will be astonished because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even though someone told you!'"

⁴²After Paul finished speaking and were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and say these things to them again. ⁴³When the meeting was over, many of them began to follow Paul and Barnabas. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them. They were urging them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people's sins because of what Jesus did.

⁴⁴On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁵But the leaders of the Jews became extremely jealous when they saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying and also to insult him. ⁴⁶Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, "We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God's message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of eternal life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God. ⁴⁷We are doing this also because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. He said in the Scriptures,

'I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.'"

⁴⁸When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they began to rejoice, and they gave God praise for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for eternal life believed the message about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁹At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

⁵⁰However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them. They also talked to the most important men in the city. The Jewish leaders persuaded the non-Jewish city leaders to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many citizens against Paul and Barnabas, and they drove them out of their region. ⁵¹As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust from their feet to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium.

⁵²Meanwhile, the joy and power of the Holy Spirit continued to fill the believers.

Chapter 14

¹At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place and spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, many Jews and also non-Jews believed in Jesus. ²But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They told the non-Jews not to believe it; they made some of the non-Jews angry toward the believers there. ³But Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly for the Lord, and the Lord Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way he showed people the truth of the message that, even though we do not deserve it, the Lord saves us.

⁴The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with the apostles. ⁵Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. ⁶But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan, so they quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. ⁷While they were in that area, they continually told the people the message about the Lord Jesus.

⁸In Lystra, a man was sitting there who was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he was never able to walk. ⁹He listened as Paul was speaking about the Lord Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that the Lord Jesus could make him well. ¹⁰So with a loud voice, Paul called out to him, "Stand up!" When the man heard that, he immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they thought that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves to look like people and have come down from the sky to help us!" ¹²They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They had that thought because Paul was the one who had been speaking. ¹³People worshiped Zeus at a temple just outside the gates of the city. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought two bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. ¹⁴But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about that, they were very upset, so they tore their own clothes. They rushed among the people, shouting, ¹⁵"Men, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are just human beings with the same feelings as you! We have come to tell you some good news! We have come to tell you about the God who is all-powerful. He wants you to stop worshiping other gods because they cannot help you. This true God made the heavens, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past, all of you non-Jewish people worshiped whatever gods that you wanted to worship. God let you worship them because you did not know him. ¹⁷But he has shown us that he acts kindly toward us. He is the one who causes it to rain and causes crops to grow. He is the one who gives you plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸The people heard what Paul said, but they still thought that they should sacrifice those bulls to worship Paul and Barnabas. But finally, the people decided not to do it.

¹⁹However, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded many of the people of Lystra that the message Paul had been telling them was not true. The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul. They let the Jews throw stones at him until he fell down, unconscious. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. ²⁰But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. And Paul became conscious! He stood up and went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. ²¹They stayed there several days, and they kept telling the people the good message about Jesus. Many people became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium, and then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. ²²In each place, they urged the believers to keep

on trusting in the Lord Jesus. They told the believers, "We must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever." ²³Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before Paul and Barnabas left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then Paul and Barnabas entrusted the leaders and other believers to the Lord Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

²⁴After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia.

²⁵In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga and preached God's message about the Lord Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. ²⁶There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. That was the place where Paul and Barnabas had been chosen to go to other places and preach, and where the believers had asked God to help Paul and Barnabas in the work that they had now completed. ²⁷When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. ²⁸Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

Chapter 15

¹Then some Jewish believers went down from Judea province to Antioch. They started teaching the non-Jewish believers there, saying, "You must be circumcised to show that you belong to God, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, you will not be saved." ²Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with those Jews and started arguing with them. So the believers at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to go to Jerusalem, in order that they might discuss this matter with the apostles and other leaders.

³After Paul, Barnabas, and the others were sent on their way by the believers in Antioch, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they reported to the believers that many non-Jews had become believers. As a result, all the believers in those places rejoiced greatly.

⁴When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the apostles, other elders, and the other believers in the group there. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do among non-Jewish people.

⁵But some of the Jewish believers who belonged to the Pharisee sect stood up among the other believers and said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must be circumcised, and they must be told to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

⁶Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this matter. ⁷After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you other apostles, in order that I might tell the non-Jewish people also about God's love, and in order that they might believe in him. ⁸God knows the hearts of all people. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews to be his people by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just like he had also done for us. ⁹God made no distinction between us and them, because he made them clean inside simply as a result of their believing in the Lord Jesus. That is exactly how he has forgiven us. ¹⁰Why do you want to force the non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish rituals and laws? Doing that is like putting a heavy burden on them. It forces them to obey laws that even our ancestors broke and that we Jews today have never been able to keep! So then, stop making God angry by doing that! ¹¹We know that God saves us Jews from our sins because of what the Lord Jesus did for us. God saves us Jews exactly like he saves those non-Jews who believe in the Lord Jesus."

¹²All the people there became silent after Peter had spoken. Then they all listened to Barnabas and Paul. The two of them told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people. The miracles that showed that God had accepted the non-Jews.

¹³When Barnabas and Paul had finished speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simon Peter has told you how God previously blessed the non-

Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a people who would belong to himself. ¹⁵The words that God spoke long ago, words that were written by one of the prophets, agree with that:

¹⁶Later on I will return and I will restore the kingdom of David when I choose a king from the descendants of David. It will be like someone who builds a house again after it has been torn down. ¹⁷I will do this in order that all other people might try to know me, the Lord God. This will include even the non-Israelites whom I have called to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I the Lord God have spoken these words. ¹⁸I have done these things, and I have made my people know about them since long ago.”

¹⁹James continued to speak. He said, “Therefore I think that we should stop bothering the non-Jewish people who are turning away from their sins and turning to God. That is, we should stop demanding that they obey all our laws and rituals. ²⁰Instead, we should write a letter to them requiring only four things: They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols, they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married, they should not eat meat from animals that have been killed by being strangled, and they should not eat the blood of animals. ²¹In many cities for a very long time, people have been proclaiming the laws that Moses wrote, laws prohibiting those things. And every Sabbath those laws are read in the Jewish meeting places. So if the non-Jews want to know more about those laws, they can find out in our meeting houses.”

²²The apostles and the other elders, along with all the other believers in Jerusalem, accepted what James had said. Then they decided that they should choose men from among themselves and that they should send them, along with Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch, to let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas, who was also called Barsabbas, and Silas. These were both leaders among the believers at Jerusalem. ²³Then they wrote the following letter that they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch: “We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you as we write this to you non-Jewish believers who live in Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²⁴People have told us that some men from among us went to you, although we had not sent them to you. We heard that they have troubled you by telling you things that confused your thinking. ²⁵So after we met together here, we decided to choose some men and ask them to go to you, along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much. ²⁶Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus the Messiah. ²⁷We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing. ²⁸It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us that you should not be required to obey a lot of burdensome Jewish laws. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions:

²⁹You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat blood from animals, and you should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

Also, you should not sleep with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.”

³⁰The four men they selected went down from Jerusalem and came to Antioch. When all the believers there had assembled together, they gave the letter to them. ³¹When the believers there read the letter, they rejoiced because its message encouraged them. ³²Being prophets, Judas and Silas spoke a lot and encouraged the believers there and helped them to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus.

³³After Judas and Silas had stayed there for some time and were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well, and then they left. ³⁴^[1] [But Silas thought it would be best for him to stay there.]

³⁵However, Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in Antioch. While they were there, they, along with many others, were teaching people and preaching to them the message about the Lord Jesus.

³⁶After some time Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the fellow believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the message about the Lord Jesus. In that way, we will know how well they are continuing to believe in the Lord Jesus.” ³⁷Barnabas agreed with Paul, and said that he wanted to take John, whose other name

was Mark, along with them again. ³⁸However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought that it would not be good to take Mark with them, because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia, and had not continued to work with them. ³⁹Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about this matter, so they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark along with him. They got on a ship and went to the Island of Cyprus. ⁴⁰Paul chose Silas, who had returned to Antioch, to work with him. The believers there prayed to the Lord God, asking him to graciously help Paul and Silas. Then the two of them departed from Antioch. ⁴¹Paul continued traveling with Silas through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. In those places they were helping the groups of believers to trust strongly in the Lord Jesus.

15:34 ^[1]

Chapter 16

¹Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. And take note of this: a believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek.

²The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy, ³and Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he circumcised Timothy. He did that so that the Jews who lived in those places would accept Timothy, because they knew that his non-Jewish father had not circumcised him.

⁴So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they told the believers the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

⁵They helped the believers in those towns to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus, and every day more people became believers.

⁶Paul and his companions were stopped from speaking the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit, so they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. ⁷They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia, and they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus kept them from going there. ⁸So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas, a city by the sea. ⁹That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from the province of Macedonia. He was calling to Paul, saying, "Come to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰After he saw the vision, we left for Macedonia, because we believed that God had called us to proclaim the good news with the people there.

¹¹We got on a boat and sailed from Troas to Samothrace, and the next day went to the city of Neapolis. ¹²Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in Macedonia, where many Roman citizens lived. We stayed in Philippi for many days.

¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate down to the river. We had heard someone say that Jewish people gathered to pray there. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray, so we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. ¹⁴A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, sold purple cloth, and worshiped God. The Lord God caused her to pay attention to the message that Paul spoke, and she believed it. ¹⁵After Paul and Silas baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house, she said to them, "If you believe I have been faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay there." After she said this, we stayed at her house.

¹⁶Another day, while we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her power to tell the future about people. People paid money to the men who were her owners, in return for her telling them what would happen to them. ¹⁷This young woman followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you." ¹⁸She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became angry, so he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus the Messiah, come out of her!" Right away the evil spirit left her. ¹⁹And then her owners realized that she could no longer earn money for them because she could no longer predict what would happen to people, so they were angry. They grabbed Paul and

Silas and took them to the public square where the rulers of the city were. ²⁰The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers and told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. ²¹They are teaching that we should follow rules that our laws do not allow us Romans to obey!" ²²Many of the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas, and they started to beat them. Then the Roman rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and to beat them with rods. ²³So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. ²⁴Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There, he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood, so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

²⁵About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the jail. The earthquake caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened the prisoners to fall off. ²⁷The jailer woke up and saw that the doors of the jail were open by the earthquake. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners became free. ²⁸Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" ²⁹The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches so he could see who was still in the prison. He rushed in, shaking with fear, and fell down in front of Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail and asked: "Sirs, what do I need to do to be saved?" ³¹They answered, "Trust in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved."

³²Then Paul and Silas spoke about the Lord Jesus to him and everyone in his household. ³³Then the jailer washed their wounds, right at that time in the middle of the night. Then Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his household. ³⁴Then the jailer took Paul and Silas into his house and gave them food to eat. He and all in his household were all very happy because they had believed in God.

³⁵The next morning, the city rulers told some soldiers to go to the prison to say to the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" ³⁶When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now and go in peace!" ³⁷But Paul said to the jailer, "The city rulers told men to beat us in front of a crowd, even though we are Roman citizens, and put us in prison. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison." ³⁸So the soldiers went and told the city rulers what Paul had said. When the city rulers heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were afraid because they had done the wrong thing. ³⁹So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, and then the two apostles left the city of Philippi.

Chapter 17

¹They traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. ²On the sabbath Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each sabbath day. He spoke to the people about how the Scriptures said that Jesus would be the Messiah. ³He showed from the Scriptures that the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die and come alive again. He said, "This man Jesus is the Messiah. He died and became alive again, just like the prophets said he would." ⁴Some of the Jews there believed what Paul had said and began to meet with Paul and Silas. There were also many non-Jewish people and important women who worshiped God who also believed the message about Jesus, and they also began to meet with Paul and Silas.

⁵But some leaders of the Jews became angry because many people believed what Paul taught. So they went to the public square and persuaded some evil men to follow them. In this way, the leaders of the Jews gathered a crowd and caused them to make a lot of noise. Those Jews and others ran to the house of a man named Jason where Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people were. ⁶They

discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house, but they found Jason and grabbed him. They dragged him and some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They said, "The men who have caused trouble everywhere in the world have come here also, ⁷and this fellow Jason has asked them to stay at his house. They are acting against the emperor. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!" ⁸When the crowd of people that had gathered and the city rulers heard that, they became very angry and excited. ⁹The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine and told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble. Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

¹⁰So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. ¹¹Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God's message, but the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen, so they listened closely to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the Scriptures for themselves to find out if what Paul said about Jesus was true. ¹²Because of Paul's teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

¹³But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. ¹⁴Some of the believers in Berea took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. ¹⁵When Paul and the other men arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, "Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can." Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

¹⁶In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. ¹⁷So he went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews, and also with the Greeks who had accepted what the Jews believe. He also went to the public square every day and talked to the people whom he met there.

¹⁸Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. People called some of them Epicureans, and they called others Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, "He is saying something about some strange gods." They said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again.

¹⁹So they took him to the place where the city leaders met. When they arrived there, they said to Paul, "Please tell us, what is this new message that you are teaching people? ²⁰You are teaching some things that we do not understand, so we want to know what they mean." ²¹The people of Athens and also the people from other regions who lived there loved to talk about what was new to them.

²²Then Paul stood up in front of the people and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. ²³I say that because, while I was walking along I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar that had these words that someone had carved on it: THIS HONORS A GOD THAT WE DO NOT KNOW. So now I will tell you about that God whom you worship but you do not know.

²⁴He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth, and he does not live in temples that people have built. ²⁵He does not need to have anything made for him by people because he makes people live and breath, and he gives them everything they need.

²⁶In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. He put each people group in its place for its time. ²⁷He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. God wants us to look for him, although he is very close to each one of us. ²⁸It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, 'Because we are his children.'

²⁹Therefore, because we are God's children, we should not think that God is like gold, silver, or stone, made into something by man. ³⁰During the times when people did not know what God wanted them to do, he did not punish

them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to turn away from their evil deeds. ³¹He tells us that on a certain day that he has chosen he is going to judge all of us justly by the man he has chosen, making sure we understand this by raising this man from the dead.”

³²When the men heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. ³³After they said that, Paul walked away. ³⁴However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

Chapter 18

¹After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. ²There he met a Jew whose name was Aquila, who was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had come a short time previously from the city of Rome, in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered that all the Jews must leave Rome. Paul went to see Priscilla and Aquila. ³Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents, so he stayed with them, and they worked together. ⁴Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place, where he spoke to both Jews and non-Jews. He taught them about Jesus.

⁵When Silas and Timothy came from the region of Macedonia, Paul was strongly moved by the Spirit to tell the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶But the Jews began to turn against Paul and to say evil things about him. So he shook the dust from his clothes and he said to them, “If God punishes you, it is your responsibility, not mine! From now on I will talk to those who are not Jewish!” ⁷So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God.

⁸After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in the Lord. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family, they also believed in Jesus and were baptized.

⁹One night Paul had a vision in which the Lord Jesus said to him, “Do not be afraid of the people who are against you, but keep talking about me, ¹⁰because I will help you and no one will be able to hurt you here. Keep telling them about me, because there are many people in this city who belong to me.” ¹¹So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the people the message from God about Jesus.

¹²When Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia, the Jewish leaders got together and seized Paul. They took him before the governor and accused him, ¹³saying, “This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that go against our Jewish laws.” ¹⁴When Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, “If this man had broken our Roman laws, I would have listened to what you Jews want to tell me. ¹⁵However, you are talking about words and names and your own Jewish laws, so you yourselves must talk to him about this. I will not judge these things!” ¹⁶After Gallio had said that, he told some soldiers to take the Jewish leaders away from the court. ¹⁷Then the people grabbed the leader of the Jews, Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge’s seat. But Gallio did nothing about it.

¹⁸Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. ¹⁹They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and spoke to the Jews about Jesus. ²⁰They asked him to stay longer, but he did not agree to stay. ²¹But as he left, he told them, “I will come back, if God wants me to.” Then he got on a ship and sailed away from Ephesus.

²²When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went up to Jerusalem and greeted the believers there. Then he went to the city of Antioch in the region of Syria.

²³Paul spent some time with the believers there. Then he left Antioch and walked to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He urged the believers to believe more and more in the message from God about Jesus.

²⁴While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria and spoke very well about the Scriptures. ²⁵Other believers had taught Apollos how the Lord Jesus wanted people to live, and he enthusiastically taught those things to the people. However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus, because he only knew about the baptism of John the Baptizer. ²⁶Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place, and he told the people there about the things that he had learned. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home where they taught him more about Jesus.

²⁷When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he helped those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. ²⁸Apollos was talking very powerfully with the leaders of the Jews while many other people listened. By reading from the Scriptures, he was able to show them that Jesus was the Messiah.

Chapter 19

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul left Phrygia and Galatia and went through Asia, and he came back to Ephesus. He met some people who said that they were believers. ²He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God's message?" They answered, "No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "So when you were baptized, what did you know?" They replied, "We believed what John the Baptizer taught." ⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a sign that people were turning to God and away from their evil thoughts and deeds. He also told them to believe in someone else, one who is coming after him, and that person is Jesus."

⁵So when those men heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon each of them. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned, and they also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit told them. ⁷There were about twelve men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

⁸For three months after that, Paul entered the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and taught and persuaded people about Jesus and how God would show himself as king. ⁹But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. They said many bad things about what Paul was teaching. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet in the meeting place of Tyrannus. ¹⁰For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about the Lord Jesus.

¹¹God also gave Paul the power to do miracles. ¹²If those who were sick could not come to Paul, pieces of cloth that Paul touched would be taken and placed on the sick people. As a result, the sick people would become well, and the evil spirits would leave them.

¹³There were also some Jews who walked from town to town, and they commanded the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of those Jews told the evil spirits to come out of people by saying "I command you to come out by the power of the Lord Jesus, the man whom Paul teaches about!" ¹⁴There were seven men who were doing this. They were sons of a man named Sceva, a Jew, who called himself a chief priest. ¹⁵But one day as they were doing that, the evil spirit did not come out of that person. Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you power to do anything to me!" ¹⁶After saying that, suddenly the man who had the evil spirit jumped on the sons of Sceva. He knocked all of them down and hurt each of them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They became frightened and ran out of the house. ¹⁷All the people who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They became afraid because they saw that the man with the evil spirit was very strong. At the same time, they honored the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸At that time, while other believers were listening, many believers told about the evil things that they had been doing. ¹⁹Some of the people who were sorcerers took their scrolls that told how to work magic and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. When people added up how much the scrolls cost, it came to fifty thousand silver coins.

²⁰In this way, many people heard the message about the Lord Jesus and believed in him.

²¹After Paul completed his work in Ephesus, the Spirit led him to decide to go to Jerusalem, but first he planned to go see the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I will also go to Rome." ²²He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia. But Paul stayed in the city of Ephesus, in the province of Asia.

²³Soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him. ²⁴There was a man there whose name was Demetrius. He made statues of the goddess Artemis (who is also known as Diana) out of silver. Demetrius made a lot of money for all the men who made and sold these idols.

²⁵Demetrius called together the workmen who made the idols. He said to them, "Men, you know that we make a lot of money doing our work. ²⁶You know that Paul has taught many people who live in Ephesus to no longer buy the statues that we make. Now even the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we worship are not gods and that we should not worship them. ²⁷If people listen to him, they will stop our business. People will not think that they should come any longer to the temple of Artemis (also known as Diana) to worship her. People will no longer think that Artemis is great. Yet all the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" ²⁸All the men there became angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" ²⁹Many of the people in the city became angry at Paul and began shouting. Some of the people took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul. Then the whole crowd of people ran, dragging those men along with them, to the city theater. ³⁰Paul wanted to go into theater to talk to the people, but the other believers would not let him go there. ³¹Some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to tell Paul not to go into the theater.

³²The crowd of people in the theater kept shouting. Some shouted one thing, and some shouted something else. But most of them did not even know why they were meeting! ³³One of the Jews there was named Alexander. Some of the Jews pushed him to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Alexander put his hands up trying to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews did not cause the trouble. ³⁴But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew and knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis. So the non-Jews shouted for two hours, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, everyone in the world knows that the sacred image of our goddess Artemis fell down from heaven! ³⁶Everyone knows that, and no one can say that these things are not true. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything stupid. ³⁷You should not have brought these two men here, because they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. ³⁸Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. There are courts that they can go to if they want to, and there are judges who have been chosen by the government. You can accuse anyone there. ³⁹But if you want to ask about anything else, you should ask for your rulers to take care of it when those rulers come together. ⁴⁰This is not a good meeting! Take care of this trouble the right way because we do not want to go against the government. If the rulers asked me what you were all shouting about, I would not be able to give them a good answer." ⁴¹That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home, and they did go to their homes.

Chapter 20

¹After the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them “Goodbye” and left to go to the region of Macedonia. ²After he arrived there, he urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Then he went to Greece. ³He stayed in Greece for three months. Then he planned to return to Syria by ship, but he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to go by land, and he went again through Macedonia. ⁴The men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. ⁵Those seven men went ahead of Paul and me, Luke, by ship from Macedonia, so they got to the city of Troas before we did and waited for the two of us there. ⁶But Paul and I traveled by land as far as the city of Philippi. After the Jewish Festival of Bread made without Yeast, we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived at Troas and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. Then we all stayed in Troas for seven days.

⁷On the first day of the week, we would gather together and we would share a meal together with the other believers. Paul spoke to the believers until midnight. He was planning to leave Troas the next day, so he continued speaking. ⁸Many oil lamps were burning in the upstairs room in which we had gathered. ⁹A young man whose name was Eutychus was there. He was seated on the sill of an open window on the third story of the house. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he fell sound asleep. He fell out of the window down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. ¹⁰Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man and put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, “Do not worry; he is alive again!” ¹¹Paul went upstairs again and he prepared a meal and he ate it. Afterwards he talked with the believers until the sun came up. Then he left. ¹²The other people took the young man home, and were greatly comforted because he was alive again.

¹³We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to go more quickly overland to the town of Assos. The rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. ¹⁴We met Paul in Assos. He got on the ship with us, and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. ¹⁵The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the Island of Chios. The day after that, we sailed to the Island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. ¹⁶Miletus was just south of the city of Ephesus. Paul did not want to stop at Ephesus because he did not want to spend time in Asia. If possible, he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem by the time of the Pentecost festival, and the time of that festival was near.

¹⁷When the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

¹⁸When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, “From the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia until the day I left, you know how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you. ¹⁹You know how I kept serving the Lord Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. You also know how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. ²⁰You also know that, when I preached God’s message to you, I never left out anything that would help you. You know that I taught you God’s message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. ²¹I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews, telling them all that they must turn toward God and away from their sinful behavior and believe in our Lord Jesus.”

²²“And now I am going to Jerusalem, because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know what will happen to me there. ²³But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will cause me to suffer. ²⁴But I do not care even if people kill me, if first I am able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He called me to tell people the good message that God saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. ²⁵I have preached to you the message about how God will show himself as king. But now I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will see me. ²⁶So I want you all to understand that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without

trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, ²⁷because I told you everything that God has planned for us. ²⁸You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message. You must also help all the other believers for whom the Holy Spirit has given you to care for. Watch over yourselves and the group of the Lord's believers as a shepherd watches over his sheep. God bought them with the blood that flowed from his Son's body on the cross. ²⁹I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers. They will be like fierce wolves that kill the sheep. ³⁰Even in your own group of leaders there will be some who will lie to other believers by teaching them the wrong things. They will teach those messages so that some people will believe them and will become their followers. ³¹So watch out that none of you stops believing the true message about our Lord Jesus! Remember that day and night for three years I taught you that message and warned you with tears to be faithful to the Lord."

³²"Now as I leave you I ask God to protect you and to keep you believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing the message that I told you, you will become strong, and God will give you forever the good things that he has promised to give to all of those who belong to him.

³³As for myself, I never wanted anyone's money or fine clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that I have worked with my hands to earn the money that my friends and I needed. ³⁵In everything that I did, I showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

³⁶When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. ³⁷They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. ³⁸They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

Chapter 21

¹After we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got on the ship and traveled on the water to the Island of Cos, where the ship stopped for the night. The next day we went in the ship from Cos to the Island of Rhodes, where the ship stopped again. The day after that we went to the town of Patara, where the ship stopped. ²At Patara we left that ship, and someone told us that there was a ship that would be going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. ³We traveled over the sea until we could see the Island of Cyprus. We passed to the south of the island and continued sailing until we arrived at the region of Phoenicia, in the province of Syria, at the city of Tyre. The ship was going to stay there several days because its workers had to unload the cargo.

⁴Someone told us where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. Because God's Spirit revealed to them that people would cause Paul to suffer in Jerusalem, they told Paul that he should not go there. ⁵But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. ⁶After we all said goodbye, Paul and we his companions got on the ship, and the other believers returned to their own homes.

⁷After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. ⁸The next day we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea, where we stayed in the home of Philip, who spent his time telling others how to become followers of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to care for the widows. ⁹He had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told them.

¹⁰After we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus came down from the district of Judea and arrived in Caesarea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told him. ¹¹Coming over to where we were, he took off Paul's belt. Then he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt, like this, and they will put him in the hands of non-Jewish people as a prisoner.'" ¹²When the rest of us heard that, we and the

other believers there asked Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" ¹³But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴When we realized that he would go to Jerusalem, we did not try any longer to stop him. We said, "May the Lord's will be done!"

¹⁵After those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the Island of Cyprus, and he had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. ¹⁸The next day Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James, who was the leader of the church there. All of the other leaders of the church in Jerusalem were also there. ¹⁹Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. ²⁰When they heard that, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people here who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Also, you know that we all continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. ²¹But our fellow Jewish believers have been told that when you are among non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live there that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you. ²²But our fellow Jewish believers will hear that you have come, and they will be angry with you. So you need to do something to show them that what they heard about you is not true. ²³So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. ²⁴Go with these men to the temple and do the ceremonies there necessary for you and them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they said they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what they have been told about you is not true. Instead, all of them will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. ²⁵As for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem have talked about which of our laws they should obey, and we wrote them a letter, telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol, that they should not eat blood from animals, and that they should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married." ²⁶So Paul agreed to do what they asked, and the next day he took the four men, and together they purified themselves. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priest what day they would finish purifying themselves and when they would offer the animals as sacrifices for each of them.

²⁷When the seven days for purifying themselves were nearly finished, Paul returned to the temple courtyard. Some Jews from Asia saw him there, and they were very angry at him. They called out to many other Jews who were in the temple courtyard to help them take hold of Paul. ²⁸They shouted, "Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that they should despise the Jewish people. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses nor respect this holy temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this place to become polluted!" ²⁹They said these because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus, who was a non-Jew, from Ephesus. Their laws did not permit non-Jews to be in the temple, and they thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. ³⁰People all over the city heard that there was trouble at the temple courtyard, and they came running there. They caught Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The gates to the temple courtyard were shut, so that the people would not riot inside the temple area.

³¹While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. ³²The commander quickly took some officers and a large group of soldiers and ran to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling and beating Paul saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

³³The commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul's arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, "Who is this man, and what has he done?" ³⁴Some of the many people there were shouting one thing, and some were shouting something else. Because they continued shouting so loudly, the commander could not understand what they were saying. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress so that he could question him there. ³⁵The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress, but many people continued to follow them, trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. ³⁶The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Kill him! Kill him!"

³⁷As Paul was about to be taken into the fortress, he said in Greek to the commander, "May I speak to you?" The commander said, "I am surprised that you can speak Greek! ³⁸I thought that you were that fellow from Egypt who wanted to rebel against the government not long ago, and who took four thousand violent men with him out into the desert, so that we could not catch him." ³⁹Paul answered, "No, I am not! I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people." ⁴⁰Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

Chapter 22

¹Paul said, "Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, listen to me now while I speak to those who are accusing me!"

²When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became quiet and listened. Then Paul said to them, ³"I am a Jew, as are all of you. I was born in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher. I obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God, and I am sure that all of you also obey those laws. ⁴That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I had them thrown into jail. ⁵The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Damascus. Those letters gave me power to go there and arrest people who believed in Jesus. I was then to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem, so that they would be punished here.

⁶So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. ⁷The light was so bright that I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me from up in the sky, saying, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you do things to hurt me?' ⁸I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth the one whom you are hurting.' ⁹The men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice said. ¹⁰Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' The Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' ¹¹After that, I could not see, because the bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. ¹²A man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. All the Jews living in Damascus said good things about him. ¹³He came and stood beside me and said to me, 'My friend Saul, see again!' Instantly I could see and I saw him standing beside me. ¹⁴Then he said: 'The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you and will show you what he wants you to do. He has shown you the righteous one, Jesus the Messiah, and you have heard him speak to you himself. ¹⁵He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. ¹⁶So now do not delay! Stand up, let me baptize you, and pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!'"

¹⁷"Later, I returned to Jerusalem. One day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. ¹⁸The Lord spoke to me, saying, 'Do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem now, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!' ¹⁹But I said to him, 'Lord, they know that I went to many of our synagogues looking for people who believe in you. I was putting in jail those whom I found who believed in you, and I was even beating them. ²⁰They remember that when Stephen was killed because he told people about you, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were

murdering him had thrown aside!' ²¹But the Lord said to me, 'No, do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to other people groups, the non-Jews!'"

²²The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about the Lord sending him to other people groups. Then they began shouting, "Kill him! He does not deserve to live any longer!" ²³While they were shouting, they took off their outer garments and threw dust into the air, which showed how angry they were. ²⁴So the leader commanded that Paul be taken into the prison. He told the soldiers that they should whip Paul in order to make him tell what he had done that made the Jews so angry. ²⁵Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the soldier near him, "You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me, a Roman citizen whom no one has put on trial and condemned!" ²⁶When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, "This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!" ²⁷The commander was surprised when he heard that. He himself went into the prison and said to Paul, "Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?" Paul answered, "Yes, I am." ²⁸Then the commander said, "I am also a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen." Paul said, "But I was born a Roman citizen." ²⁹The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they left him. The commander also became afraid, because he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul's hands.

³⁰The commander still wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he took Paul to where the council was meeting and told him to stand before them.

Chapter 23

¹Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said: "My fellow Jews, all my life I have lived respecting our God, and I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong." ²When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to Ananias, "God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws, because you commanded me to be struck without having proved that I have done anything that is wrong!" ⁴The men who were standing near Paul said to him, "You should not speak badly to God's servant, our high priest!" ⁵Paul replied, "My fellow Jews, I am sorry that I said that. I did not know that the man who told one of you to hit me is the high priest. If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about our high priest, because I know that it is written in our Jewish law, 'Do not speak evil of any of your rulers!'"

⁶Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, "My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee, and all in my family were Pharisees, as well. I have been put on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to become alive again." ⁷When he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another about whether or not people who have died will become alive again, and each of them were arguing with the other. ⁸The Sadducees believe that after people die, they will not become alive again. They also believe that there are no angels and no other kinds of spirits. But the Pharisees believe all these things. ⁹They began shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the laws who were Pharisees stood up. One of them said, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. Maybe an angel or some other spirit spoke to him and what he says is true." ¹⁰Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became violent with one another. So the commander was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. He told soldiers to go down from the prison and take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

¹¹That night, Paul saw the Lord Jesus come and stand near him. The Lord said to him, "Have courage! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me, and you must tell people in Rome about me too."

¹²The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. They told themselves that they would not eat or drink anything until he was dead. They asked God to curse them if they did not do what

they promised. ¹³There were more than forty men who wanted to kill Paul. ¹⁴They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵So we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down to us. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

¹⁶But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul.

¹⁷When Paul heard that, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something." ¹⁸So the officer took the young man to the commander. The officer said to the commander, "The prisoner Paul called me and said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something.'" ¹⁹The commander took the young man by the hand, led him off by himself, and asked him, "What do you need to tell me?" ²⁰He said, "There are some Jews who want to bring Paul before their council tomorrow. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. But that is not true. ²¹Do not do what they ask you to do, because there are more than forty Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on the way to the council. They even promised to God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it, and right now they are waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking you to do." ²²The commander said to the young man, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he sent the young man away.

²³Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of two hundred soldiers ready to travel. Take along seventy soldiers riding horses, and two hundred other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight, to go down to the city of Caesarea. ²⁴And take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." ²⁵Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: ²⁶"I am Claudius Lysias writing to you. You, Felix, are our governor whom we honor, and I send you my greetings. ²⁷I have sent you this man, Paul, because certain Jews seized him and were about to kill him. But I heard someone tell me that he is a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. ²⁸I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. ²⁹I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The things they accused him about had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. ³⁰Someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man, so I sent him to you, so that you may give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you what they are accusing him about. Goodbye."

³¹So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night down to Antipatris. ³²The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem, and the soldiers who rode horses went on with Paul. ³³When they arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor, and they placed Paul before him. ³⁴The governor read the letter and then he said to Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." ³⁵Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded that Paul be guarded in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

Chapter 24

¹Five days later Ananias the high priest went down there from Jerusalem, along with some other Jewish elders and a speechmaker whose name was Tertullus. There they told the governor what Paul had done that they thought was wrong. ²The governor commanded Paul to be brought in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus began to accuse him. He said to the governor, "Honorable Governor Felix, during the many years that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have improved many things in this province. ³Therefore, Governor Felix, we always thank you for everything that you have done for all of us, wherever you have done those things. ⁴But, so that I will not take up too much of your time, I ask that you kindly listen to what I have to say. ⁵We have observed that this man, wherever he goes, causes trouble with the Jews. He also leads the entire group whom people call the followers of

the Nazarene. ⁶He even tried to do things in the temple in Jerusalem that would pollute it, so we arrested him.^[1] [And we wanted to judge him according to our law. ⁷[²] But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us. ⁸[³] sending us to you.] If you question him yourself, you will be able to learn that all these things about which we are accusing him are true. ⁹Then the Jewish leaders there told the governor that what Tertullus had said was true.

¹⁰Then the governor motioned with his hand to Paul that he should speak. So Paul replied, and said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have judged this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I gladly defend myself. I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly. ¹¹You know that it has not been more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship God. ¹²No one can say that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts because I did not do that. No one can say that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. ¹³So they cannot prove to you the things about which they are now accusing me. ¹⁴But I admit to you that this is true: I do worship the God that our ancestors worshiped. It is true that I follow the way that Jesus taught us. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the other prophets wrote in their books. ¹⁵I believe, just like these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to become alive again, both those who were good and those who were wicked. ¹⁶Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. ¹⁷After I had been in other places for several years, I returned to Jerusalem to bring some money to my fellow Jews who are poor. ¹⁸Some Jews from Asia saw me in the temple courts after I had completed the ritual that allows one to worship God. There was no crowd with me, and I was not causing people to riot. ¹⁹But it was those Jews who caused the people to riot. They should be here in front of you to accuse me, if they think that I did something wrong. ²⁰But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. ²¹They might say that I did something wrong when I shouted, 'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all people who have died to become alive again.'"

²²Felix already knew much about what people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to them, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes down here, I will decide this case." ²³Then he told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison and make sure that Paul was guarded all the time. But he said that Paul was not to be chained, and if his friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

²⁴Several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jew, and called for Paul to speak with him. Felix listened to what Paul said to him about trusting in Jesus the Messiah. ²⁵Paul talked to him about what God wants people to do in order to please him. He also explained how people should control how they act and that there would be a time when God will judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things, so he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. When I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." ²⁶Felix was hoping that Paul would give him some money, so he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix many times, but he did not give Felix any money, and Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison.

²⁷When two years had passed, Porcius Festus became governor in place of Felix. Felix let Paul remain in prison because he wanted to please the Jewish leaders.

24:6 ^[1]

24:7 ^[2]

24:8 ^[3]

Chapter 25

¹Festus began to rule as governor of the province. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem. ²There, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders stood before Festus and said that Paul had done things that were very wrong. ³They urgently asked Festus to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really

planning to attack him on the road and kill him. ⁴Festus replied, "Paul is under guard in Caesarea, let him stay there. I myself will go down to Caesarea very soon." ⁵"So," he said, "you should go there with me, those of you who are able to. If you have anything to accuse Paul of, you can do it there."

⁶Festus remained in Jerusalem with the temple leaders eight or ten more days. Then he went back down to the city of Caesarea. The next day Festus commanded that Paul be brought to him, where he sat in the judge's seat. ⁷After Paul was brought before the judge's seat, the Jewish leaders who had come down from Jerusalem gathered around him to accuse him of many serious charges, but they were not able to prove any of them. ⁸Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, "I have done nothing against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor." ⁹But Festus wanted to please the Jewish leaders, so he asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem so I can judge you there about these things?" ¹⁰Paul replied, "No, I am now standing before you, who represent the Emperor. This is where I ought to be judged. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people, as you know very well. ¹¹If I had done anything deserving of death, I would not refuse to die; but there is nothing that they accuse me of that deserves such a punishment. No one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I ask that Caesar himself judge me." ¹²After Festus conferred with his advisors, he said, "You have appealed to Caesar, and so to Caesar you shall go!"

¹³After several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea, along with his sister Bernice. They had come to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴King Agrippa and Bernice stayed many days in Caesarea. After some time had passed, Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, "There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. ¹⁵When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders came before me and asked me to condemn him to death. ¹⁶But I told them that when someone has been accused of a serious crime, it is not a custom for Romans to condemn a person immediately. Instead, we allow the accused man to stand face to face with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. ¹⁷So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I sat in the judge's seat and ordered the guard to bring in the prisoner. ¹⁸But when the Jewish leaders told me what the prisoner had done wrong, I did not think that anything they said was serious. ¹⁹Instead, what they argued with him about were things in their own religion and about a man whose name was Jesus who had died, but whom Paul said was alive. ²⁰I did not understand these matters, or how to find out the truth. So I asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem, so I can judge you there about these things?' ²¹But Paul asked for Caesar himself to judge his case, so I ordered him to be kept under guard until I could send him to Caesarea." ²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I myself would like to hear what this man has to say." Festus answered, "I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow."

²³The next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment, and all the other people were honoring them. Some Roman commanders and important men in Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded that the guards should bring Paul in. ²⁴After Paul entered, Festus said, "King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, asked me not to let him live any longer. ²⁵But I found nothing that he had done to deserve death. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case, so I have decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶But I do not know what exactly I should write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to you all, and especially to you, King Agrippa! I have done this so that you may question him. Then I may know what to write to the emperor. ²⁷I think that it would be unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome without telling exactly what were the wrong things people say that he has done."

Chapter 26

¹Then Agrippa said to Paul, "We will now allow you to speak on your own behalf." Then Paul stretched out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He said, ²"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that today that I can explain to you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say I have done evil things. ³I am especially fortunate because you know all about the customs of us Jews and the questions that we argue about. So I ask you to listen patiently to me."

⁴"All my fellow Jews know about how I have conducted my life from the time I was a child. They know how I lived in the city where I was born and also later in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me from my very beginning, and they could tell you, if they wanted to, that since I was very young I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. I lived just like the other Pharisees. ⁶Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. ⁷Our twelve Jewish tribes are also confidently waiting for God to do for us what he promised, as they honor him and worship him, day and night. Honored king, I confidently expect that God will do what he promised, and they also believe that! But it is for what I expect God to do that they say I have done wrong. ⁸Why would any of you think that God could not raise the dead?

⁹There was a time in the past when I, too, was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from Nazareth town. ¹⁰So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I shut up many of the believers in prison, as the chief priests there had given me power to do. And when their people killed believers, I voted in favor of that. ¹¹I punished those Jewish people in every synagogue where I could find them. I would force them, with all my anger against them, to make them insult God and curse his name. I even went off to foreign cities to find them so I could do everything in my power to stop them.

¹²"The chief priests gave me power to arrest believers in Damascus, and that is where I went. But while I was on my way, ¹³at about noon, O King, I saw on the road a bright light in the sky. It was even brighter than the sun! It shone all around me, and also around those who were traveling with me. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵Then I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet! I have appeared to you in order to make you into a servant and a witness both of what you have seen of what you know about me now and what I will show you later. ¹⁷I will protect you from the people and the non-Jews to whom I will send you, ¹⁸in order to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of the enemy to God. In this way God will forgive their sins and give to them the things that all my people will have forever, the people who belong to me by faith.

¹⁹"So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me in a vision to do. ²⁰First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus and those in Jerusalem, and in all the countryside of Judea, and to the non-Jews there also. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God for help. I told them also that they should do those things that show that they have stopped sinning.

²¹It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. ²²However, God has been helping me, so I have continued to proclaim these things to this very day. I have continued to tell both ordinary people and important people exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen. ²³They said that the Messiah would suffer and die, that he would be the first to rise from the dead. They also said that he would proclaim, both to his own people and to the non-Jewish people, that God is truly able to save them."

²⁴Before Paul could say anything further, Festus shouted out in a loud voice: "Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and it has made you insane!" ²⁵But Paul answered, "Your Excellency Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! ²⁶For King Agrippa knows the things that I have been talking about, and I can speak freely to him about them. I am sure that none of these things could have escaped his notice, because none of these things happened in secret." ²⁷"King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things." ²⁸Then Agrippa answered Paul, "In just a short time you have almost persuaded me to become a Christian!" ²⁹Paul replied, "Whether it takes a short time or a long time, it does not matter. I pray to God that you and also all of the others who are listening to me today will also become like me, except for these chains!" ³⁰Then the king stood. The governor, Bernice, and all the others also got up ³¹and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, "This man has done nothing deserving death or his chains."
³²Agrippa said to Festus, "If this man had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been released."

Chapter 27

¹When the Governor decided that we should sail for Italy, he put Paul and some other prisoners into the control of an army captain whose name was Julius. He held the rank of centurion and was part of a large number of soldiers who were under the direct command of the emperor. ²We boarded a ship from the city of Adramyttium in Asia. The ship was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia. In this way we went to sea. Aristarchus, from Thessalonica in Macedonia, went with us. ³The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him permission to go see his friends, who would care for him. ⁴Then the ship set sail from there. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. ⁵After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at Myra, which is in Lycia. We got off the ship there. ⁶In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from Alexandria and would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship, and we left. ⁷We sailed slowly for many days and came near to Cnidus, but we got there with difficulty, because the winds were against us. After that, the wind was very strong and did not allow the ship to move straight ahead westward. Instead, we sailed along the coast of the Island of Crete, where the wind was not blowing strongly, and we passed near Salmone, a piece of land sticking out into the water. ⁸The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete, and we arrived at a town that was called Fair Havens, near Lasea.

⁹Much time passed, and it had now become dangerous to sail, because the Jewish fasting period had already passed and the sea would become very stormy. So Paul said to the men on the ship, ¹⁰and said to them, "Men, I see that if we sail now, it will be disastrous for us with much injury and loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹But the Roman captain did not believe Paul. Instead, he believed what the pilot and the owner of the ship said, and he decided to do what they advised. ¹²The harbor was not a good place to remain during the winter, so most of the sailors advised going to sea from there. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a town in Crete. On it blow winds both from the southwest and northwest. ¹³Because there was only a gentle wind blowing from the south, the ship's crew thought that they could travel like they wanted to. So they lifted the anchor up out of the sea, and the ship sailed close along the coastline of the island of Crete. ¹⁴After a short time, however, a stormy wind blew down from the shore. It blew across the island from the north side and hit the ship. That wind is called Euroclydon, "the Northeast Wind." ¹⁵It blew strongly against the front of the ship, and we could not sail against it. So the sailors let the wind move the ship in the direction that the wind was blowing. ¹⁶The ship then sailed along the coast line of a small island named Cauda. We were able, with difficulty, to fasten the lifeboat securely to the ship. ¹⁷When they had hoisted the lifeboat up, they used its ropes to bind the hull of the ship. And they were afraid that they might run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, so they lowered the sea anchor and the wind drove them along. ¹⁸The wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly. So on the next day the sailors began to throw overboard the things that the ship was carrying. ¹⁹On the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the sails, ropes, and poles, in order to make the ship lighter. They did this with their own hands. ²⁰The wind continued to blow very strongly for many days, and the sky was full of dark clouds day and night so that we could not see the sun or the stars. We had lost all hope that we would survive.

²¹None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, "Friends, you should have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. Then, we would not have suffered this injury and loss. ²²But now, I urge you, do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but not us. ²³I know this, because last night God, the one to whom I belong and whom I serve, sent an angel who came and stood by me. ²⁴The angel said to me, 'Paul, do not be afraid. You must go to Rome and stand before the emperor there so that he can judge you. I want you to know that God has granted to you that all those who are traveling by ship with you will also survive.' ²⁵So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen, exactly as the angel told me. ²⁶However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there."

²⁷On the fourteenth night after the storm had begun, the ship was still being blown across the Adriatic sea. About midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. ²⁸So they lowered a rope to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was forty meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found thirty meters. ²⁹They were afraid that the ship might go onto some rocks, so they threw out four anchors from the ship's stern. Then they prayed that it would soon be dawn so that they could see where the ship was going. ³⁰Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship, so they lowered the lifeboat into the sea. In order that no one would know what they planned to do, they pretended that they wanted to lower some anchors from the ship's front. ³¹But Paul said to the army captain and the soldiers, "If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you have no hope of surviving." ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the water.

³³Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone on the ship to eat some food. He said, "For the past fourteen days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. ³⁴So, now I urge you to eat some food. You must do this to live. Not even one hair from your heads will perish." ³⁵After Paul had said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread and began to eat some of it. ³⁶Then they were all cheered up and ate some food. ³⁷Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. ³⁸When everyone had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the rest of the wheat into the sea.

³⁹At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know where we were. However, they could see a bay and a wide area of sand at the water's edge. They decided to try to run the ship up onto the beach. ⁴⁰So they cast off the anchors and let them fall loose into the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that fastened the rudders, and they raised the front sail so that the wind would blow into it. They they steered the ship toward the shore. ⁴¹But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran hard onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move, and big waves beat against the back of the ship, so that it began to break apart.

⁴²The soldiers had it in mind to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³But army captain wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers from doing this. Instead, he commanded that everyone who could swim should jump into the water and swim to shore. ⁴⁴Then he told the others to hold onto planks or other pieces from the ship and go toward the shore. We did what he said, and in that way all of us arrived safely on land.

Chapter 28

¹After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that it was an island called Malta. ²The people who lived there gave to us better than the usual hospitality. They lit a fire and invited us to come and warm ourselves, because it was raining and it was cold. ³When Paul collected some sticks of wood and put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the fire to escape from the heat, and it bit Paul on his hand and stayed there. ⁴The people from the island saw the creature dangling from Paul's hand, they said to each other, "Probably this man has murdered someone. Although he has escaped from being drowned in the sea, the god of justice will cause him to die." ⁵But Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire, and nothing happened to him. ⁶The people were expecting that Paul's body would soon swell up with a fever or that he would suddenly fall down and die. But after they had waited a long time, they saw that nothing was wrong with him. So the people changed what they were thinking and said to one another, "This man is not a murderer! He is a god!"

⁷Now in a place near to where they were, there were some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. ⁸At that time Publius' father had fever and dysentery, and he was lying in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹After Paul had done that, the other people on the island who were sick came to him, and he healed them, too. ¹⁰They brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. When we were ready to leave three months later, they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

¹¹After we had stayed there three months, we got on a ship that was from Alexandria and that was going to Italy and sailed away. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. ¹²When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³Then we sailed and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind was blowing from the south, so in only two more days we reached the town of Puteoli. There we left the ship. ¹⁴In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who wanted us to stay with them for seven days. After this, we finally arrived at Rome.

¹⁵In Rome, some fellow believers had heard about us, so they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the town called The Market on Appian Road, and others met us at the town called The Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and was encouraged. ¹⁶After we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a house by himself. But there was always a soldier there to guard him.

¹⁷After Paul had been there three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. When they came to him, Paul said to them, "My dear brothers, although I have not opposed our people nor spoken against the customs of our ancestors, our leaders in Jerusalem seized me. But before they could kill me, a Roman commander rescued me and later sent me to the city of Caesarea for Roman authorities to put me on trial. ¹⁸The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me, because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. ¹⁹But when the Jewish leaders there spoke against the desire of the Romans to set me free, I had to request that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But my reason for doing that was not that I wanted to accuse our leaders about anything. ²⁰So I have requested you to come here so that I can tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what the people of Israel confidently expect God will do for us." ²¹Then the Jewish leaders said, "We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. Also, none of our fellow Jews who have arrived here from Judea has said anything bad about you. ²²But we want to hear what you think about this group that you belong to, because we know that in many places people are speaking against it."

²³So they decided that they would come back on another day to hear Paul speak to them. When that day arrived, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying. Paul told them about how God would rule everyone; he talked about how the law of Moses and the prophets foretold Jesus. Paul talked with all who would listen from morning until evening. ²⁴Some of those Jews were persuaded to believe what Paul said about Jesus was true, but others did not believe that it was true. ²⁵When they began to disagree with each other, and when they were about to leave, Paul had one more thing to say: "The Holy Spirit said the truth to your ancestors, when he spoke these words to Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶Go to your people and say to them:

'You hear with your ears, but you never understand what God is saying.

You see with your eyes but you never really see the things that God is doing. ²⁷These people do not understand, because they have become stubborn.

their ears are almost deaf;

and they have closed their eyes because they do not want to see.

They do not want to hear with their ears

or understand with their hearts,

for then they would come back to me

and I would heal them.'

²⁸Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and they will listen." ^{29[1]} [When he had said these things, the Jews went away. They were having a great dispute among themselves.]

³⁰For two whole years Paul stayed there in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him, and he received them all gladly and talked with them. ³¹He preached and taught people about how God would show himself as king, and he taught them about the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He did that with great boldness, and no one tried to stop him.

28:29 ^[1]

Romans

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, who serve the Messiah Jesus, am writing this letter to all of you believers in the city of Rome. God chose me to be an apostle, and he appointed me in order that I should proclaim the good news that comes from him. ²Long before Jesus came to earth, God promised that he would reveal this good news by means of what his prophets wrote in the sacred scriptures. ³This good news is about his Son. As to his Son's physical nature, he was born a descendant of King David. ⁴As to his divine nature, it was powerfully shown that he is God's own Son. God showed this when his Holy Spirit caused him to become alive again after he died. He is Jesus the Messiah our Lord. ⁵He has shown us great kindness and appointed us to be apostles. He did that in order that many among all the people groups would believe in him and obey him. ⁶You believers who are living in Rome are included among those whom God has chosen to belong to Jesus the Messiah. ⁷I am writing this letter to all of you in Rome whom God loves and whom he has chosen to become his people. I pray that God our Father and Jesus the Messiah our Lord may continue to act kindly toward you and will continue to cause you to have peace.

⁸As I begin this letter, I thank my God for all you believers in Rome. It is because of what Jesus the Messiah has done for us that I am able to do that. I thank him because people all over the Roman Empire are talking about how you are trusting in him. ⁹God, whom I devotedly serve as I proclaim to people the good news concerning his Son, knows that I tell the truth when I say that I always mention you whenever I pray to God. ¹⁰I especially ask God that if he desires me to visit you, somehow at last I shall be able to do so. ¹¹I pray this because I long to visit you to help you in order that you may trust and honor the Messiah more and more. ¹²I mean that I want us to encourage each other by telling each other how we trust in Jesus. ¹³My fellow believers, many times I planned to visit you. I certainly want you to know that. But I have not been able to come to you because something has always stopped me. I have wanted to come in order that more people among you might trust in Jesus, just as in other places among the non-Jews. ¹⁴I feel obliged to proclaim the good news to all non-Jewish people, to those who speak Greek and to those who do not, to people who are smart and to those who are unintelligent. ¹⁵As a result, what I have eagerly desired is that I might proclaim this good news to you who are living in Rome also.

¹⁶I very confidently proclaim the good news about what the Messiah has done, because this good news is the powerful way in which God saves those who trust in what the Messiah has done for them. Specifically, God first saves the Jews who believe the good news, and then he saves non-Jews. ¹⁷By means of this good news God reveals how he puts people right with himself. This is like what a prophet wrote long ago in the scriptures: "Those whom God puts right with himself will live because they trust him."

¹⁸God in heaven makes it clear that he is angry with all who show no respect for him and who do wicked things. He shows them that they deserve for him to punish them. Because they do wicked things, they also keep other people from knowing what is true about God.

¹⁹All non-Jews can clearly know what God is like, because God himself has revealed this to everyone. ²⁰People cannot actually see with their eyes what God is like. But ever since he created the world, the things in it make us understand things about him—for example, he has always been able to do powerful things. Another example is that everyone knows that he is completely different from all that he has created. So no one is able to say truthfully, "We never knew about God." ²¹Although non-Jews knew what God is like, they did not honor him as God, nor did they thank him for what he had done. But instead, they began to think foolish things about him, and they were no longer able to understand what he wanted them to know about himself. ²²Although they claimed that they were wise, they became foolish, ²³and they refused to admit that God is glorious and will never die. Instead, they made and worshiped idols that resembled people who will some day die, and then they made other idols that resembled birds and four-footed animals, and finally they made idols that resembled reptiles.

²⁴So God allowed the non-Jews to do immoral sexual things that they strongly desired, things that they thought they had to do, because they wanted so much to do them. As a result, they began to dishonor each other's bodies by their sexual actions. ²⁵Also, they chose to worship false gods instead of admitting what is true about God. They worshiped things that God created instead of worshiping him, the one who created everything, the one whom we should all praise forever! Amen.

²⁶So God allowed the non-Jews to do shameful sexual things that they strongly desired. As a result, many women began sleeping with other women—something that goes against nature. ²⁷Similarly, many men abandoned their natural relationships with women. Instead, they developed strong sexual desire for each other. They committed homosexual acts with other men, acts that were shameful. As a result, God has punished them by sicknesses in their bodies, which is the direct consequence of that kind of sin.

²⁸Furthermore, because they decided that it was not worthwhile to know God, he allowed their own worthless thoughts to completely control them. As a result, they began doing evil things that no one should do. ²⁹They strongly desire to do all kinds of unrighteous deeds and evil things to others and take things that belong to others and harm others in various ways. Many constantly envy other people and desire to murder people and to cause arguments and quarrels between people and deceive others and speak hatefully about others. ³⁰Many say evil things about others and slander others. Many act especially hatefully toward God and violently toward others and treat others contemptuously and boast about themselves to others and invent new ways to do evil deeds. Many children disobey their parents. ³¹Many act in other foolish ways that offend God and do not do what they promised others that they would do and do not even love their own family members and do not act mercifully toward other people. ³²Although they know that God has declared that those who do such things deserve to be killed, they not only do these kinds of evil things, but they also approve of others who do them.

Chapter 2

¹You may say that God must punish people for doing what he hates. But when you say that, you are really saying that God should punish you because you also have lived the same kind of life. You did the same things they have done. ²We know very well that God will judge and punish fairly people who do such evil deeds. ³So you who say that God should punish others for doing evil deeds, although you do evil deeds yourself, you should certainly not think that you yourself will be able to escape from God when he begins to punish you! ⁴And you should not say, "God is acting very tolerantly and patiently toward me, so I do not need to turn away from my sin." You should understand that God is patiently waiting for you to repent from your sins. ⁵But instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to stop sinning, God will punish you even more severely. He will do that at the time when he shows that he is angry and judges all people fairly.

⁶God will pay back everyone according to what they deserve for what they have done. ⁷Specifically, some people keep doing good deeds, because they want God to honor them, and they want to live forever with him. God will reward them in this way. ⁸But some people act in a selfish way and refuse to believe that what God says is true, and they do the things that God says are wrong. God will be very angry and will punish them severely. ⁹He will cause everyone who habitually does evil deeds to suffer greatly and to have many troubles. This certainly will happen to the Jews who refuse to accept God's message, because God gave them the privilege to be his special people, but it will also happen to the non-Jews. ¹⁰But God will praise, honor, and give a peaceful spirit to every person who habitually does good deeds. He will certainly do this for the Jews because he chose them as his special people, but he will also do it for the non-Jews. ¹¹God will do this fairly, because he pays no attention to how important anyone is.

¹²Although non-Jews do not have the laws that God gave to Moses and still sin without having a law, God will bring them to ruin forever. And he will also punish all the Jews who have disobeyed his law, because he will judge them according to what the law says. ¹³It is right for God to punish them because it is not those who know about God's laws that he makes righteous. Only those who have obeyed all of God's law, they are the only ones God makes righteous. ¹⁴Whenever the non-Jews, who do not have the law of God, follow those laws because they obeyed them

by the light of nature, they prove that they have a law within themselves, even though they never had the laws that God gave to Moses. ¹⁵They show that they know in their own minds what God commands in his law, for each person in his very own conscience either accuses himself of bad behavior or defends himself. ¹⁶God will punish them at the time when he will judge people according to what they have thought and done secretly. He will judge people by authorizing the Messiah Jesus to judge them. This is what I tell people when I preach the good news to them.

¹⁷Now I have something to say to anyone of you Jews to whom I am writing: You trust that God will save you because you know the laws that he gave to Moses. You boast that you belong to God. ¹⁸You know what God desires. Because you have been taught God's laws, you are able to know which things are right and to choose to do them. ¹⁹You are certain that you are able to show God's truth to non-Jews, and that you can instruct those who know nothing about God. ²⁰You are certain that you can instruct those who believe foolish things about God and those who are like children because they know nothing about him at all. You are certain about all this because you have the law that teaches you truly about God. ²¹Since you claim that you have all these advantages because you are a Jew, it is disgusting that you teach others but do not obey the laws yourself! You who preach that people should not steal things, it is disgusting that you yourself steal things! ²²You who command people not to sleep with someone to whom they are not married, it is disgusting that you commit adultery yourself! You who command others not to worship idols, it is disgusting that you do not avoid disgusting things. ²³You who boast saying, "I have God's laws," it is disgusting that you disobey those same laws! As a result you are insulting God! ²⁴It is just as the scriptures tell us, "Because of the evil things that you Jews do, the non-Jews say insulting things about God."

²⁵Any one of you who is circumcised to show that he belongs to God can benefit from that if he obeys the law that he gave to Moses. But if you, a circumcised person, disobey the law, God will consider you to be no better in God's sight than someone who is not circumcised. ²⁶This means that God will certainly consider that even non-Jews who are not circumcised can become his people if they obey the things that he commanded in his laws. ²⁷These people, who are not circumcised but who still obey God's laws, will declare that God is right when he punishes you, for you are circumcised but still break the law. ²⁸It is not those who perform rituals for God who are true Jews, and it is not being circumcised in their bodies that causes God to accept them. ²⁹On the contrary, we whom God has changed inwardly are the true Jews. God has accepted us and God's Spirit has changed our nature, not because we perform the rituals commanded by the law. Even if other people will not praise us, God will praise us.

Chapter 3

¹Someone might say then, "If that is true, then it appears that there is no advantage to be a Jew over a non-Jew, and being circumcised does not benefit us Jews at all." ²But I tell you that being Jews has many benefits. First of all because it was to their ancestors that God spoke his words, words that show us who he is. ³Someone might think that the Jews being unfaithful might mean that God will not bless the Jews as he promised that he would? ⁴No, it certainly does not mean that! God always does what he has promised, even though people do not. All those who accuse God of not keeping his promises to us Jews are very mistaken. King David wrote about this: "So everyone must acknowledge that what you have said about them is true, and that you will always win the case when anyone accuses you of doing wrong."

⁵So we cannot say that God did not bless us because we were wicked. We cannot say that he acted unfairly. That he was wrong to punish us out of anger. (I am speaking as ordinary humans speak.) ⁶We should certainly not conclude that God should not judge, because if God did not judge, it could not possibly be right for him to judge the world! ⁷But someone might answer, "The fact that God truly keeps his promises becomes very clear because for example, I told a lie and the result is that people praise God because he has mercy! So God should no longer say that I should be punished on account of my having sinned, since people are praising him because of it! ⁸If what you, Paul, say is true, then we might as well do evil things in order that good things like that will result!" Some people speak evil about me because they accuse me of speaking like this. God will punish people who say such things about me, and they will deserve for him to punish them!

⁹Shall we conclude that God will treat us more favorably and will treat the non-Jews less favorably? We can certainly not conclude that! The Jews and also the non-Jews have sinned and so they deserve for God to punish them. ¹⁰The following words that are written in the scriptures support this,

No person is righteous. There is not even one righteous person! ¹¹There is no one who understands how to live properly. There is no one who seeks to know God!

¹²Absolutely everyone has turned away from God. God considers them depraved. There is no one who acts righteously; no, there is not even one!

¹³What people say is foul, like the smell that comes from a grave that has been opened. By what people say, they deceive people.

By what they say they injure people, just like the poison of snakes injures people.

¹⁴They are continually cursing others and saying cruel things.

¹⁵They go quickly to murder people.

¹⁶Wherever they go they ruin everything and make people miserable.

¹⁷They have not known how to live peacefully with other people.

¹⁸They absolutely refuse to honor God!

¹⁹We know that whatever these laws command is to those who are required to obey. This means that Jews or non-Jews are not able to say anything contrary when God demands an answer for having sinned. ²⁰It is not because people have done the things that God's laws require that God will erase the record of their sins because no one has done those things completely. In fact, the result of our knowing God's laws is that we know clearly that we have sinned.

²¹When God declares us right with him it does not depend on our obeying the law that he gave Moses. It was written about in the laws and by the prophets that God forgives our sins by a different way. ²²God erases the record of our sins because we trust in what Jesus the Messiah has done for us. God does this for every person who trusts in the Messiah, because he considers that there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews. ²³All people have done evil, and everyone has failed to accomplish the glorious goals that God set for them. ²⁴Our record of sins has been erased by his acting kindly to forgive our sins, without our doing anything to earn it. The Messiah Jesus accomplished this by redeeming us. ²⁵God showed that the Messiah turned away his anger by shedding his blood when he died, and we must believe in what he did for us. The sacrifice of the Messiah shows that God acted in a just manner. Otherwise, one might not have thought he was just, because he had overlooked sins that people had previously committed, for he is patient. ²⁶God appointed the Messiah to die for us. By doing that, he now shows that he is just, and he shows that he is justly able to erase the record of sins for everyone who trusts in Jesus.

²⁷It is not at all because we obey the laws of Moses that God erases the record of our sins. So there is no way that we can boast that God favors us because we obeyed those laws. Instead, it is because we believe in the Messiah that God erases the record of our sins. ²⁸So it is clear that God makes someone right with himself if that person trusts in the Messiah—not if that person obeys the law. ²⁹You who are Jews certainly should not think that you are the only ones whom God will accept! You certainly should realize that he will accept non-Jews, too. Of course, he will accept non-Jews, ³⁰because, as you firmly believe, there is only one God. It is this same God who will make Jews—who have been circumcised—right with himself because they trust in the Messiah, and it is also God who will make non-Jews—who have not been circumcised—right with himself, because they also trust in the Messiah. ³¹If you say that God makes us right with himself because we trust in the Messiah, does that mean that the law is now useless? Certainly not. Instead, that law is truly valid.

Chapter 4

¹Abraham is the revered ancestor of us Jews. So think about what we can learn from what happened to Abraham. ²If it was because of Abraham's doing good things that God put him right with himself, Abraham would then have had reason to boast about that to people, (but, even so, he would not have had any reason to boast to God about it). ³Remember that in the scriptures it is written that Abraham believed what God promised to do for him, and that for this reason, God considered Abraham to be right with himself. ⁴Now if we receive wages for work that we do, those wages are not considered to be a gift. Instead, they are considered to be what we have earned. Similarly, if we could do something to obligate God to be kind to us, then that would not be a gift. ⁵But in reality, God makes right with himself people who did not honor him previously. Instead, they now trust in him, and God therefore considers them to be right with himself. ⁶Similarly, it is as David wrote in the Psalms about anyone whom God considers to be right with himself without earning it:

⁷"How fortunate are the people whose sins God has forgiven, whose sins he no longer looks at. ⁸How fortunate are the people whose sins he no longer keeps a record of.

⁹Being fortunate like this is not something that only we Jews can experience. No, it is also something that non-Jews can experience. We know this, because it is written in the scriptures that Abraham trusted in God, so God considered him to be right with himself. ¹⁰Think about when God did this for Abraham. He did it before Abraham was circumcised, not after. ¹¹God commanded that Abraham be circumcised many years after God had already accepted him. Circumcision was the mark that showed that Abraham already was right with God. So we can learn here that God considered Abraham to be the ancestor of everyone who trusts in him, even of those who are not circumcised. In this way, God considers all these people to be right with himself. ¹²Likewise, God considers Abraham to be the ancestor of all us who are true Jews, that is, all Jews who not only have the mark of circumcision on their bodies, but—much more importantly—who live like our ancestor Abraham did before he was circumcised, when he was simply trusting in God.

¹³God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would possess the world. But when he promised that, it was not because Abraham was obeying any law. Instead, it was because Abraham believed that God would do what he promised. So God put Abraham right with himself. ¹⁴If people possess the world because they obey God's law, then it is useless to trust in God for anything, and his promise means nothing. ¹⁵Remember that in reality, God says in his law that he will punish anyone who does not perfectly obey it. Also remember, however, that for people who have no law, it is impossible to disobey it. ¹⁶So it is because we trust in God that we will receive the things that he has promised to us as a gift, because he is very kind. He gives these things to everyone whom he regards as a true descendant of Abraham—us Jewish believers, who have God's law and trust him, and also those non-Jews who do not have God's laws but who trust in him as Abraham did. For God regards Abraham as the true ancestor of all of us believers. ¹⁷This is what God said to Abraham in the scriptures: "I will make you the ancestor of many ethnic groups." Abraham received this directly from God who raises dead people to life and creates things out of nothing. ¹⁸He trusted firmly in this promise of God, even though there was no physical reason for him to expect that he would have descendants because he and his wife were too old to bear children. God had promised Abraham that he would become the ancestor of many ethnic groups by saying, "Your descendents will be like the stars in the sky." ¹⁹He did not doubt that God would do what he promised, even though he knew that his body was not able to father a child (he was, after all, about one hundred years old), and he knew that Sarah had never had children, especially now, because she was so old. ²⁰He did not doubt at all that God would do what he had promised. Instead, he trusted in God more strongly, and he thanked God for what God was going to do. ²¹He was also convinced that God was able to do whatever he promised that he was going to do. ²²And that is the reason that God considered Abraham to be right with himself.

²³The words in the scriptures, "God considered him to be right with himself because he trusted in him," are not only about Abraham. ²⁴They were also written about us, whom God would consider to be right with himself because we trust in him, the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he died. ²⁵God allowed

men to execute Jesus because of our evil deeds. And God caused Jesus to live again because God wanted to put us right with him.

Chapter 5

¹God has put us right with himself because we trust in our Lord Jesus the Messiah. So we are now at peace with God. ²Because of what the Messiah has done for us, it is as if God has opened up a door for us to go to where he will be kind to us. So we rejoice because we are confidently expecting that God will gladly share his greatness with us. ³When we suffer because we are joined to the Messiah, we also rejoice because we know that when we are suffering, we are learning to endure things patiently. ⁴And we know that when we endure suffering patiently, God approves of us. And when we know that God approves of us, we confidently expect that he will do great things for us. ⁵And we are very confident that we will receive the things that we wait for, because God loves us very much. His Holy Spirit, whom he gave to us, causes us to understand how much God loves us.

⁶When we were unable to save ourselves, it was the Messiah who, at the time that God chose, died for us people, although we were not honoring God at all. ⁷Rarely will anyone die for another person, even if that person were righteous, although for a good person perhaps someone might be courageous enough to die. ⁸Nevertheless, as for God, the way he showed us that he loves us is that the Messiah died for us while we were still rebelling against God. ⁹So it is even more certain that the Messiah will save us from God's anger about sin since we are right with God because the Messiah died for us and shed his blood for our sins. ¹⁰Even when we were his enemies God made us to be his friends because his Son died for us. Since the Messiah is alive again, it is even more certain that God will restore our relationship with him since the Messiah is working to save us. ¹¹And that is not all! Now we also rejoice because of what God has done. Since our Lord Jesus the Messiah has died for us, he has restored our relationship with God.

¹²All people are sinful because Adam, the first man whom God created, sinned long ago. Because he sinned, he eventually died. So all people who have lived since then became sinners, and they all die. ¹³People in the world sinned before God gave his law to Moses but there was no way to recognize sin against that law. ¹⁴But we know that from the time when Adam lived until the time when Moses lived, all people sinned, and that they died as a consequence. Everyone died, even those who did not break a direct command from God as Adam did. Adam's sin affected all people, just like what the Messiah did, the one who came later, also affects all people. ¹⁵But the gift that God gives is not like Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, everybody dies. But because another single man, Jesus the Messiah, died for us, God kindly gives to so many of us this gift of everlasting life, although we do not deserve it. ¹⁶And there is another way in which God's gift is different from Adam's single sin. Because Adam sinned, all people after him have sinned, and so God declared that all people deserve to be punished. But as a kind gift, God makes us right with himself, in spite of our many sins. ¹⁷All people die because of what one man, Adam, did. But now many of us experience that God has kindly given us a very great gift—which we do not deserve—and he has put us right with himself. It is also very certain that we will rule with the Messiah in heaven. This will happen because of what one man, Jesus the Messiah, did for us.

¹⁸So, because one man, Adam, disobeyed God's law, all people deserve to be punished. Similarly, because one man, Jesus, acted righteously by obeying God while he lived and died, God makes everyone right with himself, for them to be restored to life. ¹⁹It was because one person, Adam, disobeyed God that many people became sinners. Similarly, it is because one person, Jesus, obeyed God when he died that he will put many right with himself. ²⁰God gave his law to Moses in order that people might realize how greatly they had sinned; but as people sinned more, God continued to act even more kindly toward them in a way that they did not deserve. ²¹He did that in order that, unlike people die because they sin, his kind gift might put them right with himself. Then they can live forever because of what Jesus the Messiah our Lord has done for them.

Chapter 6

¹Someone might say in reply to what I have written that since God has acted kindly toward us, perhaps we should continue to sin in order that his kindness would be the greater. ²No, certainly not! We are like people who have died, who can no longer do anything evil. So we should not continue to sin. ³When we were baptized in union with the Messiah Jesus, God viewed us as dying with the Messiah on his cross. You ought to realize this. ⁴So, when we were baptized, God viewed us also as being with the Messiah in his tomb. God the Father used his power to raise the Messiah from the dead; in the same way, he made it possible for us to live life in a new way. ⁵Since God views us as joining with the Messiah when he died, he will also make us rise with him from the dead. ⁶God views us sinners as having died on the cross with the Messiah, in order to put an end to our sinful nature. As a result, we no longer have to sin. ⁷For whoever has died no longer has to sin. ⁸Since God views us as having died together with the Messiah when he died, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that since God enabled the Messiah to live again after he died, the Messiah will never die again. Nothing will ever be able to make him die again. ¹⁰When he died, he went free from our sinful world, and he will never die again; but because he lives again, he lives in order to serve God. ¹¹In the same way, you must view yourselves as God views you: You are dead people, unable to sin any longer; but you are also living people, living to serve God and joined to the Messiah Jesus. ¹²So when you want to sin, do not allow yourselves to do what you want. Remember that your body will die one day. ¹³Do not use any part of your body to do anything wicked. Instead, present yourselves to God as people who are now alive after belonging to the realm of the dead. Use every part of your body for God. Allow him to use you to do righteous things. ¹⁴When you desire to sin, do not do it! The laws that God gave Moses did not enable you to stop sinning. But now God controls you and kindly helps you not to sin.

¹⁵We might think from this that because the laws God gave Moses did not enable us to stop sinning and God is now treating us kindly anyway, that God permits us to continue sinning. Absolutely not! ¹⁶If you offer to obey someone, you become his slaves. If you obey when you wish to sin, then you become the slaves of sin and die as a result. But if you obey God, then you become his slaves and, as a result, will do the right things that God wants you to do. ¹⁷In the past you sinned in whatever way you wanted to sin—you were slaves of sin. But then you began to sincerely obey what the Messiah taught you. I thank God for that. ¹⁸So now you do not have to sin any longer; sin is no longer your master. Instead, you are slaves of God, who is righteous. ¹⁹I am writing to you in a way that ordinary people can understand. In the past it was as if you were slaves to your desires so you did all kinds of impure and evil things. But now act justly as God acts, so that he will set you apart for himself as his people. ²⁰It is true that in the past, you behaved as people who were free from God's power and righteousness (because you did whatever your evil minds told you to do). You did not have to do things that were right. ²¹Nevertheless, doing those things resulted in your being separated from God, so you did not benefit at all from doing the sinful things that you are now ashamed of. ²²But now you do not have to sin any longer. You are no longer slaves like that. Instead, you have become slaves of God. In return, he has set you apart as his own people, and he will allow you to live forever, with him. ²³All who do what their evil minds tells them to do receive payment, too, but that payment is death. They will be apart from God forever. But as for God, he pays no wages to his slaves at all. Instead, he gives us a free gift: He allows us to live forever with him, joined to the Messiah Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 7

¹My fellow believers, you know about laws. So you certainly know that people have to obey laws only while they are alive. ²For example, a woman must be faithful to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she does not have to act any longer as if she were married. The law releases her from the marriage. ³So if she goes to another man while her husband is alive, she will be an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she no longer has to obey that law. Then if she marries another man, she will not be an adulteress. ⁴In the same way, my brothers and sisters, when you died with the Messiah on his cross, the law of God could no longer control you. You were free to join the Messiah, so that you might honor God. You can do this because you are alive again. God has joined you to the Messiah, and he has raised the Messiah from the dead. ⁵When we were doing what our evil thoughts told us to

do, when we learned God's law, we wanted to sin more and more. So we did evil things that would lead God to separate us from him forever. ⁶But now God has freed us from having to obey law of Moses—it is as though we have died, and the law can no longer tell us what to do. God has done this for us so that we may worship him in a new way that the Spirit shows us, rather than in the old way that the law required.

⁷Could we say that people want to sin more if they know God's laws? Then those laws themselves must be evil. No, of course not! The law is not evil! But it is true that I did not really know what sin was until I learned about it in the law. For example, I did not realize that it is evil to desire what is not yours until I learned that the law says, "You must not desire what is not yours." ⁸And because of what that commandment stated, my sinful desire to have things that belong to others caused me to covet in many ways. Our desire to sin is not stimulated when there is no law that prohibits our doing sinful things. ⁹Formerly, when I did not know what God's law required, I used to sin without worrying about what I was doing. But when I became aware that God had given us his law, I suddenly realized that I was sinning, ¹⁰and I realized that I was apart from God. The law that was supposed to allow me to live forever, if I obeyed it, was leading me to die instead. ¹¹When I wanted to sin, I thought that I would live forever if I obeyed the law enough. But I was mistaken: I thought I could keep sinning at the same time. In fact, God was going to separate me from him forever because I did not truly obey the law. ¹²So we know that the law that God gave to Moses is perfectly good. Everything that God commands us to do is also without fault, just, and good.

¹³So, if someone were to object saying, "The laws that God gave Moses, which are good, resulted in my being separated from God!" I would reply, "Certainly they did not do that!" But instead, those laws, which are good, stimulated my desire to sin. I knew that the result was that I was separated from God. And also, because I learned what God had commanded, I knew that what I was doing was truly sinful.

¹⁴We know that the law came from God and changes our attitude. But I am a person whose attitude tends toward sin. It is as though I had been forced to become a slave of my desire to sin — I had to do whatever my desires told me to do. ¹⁵The things that I do, I often do not understand. That is, sometimes it is the good things that I want to do that I do not do. And sometimes it is the evil things that I detest that I do. ¹⁶Since I do the evil things that I do not want to do, I agree that the law of God directs me in the right way. ¹⁷So, it is not because I wish to sin that I sin. Instead, I sin because the desire to sin causes me to sin. ¹⁸I know that when I follow my own attitude I can do nothing good. I know this because I want to do what is good, but I do not do what is good. ¹⁹I do not do the good things that I want to do. Instead, it is evil things that I do not want to do that I do. ²⁰When I do evil things that I do not want to do, it is not that really I that do those things. Instead, my attitude that favors sin is making me sin. ²¹I find, then, that what always happens is that when I want to do what is good, there is an evil desire present within me that prevents me from doing good. ²²In my new attitude I am very happy about the law of God. ²³Nevertheless, I sense that there is a different power that is in my body. It is opposed to what with my mind I desire to do, and it makes me do what my old sinful attitude wants me to do. ²⁴When I consider this, I feel that I am a very wretched person. I want someone to set me free from the control of what my body desires, in order that I might not be separated from God. ²⁵I thank God that it is by Jesus the Messiah our Lord that he sets us free from the control of what our bodies desire. So with our minds, I on the one hand want to obey God's law. But also, I often let our sinful desires control me because of my old sinful attitude.

Chapter 8

¹So God will not condemn and punish those who are joined to the Messiah Jesus. ²God's Spirit causes us to live in a new way because we are joined to the Messiah Jesus. In this way, I no longer have to sin when I think about sinning, and I will no more be separated from God. ³We tried to obey God's law in order to live with God, but it was useless to think that we could—we could not stop sinning. So God helped us instead: He sent his own Son into the world in order that his Son might atone for our sin. His Son came having a body that was like the body of us who sin. His Son came to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sin. When he did this, he also showed that our sins are truly wicked, and that anyone who sins deserves to be punished. ⁴So we can now fulfill all that God required in his law. We do this, not by our acting the way our old evil attitude desires, but instead by living as God's Spirit desires us to

live. ⁵People who live by their evil attitudes think about pay attention to those attitudes. But people who live by what God's Spirit wants think about the things of the Spirit instead. ⁶Those who think about and are concerned about what their evil attitude desires will not live forever. But those who want what God's Spirit desires will live forever and have peace. ⁷Let me explain this. To the extent that people want what their evil attitude desires, they are acting contrary to God. They do not obey his law. In fact, they are not even able to obey his law. ⁸The people who do what their evil attitude tells them cannot please God. ⁹But we do not have to let our old evil nature control us. Instead, we can let God's Spirit control us, because he lives within us. If the Spirit who comes from the Messiah does not live in people, they do not belong to the Messiah. ¹⁰But since the Messiah is living in you by his Spirit, God views your bodies as dead, so you no longer have to sin. And he views your spirits as alive, because he has put you right with himself. ¹¹God caused Jesus to live again after he died. And because his Spirit lives in you, God will also make your bodies, which now are sure to die, live again. He caused the Messiah Jesus to live again after he died, and he will make you live again by causing his Spirit to do it.

¹²Therefore, my fellow believers, we are obligated to live as the Spirit directs us. We are not obligated to our old nature to live as our old nature wants us to. ¹³If you do what your old evil nature wants, you will surely not live forever with God. But if the Spirit stops you from doing those things, then you will live forever.

¹⁴We who obey the Spirit of God are God's children. ¹⁵This is because you have not received a spirit who makes you live in fear. You are not like slaves who fear their masters. On the contrary, God has given you his Spirit, and his Spirit has made us God's children. The Spirit now enables us to cry out to God, "You are my Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself confirms what our spirits say, that we are God's children. ¹⁷Because we are God's children, we also will one day receive what God has promised us. And we will receive this together with the Messiah. But we must suffer for doing good as the Messiah did, in order that God may honor us.

¹⁸I think that what we suffer during the present time is not worth paying attention to, because the future splendor that God will reveal to us will be so great. ¹⁹The things that God has created are very eagerly waiting for the time when he will reveal who his true children are. ²⁰God caused the things that he created to be unable to achieve what he had intended. That was not because they wanted to fail. On the contrary, God made them that way because he was certain ²¹that the things he created will one day no longer die, decay, and fall apart. He will free these things from that, in order that he can do the same wonderful things for these things that he will do for his children. ²²We know that until now it is as though all things that God created have been groaning together, and they want him to do those same wonderful things for them. But now it is just like a woman who is having the pains that come before she gives birth to a child. ²³Not only do those things groan, but we ourselves also groan inwardly. We who have God's Spirit, who is like a partial gift we have received as we wait for everything that God will give us, we groan inwardly. We groan while we wait eagerly for the time when we will receive our full rights as God's adopted children. That will include his freeing our bodies from the things that hinder us on earth. He will do this by giving us new bodies. ²⁴For God saved us because we had confidence in him. If we had now the things for which we have been waiting, we would not need to wait for them any longer. After all, if you possess something that you have been expecting to get, you certainly do not need to wait for it any longer. ²⁵But because we keep waiting expectantly to receive what we do not yet have, we wait for it eagerly and patiently.

²⁶Similarly, God's Spirit helps us when we are weak. We do not know what is proper for us to pray. But God's Spirit knows; as he prays for us, he groans in a way that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷God, who examines our inner attitude and mind, understands what his Spirit desires. His Spirit prays for us who belong to God exactly as God wants him to pray.

²⁸And we know that for those who love God, he works out all things that happen to them in a way that does us good. He does this for those whom he has chosen, because that was what he planned to do. ²⁹God knew previously that we would believe in him. We are those who God also decided previously would have a character like his Son's character. The result is that the Messiah is God's firstborn Son, and those who are God's children are the many younger brothers of Jesus. ³⁰And the ones God decided previously who would be like his Son, he also called them to be with him. And the ones he called to be with him, he also made them to be right with himself. And to the ones whom he has put right with himself, he also will give them honor.

³¹So I will tell you what we must learn from all these things that God does for us. Because God is acting on our behalf, no one can win against us! ³²God did not spare even his very own Son. Instead, he turned him over to others to cruelly kill him in order that all we who believe in him may benefit from his dying for us. Because God did that, he will also certainly give us freely everything that we need to live for him. ³³No one can accuse us before God of doing wrong, for he has chosen us to belong to him. He is the one who has put us right with himself. ³⁴No one can condemn us any longer. The Messiah, Jesus, is the one who died for us—and more than that, he also was raised from the dead—and he is ruling with God in the place of honor, and he is the one who is pleading for us. ³⁵Absolutely no one and nothing can cause the Messiah to stop loving us! Even if someone afflicts us, or we were suffering from great need, or even if someone harms us, or even if we have nothing to eat, or even if we do not have enough clothes, or even if we live in a dangerous situation, or even if someone will kill us. ³⁶Such things may happen to us, just as it is written that David said to God, “Because we are your people, others repeatedly attempt to kill us. They consider that we are only people to be killed, like a butcher considers that sheep are only animals to be slaughtered.” ³⁷But even though all these bad things happen to us, we win completely over these things because the Messiah, who loves us, helps us. ³⁸I am completely convinced that neither anything from the realm of the dead, nor what happens to us while we live, nor angels, nor demons, nor present events, nor future events, nor powerful beings, ³⁹nor powerful beings in the sky or below it, nor anything else that God has created can cause God to stop loving us. God showed us that he loves us by sending Jesus the Messiah our Lord to die for us.

Chapter 9

¹Because I am joined to the Messiah, I will tell you the truth. I am not lying! My conscience confirms what I say because the Holy Spirit controls me. ²I tell you that I grieve very greatly and deeply about my fellow Israelites. ³I personally would be willing to let God curse me and, keep me apart from the Messiah forever if that would help my fellow Israelites, my natural kinsmen, to believe in the Messiah. ⁴They, like me, are Israelites. God chose them to be his children. It is to them that he showed how wonderful he is. It is with them that he made the covenants. It is to them that he gave the law. They are the ones who have the worship of God. They are the ones to whom God promised many things. ⁵It was our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God chose to begin our nation. And, most importantly, it was from us Israelites that the Messiah was born as a human being. He is God, the one who is worthy that we praise him forever! This is true!

⁶God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would all inherit his blessings. But although most of my fellow Israelites have rejected the Messiah, that does not prove that God has failed to do the things that he promised. For it is not all people who are descended from Jacob and who call themselves the people of Israel whom God considers to be truly his people. ⁷And it is also not all of Abraham’s natural descendants that God considers to be Abraham’s true descendants. Instead, God considers only some of them to be Abraham’s true descendants. This agrees with what he told Abraham: “It is Isaac, not any of your other sons, whom I will consider to be the true father of your descendants.” ⁸What I mean is, not all of Abraham’s descendants are the people that God accepts as his own children. Instead, only the people that God had in mind when he promised to give Abraham descendants—it is these people whom he considers to be Abraham’s true descendants and his own children. ⁹This is what God promised Abraham: “About this time next year I will come back to you, and Sarah your wife will bear a son.” God promised this, and he made it happen. ¹⁰It was similar with Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, Abraham’s son, when Rebecca conceived twins. ¹¹But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; ¹²he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.” ¹³It is just what God said in the scriptures: “I chose Jacob, the younger son. I rejected Esau, the older son.”

¹⁴Someone might ask me, “Is God unjust by choosing only certain people?” I would reply, “He is certainly not unjust!” ¹⁵God told Moses, “I will pity and help anyone whom I choose!” ¹⁶So God chooses people, not because they want God to choose them or because they try hard to please him. Instead, he chooses people because he himself has mercy on undeserving ones. ¹⁷Moses recorded that God had told Pharaoh, “This is why I made you

king of Egypt: It was so I might fight against you and everyone in the world will help others respect my reputation.”

¹⁸So we know that God kindly helps the ones he wants to act kindly toward. And we also know that he makes stubborn anyone who he wants to be stubborn, such as Pharaoh.

¹⁹Maybe one of you will say to me, “Because God determines ahead of time everything that people do and no one can resist what God has wished, it is not right for God to punish those who sin.” ²⁰I would reply, “You are only a human being, so you have no right to criticize God! He is like a man who makes clay pots. A pot has no right to ask its maker, “Why did you make me like this?” ²¹Instead, the potter certainly has the right to take a lump of clay and use part of it to make a beautiful pot that people will value highly—and then use the rest of the clay for a pot that someone will use every day. Certainly God has the same right. ²²Although God desires to show that he is angry about sin, and although he desires to make clear that he can powerfully punish people who have sinned, he tolerated very patiently the people who caused him to be angry and who deserved to be destroyed. ²³God has been patient in order that he might make clear how very wonderfully he acts toward those upon whom he has mercy, whom he prepared ahead of time in order that they might live with him. ²⁴That means us whom he chose—not only us Jews, but also non-Jews. ²⁵God has the right to choose from among both Jews and non-Jews, as the prophet Hosea wrote:

“Many people who were not my people—I will say they are my people.

Many people whom I did not love before, I will say that I now love them.”

²⁶And another prophet wrote: “Where God told them before, ‘You are not my people,’

in those same places they are told that they will become children of the true God.”

²⁷Isaiah also exclaimed concerning the Israelites: “Even though the Israelites are so many that no one can count them, like sand particles beside the ocean, only a small part of them will be saved, ²⁸because the Lord will punish completely and speedily the people who live in that land, as he said that he would do.”

²⁹Isaiah also wrote, “If the Lord of the heavenly armies had not mercifully allowed some of our descendants to survive, we would have become like the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, whom he completely destroyed.”

³⁰We must conclude this: Although the non-Jews were not trying to be holy, they discovered that God would put them right with himself if they trusted in the Messiah. ³¹But the people of Israel did indeed try to be holy by obeying God’s law, but they were not able to. ³²They were not able to, because they tried to do certain things to persuade God to accept them. Because they did not expect the Messiah to die, the Israelites felt disgusted concerning Jesus’ death, which is like the stone on which people stumble. ³³This is what a prophet said would happen: “Listen! I am placing in Israel one who is like a stone on which people will stumble. What he does will make people angry. Nevertheless, those who believe in him will not be ashamed.”

Chapter 10

¹My fellow believers, what I greatly desire and what I pray to God earnestly for is that he will save my own people, the Jews. ²I declare truthfully about them that although they earnestly go after God, they do not understand how to go after him in the right way. ³They do not know how God puts people right with himself. They want to put themselves right with God, so they do not accept what God wishes to do for them. ⁴The Messiah has perfectly obeyed the law in order to put everyone who believes in him right with God. So the law is no longer necessary.

⁵Moses wrote about people who tried to obey all of God’s laws: “It is the people who have done perfectly the things that the law requires who will live forever.” ⁶But those whom God puts right with himself because they trust in the Messiah—to them Moses says, “There is no need for anyone to try to climb up to heaven,” that is, in order to bring the Messiah down to save us. ⁷Moses also says this to them: “No one should try to go down to where the

dead are," that is, in order to bring the Messiah back from the dead for us. ⁸But instead, those who believe in the Messiah can say what Moses wrote: "You can find out about God's message very easily. You can speak about it and think about it." This is the message that we proclaim: People must believe in the Messiah. ⁹This message is that if anyone of you confirms that Jesus is Lord, and if you truly believe that God raised him from the dead, he will save you. ¹⁰If people believe these things, God will put them right with himself. And for those who state publicly that Jesus is Lord—God will save them. ¹¹It is written in the scriptures about the Messiah, "Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed or ashamed." ¹²In this way, God treats the Jews and the non-Jews the same. Because he is the same Lord for all people who believe in him, he greatly helps all who ask him to help them. ¹³This is just like what the scriptures say: "The Lord God will save all those who ask him."

¹⁴Most people have certainly not believed in the Messiah, and some people might try to explain why they have not done so. They might say, "People certainly cannot ask the Messiah to help them if they have not first believed in him! And they certainly cannot believe in him if they have not heard about him! And they certainly cannot hear about him if someone does not preach to them about him!" ¹⁵And those who could preach to them about the Messiah, certainly cannot do so if God does not send them. But if some believers preached to them, it would be just like the scriptures say: "It is wonderful when people come and bring good news!" ¹⁶I would reply in this way to those who say such things: God has indeed sent people to preach the message about the Messiah. But not all the people of Israel have paid attention to the good news! It is like what Isaiah said when he felt very discouraged: "Lord, it seems as if hardly anyone believed what they heard us preach!" ¹⁷So then, I tell you that people are believing in the Messiah because they hear about him, and people are hearing the message because others are preaching about the Messiah!

¹⁸But if someone said to those people, "Of course the Israelites have heard this message," I would say, "Yes, indeed! It is like what the scriptures say:

"The people living all over the world have seen the creation, and what it proves about who God is—even the people living in the most remote places in the world have understood this!"

¹⁹Furthermore, it is true that the Israelites really did hear this message. They understood it, too, but they refused to believe it. Remember that Moses was the first one to warn the people like this. He told them that God said, "You think that the non-Jewish nations are not real nations at all. But some of them will believe in me, and I will bless them. Then you will envy them and be angry at them, people who you do not think understand me." ²⁰Remember also that God said very boldly through Isaiah, "The non-Jews who did not try to know me will surely find me! I will surely reveal what I am like to those who did not ask for me!"

²¹But God also speaks about the Israelites. He says, "For a long time I have held out my arms to the people who disobeyed and rebelled against me, in order to invite them to return to me."

Chapter 11

¹If I should ask, "Has God rejected his people the Jews?" The answer would be, "Certainly not! Remember that I also belong to the people of Israel. I am a descendant of Abraham, and I belong to the tribe of Benjamin, but God has not rejected me!" ²No, God has not rejected his people, whom he chose long ago to be people whom he would bless in a special way. Remember that Elijah mistakenly complained to God about the people of Israel, as the scriptures say: ³"Lord, they have killed the rest of your prophets, and they have destroyed your altars. I am the only one who believes in you who remains alive, and now they are trying to kill me!" ⁴God answered him like this: "You are not the only one left who is faithful to me. I have taken care to keep for myself seven thousand men in Israel, men who have not worshiped the false god Baal." ⁵So, similarly, there is also at this time a leftover group of us Jews who have become believers. God has chosen us to become believers only because he acts kindly toward us, in ways that we do not deserve. ⁶Since it is because he acts kindly toward those whom he chooses, it is not because they have done good things that he has chosen them. If God chose people because they did good deeds, then he would not need to act kindly toward them.

⁷Since God chose only some people of Israel, this makes us know that most of the Jews failed to get what they were looking for—(although the Jews whom God chose did get it). Most of the Jews remained unwilling to understand what God was telling them. ⁸This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah had written about: “God caused them to be stubborn. They should be able to understand the truth about the Messiah, but they cannot. They should obey God when he speaks, but they do not. It is like that to this very day.” ⁹The Jews remind me of what King David said, when he asked God to cause his enemies’ senses to be dull: “Make them stupid, like animals that fall into nets or traps! May they feel as safe as if they were at their banquets, but let those feasts be times when you will catch them, and they will sin, with the result that you will destroy them.

¹⁰May they not see the danger when it comes to them. May you always make them suffer because of their troubles.”

¹¹If I should ask, “When the Jews sinned by not believing in the Messiah, did that mean they will always be apart from God?” I would reply, “No, they have certainly not separated themselves from God permanently! Instead, because they sinned, God is saving non-Jews in order to cause the Jews to envy the way he blesses non-Jews, so that they will ask the Messiah to save them.” ¹²When the Jews rejected the Messiah, the result was that God abundantly blessed the other people in the world by offering them the opportunity to believe. And when the Jews failed spiritually, the result was that God abundantly blessed the non-Jews. Since that is true, think how wonderful it will be when the complete number of the Jews whom God has chosen will believe in the Messiah!

¹³Now it is to you non-Jews that I am saying what follows. I am the one who is the apostle to non-Jews such as you, and I highly value this work that God appointed me to do. ¹⁴But I also hope that by my labors I will make my fellow Jews jealous, with the result that some of them will believe and thus be saved. ¹⁵God has rejected most of my fellow Jews because they refused to believe, with the result that he made peace between himself and other people in the world. If that is what happened after most of the Jews rejected the Messiah, think about the excellent things that will happen after they trust in him. It will be like they have risen from the realm of the dead! ¹⁶Just like the whole lump of dough will belong to God if people offer to God the bread baked from the first part of it, so the Jews will belong to God because their ancestors belonged to God. And just like the branches of a tree will belong to God if the root belongs to God, so the descendants of our great Jewish ancestors who belonged to God will also some day belong to God.

¹⁷God has rejected many of the Jews, like people break off dead branches of a tree. And each of you non-Jews whom God has accepted is like a branch of a uncultivated olive tree that someone spliced into the trunk of a cultivated olive tree. God has caused you to benefit from how he blessed our first Jewish ancestors, just as branches benefit from the sap from the root of a cultivated olive tree. ¹⁸However, you non-Jews must not despise the Jews whom God rejected, even though they are like the branches that someone breaks off from the tree! If you want to boast because of how God has saved you, remember this: Branches do not feed a root. Instead, the root feeds the branches. Similarly, God has helped you because of what you have received from the Jews! You have given the Jews nothing that helps them. ¹⁹Maybe you will say to me, “God rejected the Jews like people break bad branches off a tree and throw them away, and he has done this in order that he might accept us non-Jews, just like people put branches of a wild olive tree into the trunk of a good tree.” ²⁰I would reply that this is true. However, it is because the Jews did not believe in the Messiah, God rejected them. As for you, it is only because you believe in the Messiah that you stand strong! So do not become proud, but instead be filled with awe! ²¹Since God did not spare those unbelieving Jews, who grew up like a tree’s natural branches that came from the root, then know, if you do not believe, he will not spare you either!

²²Note then, that God acts kindly, but he also acts severely. He has acted severely toward the Jews who have refused to trust in the Messiah. God has acted kindly toward you, but he will act severely if you do not keep trusting in the Messiah. ²³And if the Jews believe in the Messiah, God will also put them back into the tree again, because God is able to do that. ²⁴You non-Jews who were previously apart from God have benefited from the ways in which God blessed the Jews. That is like taking branches that someone has cut from a wild olive tree—a tree that just grew without anyone planting it— and, contrary to what people usually do, splicing them into a cultivated olive tree. So God will much more readily receive back the Jews because they belonged to him before! That will be like putting the original branches that someone cut off, back into the olive tree to which they originally belonged!

²⁵My non-Jewish fellow believers, I certainly want you to understand this secret truth, so that you do not think you know everything: Many people of Israel will continue to be stubborn until all the non-Jews whom God has chosen have believed in Jesus. ²⁶And then God will save all of the true people of God. Then these words in the scriptures will become true:

“The one who sets his people free will come from among the Jews. He will forgive the sins of God’s people.”

²⁷And as God says,

“The covenant that I will make with them is one by which I will forgive their sins.”

²⁸The Jews rejected the good news about the Messiah and now God treats them as his enemies. But that has helped you non-Jews. But because they are the people whom God chose, God still loves them because of what he promised to do for their ancestors. ²⁹He still loves them, because he never changed his mind about what he has promised to give them, and about how he has called them to be his own people. ³⁰You non-Jews once disobeyed God, but now he has acted mercifully toward you because the Jews disobeyed him. ³¹Similarly, now they have disobeyed God. The result is that in the very same way in which he acted mercifully toward you, he will act mercifully toward them again. ³²God has declared and proved that all people, both Jews and non-Jews, have been disobedient to him. He has declared that because he wants to act mercifully toward us all.

³³I marvel how great are the wise things that God has done and what he has always known! No one can understand them or know them fully. ³⁴I remember the scriptures that say, “No one has ever known what the Lord thinks. No one has ever been able to give him advice.” ³⁵And, “No one has given anything to God in a way that God had to reward him.”

³⁶God is the one who created all things. He is also the one who sustains all things. The reason that he created them was that they might praise him. May all people honor him forever! May it be so!

Chapter 12

¹My fellow believers, since God has acted mercifully toward you in so many ways, I appeal to all of you that you present yourselves like a sacrifice that is alive, a sacrifice that you give to God alone and that pleases him. This is the only right way to worship him. ²Do not let unbelievers guide you in how you behave. Instead, let God change your way of thinking and make it new, in order that you may know what he wants you to do, so you may know how to act in ways that please him, the ways in which he himself acts.

³Because God has kindly appointed me to be his apostle, which I did not deserve, I say this to every one of you: Do not think you are better than you really are. Instead, think about yourselves in a sensible way, a way that is the same as the way in which God has allowed you to trust in him. ⁴Although a person has one body, it consists of many parts. All of the parts are necessary for the body, but they do not all function the same way. ⁵Similarly, we, although we are many, are united into one group because we are joined to the Messiah, and we belong to one another. So no one should act as though he is more important than the others! ⁶Instead, since each one of us can do different things because God makes us different from each other, we should do them eagerly and cheerfully! Those of us to whom God gives messages for others should speak in a way that fits our trust in God. ⁷Those whom God has enabled to serve others should do that. Those whom God has enabled to teach his truth should do that. ⁸Those whom God has enabled to encourage others should do it wholeheartedly. Those whom God has enabled to give things to others, should do so without holding back. Those whom God has enabled to manage others should do it, and do it with care. Those whom God has enabled to help the needy should do it cheerfully.

⁹The way you must love people is to love them sincerely! Hate what is evil! Continue to eagerly do what God considers to be good! ¹⁰Love one another as members of the same family do; and in regard to honoring one another, you should be the first ones to do it! ¹¹Do not be lazy. Instead, be eager to serve God! Be enthusiastic as you serve the Lord! ¹²Rejoice because you are confidently awaiting what God will do for you! When you suffer, be

patient! Keep praying and never give up! ¹³If any of God's people lacks anything, share with them what you have! Be creative in hosting others! ¹⁴Ask God to be kind to those who persecute you because you believe in Jesus! Ask him to be kind to them; do not ask him to cause bad things to happen to them. ¹⁵If they are joyful, you should rejoice with them! If they are sad, you should be sad with them! ¹⁶Desire for others what you desire for yourselves. Do not be proud in how you think; instead, be friends with people who seem unimportant. Do not consider yourselves wise. ¹⁷Do not do evil deeds to anyone who has done evil to you. Act in a way that all people will know is good! ¹⁸Live peacefully with other people whenever it is possible, to the extent that you can control the situation.

¹⁹My fellow believers whom I love, do not do evil in return when people do evil to you! Instead, allow God to punish them. The scriptures say, "I will pay back those who do evil. It is my right to pay them back," says the Lord."

²⁰Instead of doing evil to those who have done evil to you, do as the scriptures teach: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them! If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. By doing that, you will cause them to feel the pain of shame and perhaps they will change their attitude toward you." ²¹Do not let evil deeds that others have done to you overcome you. Instead, do for them better than what they have done to you!

Chapter 13

¹Every believer must obey the government officials. Remember that God is the only one who gives officials their authority. Furthermore, those officials that exist are ones who have been appointed by God. ²So whoever resists the officials is resisting what God has established. Furthermore, those who resist officials will cause the officials to punish them. ³I say this, because rulers do not cause people who do good deeds to be afraid. Instead, they cause people who do evil to be afraid. So if any of you do good, they will praise you instead of punishing you! ⁴All officials exist in order to serve God, in order that they may help each of you. If any of you does what is evil, of course you should be afraid of them. The officials exist to serve God by punishing those who do evil. ⁵So, it is necessary for you to obey the officials, not only because they will punish you if you disobey them, but also because you know within yourselves that you should be subject to them! ⁶It is for this reason that you also pay taxes, because the officials are ones who serve God as they continually do their work. ⁷Give to all the officials what you are supposed to give to them! Pay taxes to those who require that you pay taxes. Pay duties on goods to those who require that you pay those duties. Respect those whom you ought to respect. Honor those whom you ought to honor.

⁸Pay all of your debts when you are supposed to pay them. The only thing that is like a debt that you should never stop paying is to love one another. Whoever loves others has fulfilled all that God requires in his law. ⁹There are many things that God has commanded in his law, such as do not commit adultery, do not murder anyone, do not steal, and do not desire anything that belongs to someone else. But we can sum up the meaning of all the law in this sentence: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." ¹⁰If you love everyone around you, you will harm no one. So whoever loves others fulfills all that God's law requires.

¹¹Do what I have just told you, especially since you know how important is the time in which we are now living. You know that it is time for you to be fully alert and active, like people who have awakened from sleeping, because the time when the Messiah will finally deliver us from this world's sin and sorrow is near. That time is closer now than when we first believed in the Messiah. ¹²Our time to live in this world is almost ended, like a night that is nearly ended. The time when the Messiah will return is near. So we must stop doing the wicked deeds that people like to do at night, and we must be doing the things that will help us resist evil, as soldiers who put on their armor in the daytime get ready to resist their enemies. ¹³We must behave properly, as though the time when the Messiah will return were already here. We must not get drunk and do evil things with others. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality or wild sensual behavior. We must not quarrel. We must not be jealous of other people. ¹⁴On the contrary, we should be like the Lord Jesus the Messiah so that others will see what he is like. You should stop wanting to do the things that your old evil nature wants to do.

Chapter 14

¹Accept those who are not sure whether God will permit them to do certain things some people think are wrong. But when you accept them, do not argue with them about what they think. These questions are only personal opinions. ²Some people believe that they may eat all kinds of food. Others believe that God does not want them to eat certain things, so they believe that they may eat only vegetables. ³Anyone who thinks that it is all right to eat all kinds of food must not despise those who do not think that. Anyone who thinks it is not all right to eat all kinds of food must not condemn those who think differently, because God himself has accepted those people. ⁴You are wrong when you evaluate somebody else's servant. We are all God's servants so God is the master of us all. He is the one who will decide whether those people have done wrong! No one should judge another in this regard, because he is able to keep them faithful to him.

⁵Some people regard certain days as more holy than other days. Other people regard all days as equally suitable for worshiping God. Each person should be fully convinced about such matters, thinking and deciding for himself and not for others. ⁶As for those who believe that they should worship on a certain day of the week, it is to honor the Lord that they worship on that day. And as for those who think that it is all right to eat all kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they eat those foods, because they thank God for their food. As for those who abstain from eating certain kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they do not eat those foods, and they also thank God for the food that they do eat. So these people are not wrong, even though they think differently. ⁷None of us should live merely to please ourselves, and none of us should think that when we die, it affects only us. ⁸While we live, it is the Lord whom we belong to and should be trying to please, and not just ourselves. And when we die, it is the Lord whom we should be trying to please. So, while we live and also when we die, we should try to please the Lord, for we belong to him. ⁹For the Messiah died and became alive again in order that he might be Lord whom all people should obey, both those alive and those who are dead.

¹⁰It is disgraceful that you who obey certain rules say that God will punish your fellow believers who do not obey them. For God will judge each one of us. ¹¹We know this because it is written in the scriptures:

"Everyone will bow down before me!

And everyone will praise me."

¹²So we will each have to tell God what we have done and let him decide whether or not he approves of it.

¹³Since it is God who will judge everyone, we must stop saying that God should punish some of our fellow believers! Instead, you must be determined to never cause another brother or sister to sin or to stop trusting the Messiah. ¹⁴Because I am joined to the Lord Jesus, I am absolutely certain that there is nothing that by itself is wrong to eat. But if people think it is wrong to eat something, then for them it is wrong to eat it. So you should not encourage them to eat it. ¹⁵If you eat food that a fellow believer thinks is wrong to eat, you might cause him to stop obeying God. You would no longer be loving him. Do not cause any fellow believer to stop trusting in the Messiah. After all, the Messiah died for him, too! ¹⁶Similarly, do not do something that fellow believers would call bad, even if you think it is good. ¹⁷When God rules how we live, we do not worry about what we eat and drink. Instead, we think about how what is the right way to obey him, have peace with each other, and rejoice because of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Those who serve the Messiah by acting in such ways please God, and others will also respect them.

¹⁹So we should always eagerly try to live in a way that will cause peace among fellow Christians, and we should try to do what will help each other to trust and obey the Messiah. ²⁰Do not destroy how God has helped any believer just because you want to eat a certain kind of food. It is true that God allows us to eat every kind of food. But if you eat something that another believer thinks is wrong, then you are encouraging him to do what he thinks is wrong.

²¹It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor to do anything else at any time if it will cause one of your fellow believers to stop trusting in God. ²²Let God tell you what things are right for you to do, but do not try to force others to accept what you believe. And you will please God if you have no doubts about your convictions

about what is right and wrong to do. ²³But some believers fear that God will not be pleased if they eat certain kinds of food. And indeed, he will say that they have done wrong, if they do not do what they believe to be right. If we do anything without being certain that God approves of it, we are sinning.

Chapter 15

¹Those of us believers who are sure that God allows us to do many more things than other believers think he allows them to do—we should be patient with them and allow them to inconvenience us. This is more important than our pleasing ourselves. ²Each of us should do the things that please our fellow believers, and things that will help them, things that will encourage them to trust in the Messiah. ³We should please our fellow believers, since the Messiah has set us an example. He did not do things to please himself. On the contrary, he tried to please God even when others insulted him. That was as the scriptures say: “When people insulted you, it was as though they were also insulting me.” ⁴Remember that all the things written in the scriptures are there to teach us, so that we may become patient in hardship. In this way the scriptures will encourage us to expect that God will do for us everything that he has promised.

⁵I pray that God give you patience and encouragement so that you all live in peace with each other, doing as the Messiah Jesus did. ⁶If you do this, you all will be praising God together, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

⁷So I say to all of you believers at Rome, accept each other. If you do that, people will praise God as they see you behave like the Messiah. Accept each other just like the Messiah accepted you! ⁸I want you to remember that the Messiah helped us Jews to know the truth about God. That is, he came to make come true everything that God had promised our ancestors that he would do. ⁹But he also came to help the non-Jews, so they would praise God for his mercy. God’s mercy has produced what is written in the scriptures that David said to God: “So I will praise you among the non-Jews; I will sing and praise you.” ¹⁰Moses also wrote, “You non-Jews, rejoice with us who are God’s people.” ¹¹And David wrote in the scriptures, “Praise the Lord, all you non-Jews; may everyone praise him.” ¹²And Isaiah wrote in the scriptures, “There will be a descendant of King David who will rule over the non-Jews. They will confidently expect him to fulfill what he has promised.”

¹³I pray that God cause you to be confidently expecting him to do what he has promised. I pray that he will cause you to be completely joyful and peaceful as you trust in him. The Holy Spirit will enable you to more and more confidently expect to receive what God has promised you.

¹⁴My fellow believers, I myself am completely sure that you yourselves have acted toward others in a completely good way. You have done that because you have known completely all that God wants you to know and because you are able to teach each other. ¹⁵However, I have written to you quite openly in this letter about some things in order to remind you about them. I have written this because God has made me an apostle, although I did not deserve this. ¹⁶He did this in order that I should work for Jesus the Messiah among the non-Jews. God has appointed me to act like a priest as I proclaim his good news in order that he may accept the non-Jews who believe in the Messiah. They will be like an offering that the Holy Spirit has set completely apart for God only.

¹⁷It follows that, because of my relationship with the Messiah Jesus, I am happy about my work for God. ¹⁸I will speak boldly only about the work that the Messiah has accomplished through me that non-Jews might pay attention to the message about the Messiah. These accomplishments came because of words and deeds ¹⁹by showing signs and other things that convince people. I have done those things God’s Spirit has enabled me. In this way I have traveled all the way around from Jerusalem to the province of Illyricum, and I have completed my work of proclaiming the message about the Messiah in those places. ²⁰As I proclaim that message, I am always eagerly trying to proclaim it in places where people have not already heard about the Messiah. I do that in order that I might not be simply continuing the work that someone else already started. I do not want to be like a man who builds a house on someone else’s foundation. ²¹On the contrary, I teach non-Jews, so that what happens may be like what was written: “The people who have never heard any news about the Messiah, they will see him. Those who have never heard of him will understand about him.”

²²Because I have attempted to preach the message about the Messiah in places where they have not heard about him, I have been stopped many times from coming to visit you. ²³But now there are no more places in these regions where people have not heard about the Messiah. Furthermore, for several years I have wanted to visit you. ²⁴So I hope to go to Spain, and I hope that you will help me on my journey. And I would like to pause on my journey for a while in order to enjoy being with you. ²⁵But I cannot visit you now, because I am about to go to Jerusalem in order to take money for God's people there. ²⁶The believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia decided to contribute money to help the believers in Jerusalem, God's own people, who are poor. ²⁷They themselves decided to do this, but truly they owe something to God's people in Jerusalem. The non-Jewish believers benefited spiritually from Jewish believers because they heard the message about the Messiah from them, so the non-Jews should also help the Jewish believers in Jerusalem by giving them material things. ²⁸When I finish this task of delivering all this money that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have given, I will leave Jerusalem and visit you in Rome while I am on my way to Spain. ²⁹And I know that when I visit you, the Messiah will abundantly bless us.

³⁰Because we belong to our Lord Jesus the Messiah and because the Spirit of God causes us to love each other, I urge you all that you help me by fervently praying to God for me. ³¹Pray that God will protect me from the unbelieving Jews while I am in Judea. And pray that the believers in Jerusalem will be glad to receive the money that I am bringing them. ³²Pray these things in order that God may be pleased for me to come to you, and that I may be able to rest among you—and you rest with me—for a while. ³³I pray that God, who causes us to have peace, will be with all of you and will help you. May it be so!

Chapter 16

¹By means of this letter I am introducing and recommending to you our fellow believer Phoebe, who will be taking this letter to you. She is a servant in the assembly in the city of Cenchrea. ²I request that you receive her because you are all joined to the Lord. You should do that because God's people ought to welcome their fellow believers. I am also requesting that you help her by giving her whatever she needs, because she has helped many people, including me.

³Tell Priscilla and her husband Aquila that I send greetings to them. They worked with me for the Messiah Jesus, ⁴and they were even willing to die for me. I thank them, and the non-Jewish congregations also thank them for saving my life. ⁵Also tell the congregation that meets in their house that I send my greetings to them. Tell my dear friend Epænetus the same thing. He is the first man in the province of Asia to believe in the Messiah. ⁶Tell Mary, who has worked hard for the Messiah in order to help you, that I send my greetings to her. ⁷Tell the same thing to Andronicus and his wife Junia, fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are well known among the apostles, and they became Christians before I did. ⁸I also send my greetings to Ampliatus, who is a dear friend and is joined to the Lord. ⁹I also send my greetings to Urbanus, who works for the Messiah with us, and to my dear friend Stachys. ¹⁰I also send my greetings to Apelles, of whom the Messiah has approved because he successfully endured trials. Tell the believers who live in the house of Aristobulus that I send my greetings to them. ¹¹Also tell Herodion, who is my fellow Jew, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to those who live in the house of Narcissus, those who belong to the Lord. ¹²Tell the same thing to Tryphaena and her sister Tryphosa, who work hard for the Lord. I also send my greetings to Persis. We all love her, and she has worked very hard for the Lord. ¹³Tell Rufus, who is an outstanding Christian, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to his mother, who has treated me as though I were her son. ¹⁴Tell Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the fellow believers who meet with them that I am sending my greetings to them. ¹⁵I also send my greetings to Philologus, to his wife Julia, to Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas, and to all God's people who meet with them. ¹⁶Greet one another affectionately in a pure way, when you gather together. The believers in all the assemblies joined to the Messiah greet you.

¹⁷My fellow believers, I tell you that you must be careful about the people who are causing divisions among you and who cause people to stop honoring God. Keep away from such people! ¹⁸They do not serve our Lord the

Messiah! On the contrary, they only want to satisfy their own desires. They deceive the people using smooth talk and praise so the people do not realize that these troublemakers are teaching false things. ¹⁹Believers everywhere know that you have obeyed what the Messiah says in the good news. So I rejoice about you. But I also want you to be smart enough to recognize what is good and stay away from what is evil. ²⁰If you do all these things, God, who gives us his peace, will soon smash the work of Satan because of your authority! I pray that our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, will continue to act kindly toward you.

²¹Timothy, who works with me, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who are my fellow Jews, want you to know that they are sending their greetings to you. ²²I, Tertius, one who belongs to the Lord, also want you to know that I am sending my greetings to you. I am writing down this letter as Paul tells me what to write. ²³I, Paul, am staying in the house of Gaius, and the whole assembly here meets in his house. He also wants you to know that he is sending his greetings to you. Erastus, who manages the city's money, sends his greetings to you also, along with our brother Quartus. ²⁴^[1] [May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

²⁵Now to God, the one who is able to strengthen you spiritually by my proclamation of the good news of Jesus the Messiah that God did not reveal in any age before our own time — ²⁶but now God has made it known by means of what the scriptures said would happen — so that people in all the people groups in the world may believe in the Messiah and obey him. ²⁷May God, who alone is wise, be praised forever, because of what Jesus the Messiah has done for us. May it be so!

16:24 ^[1]

1 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Sosthenes our fellow believer {is with me}. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. ²{I send this letter} to {you who are part of} the congregations that belong to God, which are in {the city of} Corinth. {God has} set {you} apart for himself by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus, and {he has} chosen {you} to be his own people. {You are} part of the group of believers who worship our Lord Jesus the Messiah in many countries and cities. {Jesus the Messiah is} their {Lord} and our {Lord}. ³{May} God, {who is} our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

⁴I often thank my God with reference to you. {I do this} because {I know how} God is acting kindly towards you by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus. ⁵{When I say that God has acted kindly towards you, I mean} that he has abundantly blessed you through your union with the Messiah in every area {of your lives}, including whatever you say and whatever you know. ⁶{God has blessed you} because he has proved to you that what we told you about the Messiah was true. ⁷{God has done these things for you} so that you are completely equipped spiritually {during this time when you} confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return. ⁸{Just as he proved our message to be true,} God will also prove your trust {in the Messiah} true until {your earthly lives} end. {Because of this,} he will judge you not guilty when our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns {to earth}. ⁹God always does what he promises, {and he is the one} who has specially chosen you to share everything with his Son, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

¹⁰My fellow believers, by the authority of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, I appeal to you, {asking} that all of you agree with one another. {I ask that} you do not split up into rival groups but that you reconcile with each other by agreeing in what you think and by agreeing in what you decide to do. ¹¹{I appeal to you} because some {members} of Chloe's {household} have talked to me about you, my fellow believers. {They said} that you quarrel among yourselves. ¹²What I am talking about is how many of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos's group, or that you belong to Cephas's group, or that you belong to the Messiah's group. ¹³No one has split the Messiah into pieces{, so you also should not split into pieces}. No one crucified Paul in your behalf, and no one baptized you so that you belong to Paul. ¹⁴I give thanks {to God} that I baptized no people who belong to your group except for {two individuals:} Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵Because {I baptized so few of you,} no person is able to claim that I baptized you so that you belong to my group. ¹⁶Oh yes, I remember that I also baptized those who live in the house of Stephanas. Other than that, I do not think that I baptized any other people {in your group}. ¹⁷The reason {I baptized so few of you} is that the Messiah did not commission me to baptize {people}. Rather, {he commissioned me} to proclaim the good news. {I do this} without using words that are wise {by human standards}. That way, I do not destroy {the power of the message about} the Messiah dying on the cross.

¹⁸{I do not use wise words} because the message that I proclaim about {the death of the Messiah on} the cross sounds foolish to people who are bringing destruction on themselves. However, God works powerfully in this message for us whom he is rescuing. ¹⁹{You can tell that this is true} because the Scripture says,

"I will render useless the wise things that wise people think,

and I will make the intelligent things that intelligent people think worthless."

²⁰{So then,} wise people are not really wise, and experts are not really experts, and people who are good at arguing are not really good at it, as they all belong to the current world system. {In fact,} God has shown that what seems to be wise in this current world is not wise at all. ²¹Here is how {God has done this}. Just as God wisely chose, unbelievers did not get to know God by means of their wise thinking. So, God decided to rescue those who

have faith {in the Messiah} by means of the foolish message that believers proclaim. ²²On the one hand, {many} Jewish people want to see powerful deeds. On the other hand, {many} Greek people search for wise thinking. ²³We, however, proclaim that the Messiah died on a cross. {Many} Jewish people {find this message} offensive, and {many} non-Jewish people {think that this message is} foolish. ²⁴We, however, whom God has chosen, whether {we are} Jewish {people} or Greek {people}, have learned that God works powerfully and wisely through {this message about} the Messiah. ²⁵{This is} because what God does that seems foolish is wiser than {anything that} humans {do}, and what God does that seems weak is stronger than {anything that} humans {do}.

²⁶For {proof that this is so,} think about the fact that God chose you {the way you are}, fellow believers. From a human perspective, most of you did not think wisely, do powerful deeds, {or} belong to important families.

²⁷Rather, God decided to use what seems foolish to humans to humble those who think wisely. God decided to use what seems weak to humans to humble those people and things that act powerfully. ²⁸God decided to use what seems unimportant to people and what people look down on. {It is as if} these things do not {even} exist, {but God decided to use them} to make the things that everyone knows about insignificant. ²⁹{God did these things with the goal} that no humans would say great things about themselves in God's sight. ³⁰It is God who has united you to the Messiah Jesus. By working through the Messiah, God has made us wise. He has declared us innocent, chosen us to be his own people, and delivered us {from evil powers}. ³¹So, {because God is the one who does all these things, we should do what} the scripture says:

"If people want to say great things about something, they should say those great things about the Lord."

Chapter 2

¹My fellow believers, I also {acted according to this pattern} when I visited you and told you about what God has now revealed to us. I did not speak in more powerful ways than others do. I did not argue in wiser ways than others do. ²{I did this} because I chose {to speak and act as if} the only things I understood while I was with you were Jesus the Messiah and how he died on the cross. ³I also {lived according to this pattern} when I was staying with you. I was sick, I was afraid, and I frequently shivered and shook. ⁴I did not speak wisely and persuasively {according to human standards} when I talked {to you} and shared my message {with you}. Instead, I proved that God's Spirit works powerfully {through me when I shared my message}. ⁵{I shared my message in this way} in order that you might trust {in God} because he acts powerfully, not because humans spoke wise words {to you}.

⁶Despite {what I have said,} we {who proclaim the good news} do speak wisely when we are with spiritually mature people. However, people who think in only human ways and people who rule right now do not think that we speak wisely. {Soon,} these people will no longer rule. ⁷No, we speak wisely {because we proclaim} the things that God has revealed to us. God concealed these things {until now}, although he had already decided to do them before he created anything. {He has done all of this} so that he might honor us. ⁸The people who rule right now did not know about these wise things. {You can tell that} they did not know because they killed our glorious Lord on the cross.

⁹Rather, {how they acted} fits with what Scripture says:

"God has ready for the people who love him

things that no one witnessed before,

and things that no one heard about before,

and things that no human even imagined before."

¹⁰God has made these things known to us by the {power of God's} Spirit. {God works by the power of his Spirit} because God's Spirit explores all people and things. He even explores things about God that are very difficult to understand. ¹¹{You can tell that God's Spirit explores everything about God} because everyone knows that only each human being understands everything about himself or herself. In the same way, only God's Spirit understands everything about God. ¹²We did indeed receive the Spirit who comes from God. We did not receive a

spirit that belongs to the current world. {We received God's Spirit} in order that we might understand everything that God has done for us. ¹³These are the very things that we also talk about. We do not use words that humans wisely teach. Instead, we use words that the Spirit teaches, so that we explain spiritual truths with spiritual words. ¹⁴Now, people who do not have God's Spirit reject the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches. {They reject these things} because they think that they are foolish. They cannot know about {the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches} because only people who have God's Spirit can judge rightly about them. ¹⁵On the other hand, people who have God's Spirit {can} judge rightly about everything. However, no {other} person {can} judge rightly about them. ¹⁶This fits with {what the scripture says}:

"No human knows what the Lord is thinking.

No human can teach him about anything."

We, however, can think the same things that the Messiah is thinking.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, {when I visited you,} I was unable to teach you in the way I would teach people who have God's Spirit. Rather, {I had to teach you} in the way I would teach people who think in only human ways. {I had to do this} because you believed in the Messiah in an immature way. ²I taught you about things that are simple. I did not teach about things that are complex. {I did this} because you were not ready for complex teachings. In fact, you are still not ready for complex teachings. ³{I know that you are not ready for complex teachings} because you are still people who think in only human ways. Some of you are jealous of each other, and some of you are fighting with each other. When you do these things, it proves that you are people who think in only human ways and who act in only human ways. ⁴Further, some of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos's group. When you make claims like these, it proves that you are thinking and acting in only human ways.

⁵You need to realize that Apollos and I, Paul, are only people who serve {the Messiah}. Each of us does what the Lord has assigned us to do. When we told you about the Messiah, you trusted in him{, not in us}. ⁶{God assigned} me to proclaim the good news to you first. I was like someone who plants seeds. {God assigned} Apollos to proclaim even more about the good news to you. He was like someone who waters the seeds {so that they grow}. However, God himself enabled you to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is the one who makes the plants grow. ⁷You can see that the person who first proclaims the good news to people is not important. The person who proclaims even more about the good news to people is not important. These people are like those who plant the seeds and those who water the plants, since they too are not important. Instead, it is God who is important because he enables people to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is important because he causes the plants to grow. ⁸In fact, the person who first proclaims the good news to people and the person who proclaims more about the good news to people have the same goal. They are like the person who plants the seeds and the person who waters the plants, who also have the same goal. God will reward people who do either task in a way that matches what they did. ⁹We {who proclaim the good news} all work for God, but you belong to God. It is as if you were farmland that God owns{, in which we planted and watered seeds}. Indeed, it is as if you were a house that God owns.

¹⁰God gave me the skills to wisely proclaim the good news to you first. I am like a wise head builder who puts a foundation in the ground before building a house. Others{, such as Apollos,} proclaim more about the good news to you. They are like other builders who construct a house on top of that foundation. In the end, all the people who proclaim more about the good news should make sure that they proclaim it correctly. They should be like builders who construct a house on top of a foundation correctly. ¹¹No one can put a foundation in the ground if another person has already put it in the ground. So also, no one else can first proclaim the good news to you, because I already did that. What I proclaimed to you is {what} Jesus the Messiah {accomplished}. This message about Jesus is like the foundation of a house. ¹²Builders can use many difficult building materials when they construct a house on its foundation. They can use {more durable materials like} gold, silver, and jewels, {and less durable materials like}

lumber, grass, and straw. In the same way, some of those who proclaim more about the good news teach things that are more pleasing to God. Others teach things that are less pleasing to God. ¹³On the day when the Messiah returns to judge everyone, he will reveal what kind of work each person has done. The quality of the materials that builders use to construct a building becomes clear when the building catches on fire. In a similar way, a judgment like fire will occur on the day when the Messiah returns. This judgment will show the quality of what those who proclaim more about the gospel have taught. ¹⁴Any builders who constructed a building that survives a fire gain honor and money. In the same way, God will honor and reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God accepts when he judges everyone. ¹⁵Any builders who constructed a building that fire consumes lose respect and money. However, the builders do not die in the fire, but they escape from the flames. In the same way, God will not honor or reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God does not accept when he judges everyone. However, God will still accept them, despite the wrong things that they have taught.

¹⁶You need to remember that you are like God's temple in Jerusalem {because God is present among you like he was present in the temple}. You need to remember that you are like a house in which God's Spirit lives {because he is always present with you}. ¹⁷God will act against any person who acts against his temple. This is because God's temple belongs to him alone. {Since} you are like God's temple{, God will act against any person who acts against you}.

¹⁸Do not believe what is not true about yourselves. You who consider yourselves to be wise according to human standards should become foolish {according to human standards}. In this way, you will {really} become wise people. ¹⁹{I speak these words} because the things that humans consider to be wise are things that God considers to be foolish. {You know that this is true} because the scripture says,

"God is the one who disrupts the clever schemes that wise people plan."

²⁰{The scripture says} further,

"The Lord is aware of everything that wise people plan, {and he knows} that these plans will not succeed."

²¹Therefore, none of you should boast about {how you follow other} humans. {I say this} because you have everything{, so boasting about following other humans is foolish}. ²²You have {leaders such as} Paul, Apollos, and Peter. You have everything that God made, {you do not fear when} you live, and {you can find comfort when you} die. You have everything that exists now and everything that will exist in the future. Indeed, you have everything.

²³Further, the Messiah has you, and God has the Messiah.

Chapter 4

¹I want people to think of us {who proclaim the good news} as those who serve the Messiah and who are in charge of proclaiming what God has now revealed to us. ²Whenever a leader puts another person in charge, the leader requires that person to do his or her tasks faithfully. {In the same way, God requires that we who proclaim the Gospel do our task faithfully.} ³I do not worry about what you or any other human authority decides {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. In fact, I do not even worry about what I myself decide {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. ⁴In fact, I do not know about anything I have done wrong. However, what I know about myself does not prove that I have acted faithfully. Rather, it is the Lord who will decide {whether I have acted faithfully or not}. ⁵So then, you should not finally decide about anything until the Lord comes back {to judge everyone and everything}. He will make clear what is now hidden, and he will show everyone what each person desires and plans. At that time, God will praise each person {who has acted faithfully}.

⁶My fellow believers, I have talked in this way about myself and Apollos for your benefit. I want you to learn from our example that you should act only in ways that fit with what the scriptures say. Then, nobody will speak great things about one leader and bad things about another leader. ⁷Nobody has set you apart {from every other believer}. In fact, God has given to you every good thing that you have. Since these things are gifts from God, you should not say proudly that you yourself earned them.

⁸{You are acting as if} you currently have everything that you need spiritually. {You are acting as if} you currently have more spiritual blessings than you need. {You are acting as if} you have currently begun to rule with Christ, even though we {who proclaim the good news} are not ruling with Christ now. Indeed, I wish that you really were ruling with him, in order that we {who proclaim the good news} could be ruling with you. ⁹Rather {than thinking that we rule with Christ now}, I consider us apostles to be those whom God has appointed to suffer humiliation and to die. We suffer humiliation and die publicly, and everything that God has created, including spiritual beings and humans, can see us. ¹⁰We {seem to} be foolish people because we serve the Messiah, but {you think that} you are wise people because God unites you to the Messiah. We {seem to} be people who do not have power or influence, but {you think that} you do have these things. {You think that} people praise you, but those people shame us. ¹¹Even now {as I write this letter to you}, we {whom Christ has sent} have often not had enough food or drink. We wear ragged clothing, and others repeatedly strike us. We constantly travel and do not return to a home. ¹²We do manual labor {to earn a living}. When people speak badly to us, we say good things about them. When people hurt us {because we serve the Messiah}, we patiently live through it. ¹³When people say bad things about us, we say encouraging words to them. From a human perspective, we are worthless, like filthy garbage that needs to be thrown away. {All these things are true about us} even now {as I write this letter to you}.

¹⁴I do not include in my letter what I have just finished saying because I want to make you ashamed. Rather, {I include these things} because I want to admonish you, since you are like my own children, whom I love. ¹⁵When I first preached the good news to you and God united you to Jesus the Messiah, I became your spiritual father. So, even if you had a million teachers who helped you to live in union with the Messiah, I would still be the only spiritual father you have. ¹⁶So I urge you to follow my example. ¹⁷That is why I sent Timothy to you. I love him, and he is my faithful child. He will remind you of how I live as I am joined to the Messiah. I teach the same things everywhere we go and in every church we visit.

¹⁸Some of you have become proud. You live as though I might not come back to you soon. ¹⁹But if the Lord wants me to come, I will come to you soon. Then I will learn not only how these arrogant people talk, but I will find out whether they have God's power in them. ²⁰God's kingdom is not about what you say; it is about God's power. ²¹What would you want me to do? Should I come to punish you with harsh discipline, or should I come so you can see how much I love you by how gentle I am to you?

Chapter 5

¹People have even told us that there is someone in your church who is living in sexual immorality, a kind of immorality that even the unbelievers do not allow. A man has a sexual relationship with his father's wife! ²And you, you remain arrogant! Rather you should have wept over this sin, and should have expelled this man from your congregation. ³I am not with you physically, but I am very concerned for you all, and I am with you in my spirit. And I have already judged the one who did this, just as if I were with you. ⁴When you gather together for worship under the authority of the Lord Jesus—and I am worshiping with you in spirit—⁵you should turn this man over to Satan out into the world, so that his physical body might be destroyed, so that God may save his spirit on the day of the Lord's return.

⁶It is not good that you are praising yourselves. Surely you know that evil is like yeast: A little yeast makes the whole loaf rise. ⁷Sin is like that yeast. You must clean out the old yeast and throw it away so that it cannot infect the whole batch of dough. You are like an unleavened batch of dough. As in the Passover Festival, the yeast must be kept away from the bread. For the Messiah is our Passover lamb: He became the sacrifice for us. ⁸So let us celebrate the Passover Festival, and let us follow all the rules of purification. We must throw out the old yeast, which stands for disobedience and wickedness, and we must celebrate the festival by obeying God and speaking truth to each other. If we do that, we will be like the bread that has no yeast.

⁹I wrote to you, that you must not keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰Of course, I did not mean that you should not associate with unbelievers who are immoral, or who selfishly desire many things, or who trick and cheat to take from others, or who worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid all people like that.

¹Instead, I mean that you are not to be close friends with a fellow believer who is living in sexual immorality. We must include other sins, such as greed, or idolatry, or one who is abusive in the way he talks to others, or a drunkard, or a swindler. You must not even eat with these people who claim to trust in the Messiah, yet they do these terrible things. ²For I have no obligation to judge those who are outside the church of the Messiah. Your duty is to judge those who are in it. ³God is the one who will judge those who are outside the church. The scriptures command us,

“You must take away the evil person who is among you!”

Chapter 6

¹When you have a dispute with another believer, you should not have the audacity to take that matter before a civil judge who is not a believer. Take the matter to fellow believers, whom God has set apart for himself. ²You should know that we who belong to God will judge the world. If you will judge the world one day, you should be able to settle matters that are less important. ³You should know that you will judge angels! Certainly you are able to judge matters in this life. ⁴And if you can settle matters that are important in this life, you should not find it necessary to hand off disputes between Christians to be settled by unbelievers. ⁵I say this to show how you have disgraced yourselves. There certainly must be someone in the church who is sensible enough to settle these disputes when these sort of cases come up between Christian brothers and sisters. ⁶But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a civil court and you allow a judge who is an unbeliever to settle the matter!

⁷When you have any disputes between one another it means that you have not done what you should have done. Allow a brother or sister to take advantage of you rather than you take them to court. ⁸Instead, you have wronged and cheated others, and the ones you cheated are your own brothers and sisters.

⁹Surely you understand that the wicked will not come under God’s rule. Do not believe them when they tell you otherwise. The truth is that the sexually immoral, those who worship anything or anyone other than God, those who break their marriage vows, those who engage in perverse acts of so-called worship involving sex, and those who engage in the practice of homosexuality, ¹⁰those who steal, the ones who are greedy for more, those who get drunk, those who tell lies about others, and those who trick and cheat to steal from others—these will never come under God’s rule. ¹¹Some of you used to do these things. But God has made you clean from your sins, he has set you apart for himself, and he has made you right with himself. He has done all this through the power of the Lord Jesus the Messiah and the Spirit of our God.

¹²Some say this: “I am free to do anything I want, because I am joined to the Messiah.” Yes, but because something is permitted does not mean it is good for me. “I am free to do anything I want”—but I will not allow anything to become my master. ¹³People also say, “Food is made for a person’s body to digest, and a person’s body is made to digest food”—but God will soon do away with both food and the body’s normal functions. Of course, they are really talking about sleeping with people. However, God did not make our bodies so we could be sexually immoral. But the body is to serve the Lord, and the Lord will provide for the body. ¹⁴God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will also raise us up by his power to live again.

¹⁵You should know that your bodies are joined to the Messiah. Should you take away that which is a part of the Messiah and join it together with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶You understand that anyone who sleeps with a prostitute becomes united with her. It is like the scriptures say about marriage: “The two will become one.” ¹⁷And those who are joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

¹⁸So when you want to commit a sexual sin, run away from it as quickly as you can! People say, “Every sin that a person commits is committed outside the body”—except that when one sins sexually, he sins against his own body. ¹⁹You should know that your body is a dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit within you. God gave you his Spirit and now you no longer belong to yourself. Instead, you belong to God. ²⁰God purchased you with the price of his Son’s life. Therefore honor God in all you do in your human body.

Chapter 7

¹You wrote to me some questions about how married believers should live. Here is my answer. There may be times in which it is good to abstain from sleeping together in marriage. ²But people are tempted very often to be sexually immoral. So each husband should have his own wife, and each wife should have her own husband. ³And each married believer should have the right to sleep with his or her spouse. ⁴For the husband gives control of his body to his wife. And the wife gives control of her body to her husband. ⁵So do not deprive one another of sleeping together, unless you both agree to abstain from it for a short period of time, so that you may pray. But after that time is over, come together again. Do not allow Satan to tempt you because you cannot control yourself.

⁶I am not commanding you to get married, but I will compromise because I know that many of you are married or will wish to marry. ⁷My example is before you: I am single, and sometimes I wish that each of you were single in order to serve God. But God gives many different gifts to his children; he makes some able to be married, and others to remain single.

⁸To those of you who have never married and those whose husbands have died, I say that it would be good if you continue to be single, like me. ⁹But if it is hard for you to control yourself, you should get married. It is better for you to marry than to suffer from strong sexual desires.

¹⁰The Lord gives his own commands to you who are married: "The wife should not separate from her husband."
¹¹(But if she separates from her husband, she should not marry again, or else she should make peace with her husband.) And, "the husband should not divorce his wife."

¹²And I have this to say—and this is my advice, not the Lord's command—to you who have a wife who is not a believer: If she is content to stay with you, do not divorce her. ¹³And if you are a woman with a husband who does not believe, and if he is content to stay with you, do not divorce him. ¹⁴The unbelieving husband is set apart in a special way because the wife trusts in God. It is the same for an unbelieving woman with a husband who trusts in God. It is the same for your children: They are set apart in a special way to God, because one parent believes in the Messiah.

¹⁵However, if the unbelieving spouse wants to leave you, you should let that person go. In this situation, the vow you took when you married is no longer binding on you. God has called us to peace. ¹⁶You do not know how God may work through the life you live before your unbelieving spouse. And you do not know whether your life may become a means by which God might save your husband or your wife.

¹⁷We must live the life the Lord has assigned us to live, and to obey the call God gave us. This is the principle in all the churches. ¹⁸If you were circumcised before you became a Christian, you should not try to remove the marks of that circumcision. If you were not circumcised when God saved you, you should not let anyone circumcise you.

¹⁹Circumcision or uncircumcision—these are not important to us. But what is important is that we obey what God commands us to do. ²⁰So continue to live and work as you did when God called you to trust in the Messiah. ²¹If you were a slave when God saved you, do not worry about it. Of course, if you have the chance to gain your freedom, take advantage of the opportunity. ²²This is because anyone who the Lord calls a slave is a free person because of the Lord. In the same way, you become God's slave when he calls you, even if you were never a slave to anyone.

²³God bought you with the price of his Son; your freedom is precious. So do not become slaves of humans.

²⁴Brothers and sisters in the Messiah, whatever you were when God called you, whether you were slave or free, remain in that same position.

²⁵Regarding the question about those who have never married, I will give my views, but I have no specific commandment from the Lord on this question. But you can have confidence in my reply because God has been kind to me and enabled me to be someone whom people can trust. ²⁶Therefore, because of the difficult times that seem to be coming upon us all, I think it is good for you to remain as you were when God called you. ²⁷To you who are married, I say this: Do not seek to be freed from your vow. As for you who are not married, do not try to find a wife. ²⁸But to the men who are single, I say, if you marry, you have committed no sin. I give the same advice to the

single women: If you get married, you have committed no sin. However, if you marry, you will have many worldly troubles, and I would spare you those kind of troubles.

²⁹This is what I mean about the time in which we are living, brothers and sisters: We have a short amount of time left. From now on those who are married will have to live as though they were not married, because of all the trouble that is coming. ³⁰Those who are filled with grief should not cry. Those who are rejoicing over some wonderful event should have no joy on their faces. Those who have spent money to buy something should take no delight in it; they should live as if they owned nothing. ³¹And those who deal with the things of the world should not involve themselves completely with them. For this world system is about to crumble into nothing.

³²I want you to be free from things to worry about. As you see, the unmarried man is concerned about the matters that are important to the Lord. He wants to serve the Lord and do what he wants. ³³But the man who is married must also concern himself for the ordinary matters of the world as well as serving and pleasing his wife. ³⁴So married men can only do some of the things they need to do. It is the same with widows and young ladies who have not married: As believing women, they are concerned to spend their time serving the Lord with their entire selves, with their physical abilities and with their spirit. But married women are concerned about the day-to-day matters of the world—such as how to please their husbands. ³⁵I tell you this to help you. I am not trying to control you. If you follow my advice, you will find it easier to serve the Lord without worrying about things that married people worry about.

³⁶If a man has promised to marry a woman, but if he finds he is not treating her with respect because she is becoming too old to marry, he should get married. This is not a sin. ³⁷But if he has decided that he does not desire to marry at the present time, and if he is in control of the situation, he makes a good decision not to marry. ³⁸So the one who marries his fiancée does a good thing and does not sin; and the one who chooses not to marry also chooses something even better.

³⁹A woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, but she must marry only someone who has faith in the Lord. ⁴⁰However, it is my judgment that a widow will be happier if she does not marry again. And I think that I, too, have the Spirit of God.

Chapter 8

¹Now, about the question you asked regarding eating food that was offered to idols: We know that people say, "We all have knowledge." But if you think you know a lot, you can become very proud of yourself. If, however, when you love others, you help them grow strong in their faith. ²The truth is that if someone assumes he knows something, he has not yet learned the humbleness he needs to know. ³When you love God, God knows you.

⁴Now about eating food sacrificed to idols: Let us begin with this principle: Just as some say, "Idols in this world do not actually exist," and, as Moses taught, "There is only one God." So idols are not real gods; they are not living gods at all. ⁵But I know that some people say that many gods and lords exist in the heavens or on the earth—after all, there are many supernatural beings who have real power. ⁶Yet even so, we say,

"There is one God, the Father,

from him come all things, and for him we live.

And there is only one Lord, Jesus the Messiah;

he made everything there is, and he is the one who gives us life."

⁷But not everyone knows this. Some worshiped an idol in earlier times, and, now, if they eat food sacrificed to an idol, they worry that they are still worshiping a god. They are torn between two opinions, and they are weak in their faith in the Messiah, so they feel they are honoring an idol when they eat food that has been offered to it. ⁸We know that the food we eat does not make us better or worse before God. ⁹But what is important is your brothers

and sisters in the Messiah. You are free to eat that food, but you should not cause people to fall down in their faith because you have the freedom to eat it. ¹⁰You know that idols were never alive, nor were they gods at all. But if brothers and sisters who do not know the difference between right and wrong see you eating in an idol's temple, they would think you were encouraging them to turn back to their idolatry. ¹¹As a result, if your weaker brother or sister sees you eat meat offered to idols because you have freedom in your mind to eat that food but they did not have the same freedom—you by acting as a free person could destroy your fellow believer for whom the Messiah died. ¹²So, you sin against your weaker brothers and sisters when you encourage them to do something that their sense of right and wrong tells them not to do. This is sinning against the Messiah. ¹³Therefore, if my brother or sister are unable to serve God well because they have seen me eat something, I will never eat meat again! I do not want to do anything that causes them to fall.

Chapter 9

¹To people who criticize how I work, I reply like this: I am an apostle. I have seen Jesus our Lord. I am free. You are the result of the work I did—you are my workmanship. ²Even if some others do not think I am a true apostle, I am a true apostle to you. By the Lord's stamp of approval, you are the proof that I am a true apostle.

³I answer those who say that I am not a true apostle by not using money that you believers give me for payment for my service. ⁴Of course we have the right to live on such money. ⁵We certainly have the right to travel with a believing wife, like the other apostles do—like the Lord's brother and Cephas. ⁶No one made a rule that only Barnabas and I must work to support ourselves. ⁷No soldiers serves in the army at his own expense. No one plants a vineyard without being able to eat the grapes or drink the wine. No one shepherds a flock and without drinking some of the milk that comes from the animals.

⁸This is common sense. But the law says this as well. ⁹For the law of Moses says, "When an ox is treading out the grain, do not stop it from eating some of it." There is more that God is concerned about in this law. ¹⁰This law is about us. Moses is saying that those who work in any job should benefit from the fruit of that work, just like the ox eating the grain on which he is treading. ¹¹If we have sown the seed of the good news to you, is it too much for us to receive money from you in our support? ¹²Others received this kind of help from you, and we have certainly proven that we deserve it even more than they do.

However, we have not accepted anything from you, even though we were entitled to it. Instead, we endure all kinds of hardships so that we do not make it more difficult for people to believe in the good news about the Messiah. ¹³Certainly you know that those who helped carry out the sacrifices offered to God in the temple received some of those offerings for their own needs. They received some of the food offered to God. ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who proclaim the good news are to receive their living wages from the good news. They receive part of what is given to God for their needs.

¹⁵But I have not demanded any of these things for myself. And that is not why I am writing this to you now. I boast that I never demand these things from you, and I would have to stop boasting of you were to pay me, so I would rather die than have you pay me. ¹⁶If I proclaim the good news, I am not doing anything for which I should boast. I feel obliged to preach the good news. I would grieve with many tears if I could not do what God called me to do. ¹⁷When I preach the good news because I want to, I have a great reward. But even if I only preached because someone forced me to preach, I would still have to preach, because God trusted me to do this work for him. ¹⁸So what is the reward that God gives me? It is that when I preach the good news, I offer it without anyone paying me for it. Instead, I offer it for free so that I can do it without receiving the payment the Lord would allow me to take.

¹⁹I am not obligated to anyone, but I am a servant to everyone, so that I might persuade more and more people to trust in the Messiah. ²⁰When working with Jewish people, I become like a Jew, so that I may win them to the Messiah. To those who were living under the law I lived as they lived, in order that those living under the law may trust in the Messiah as I trust in him. I lived as they lived, even though I am not living my life by the law's demands. ²¹When I am with those who are non-Jews, those who live apart from the law of Moses, I became like them (though

I myself am not outside God's law, and I am obedient to the law of the Messiah), so that I can persuade those apart from the law to trust in the Messiah. ²²To those who are weak about rules and laws, I lived as they did, so I could persuade them to trust in the Messiah. I have lived under rules and with many life-styles and with all kinds of people so that in any way God chooses to work, God will rescue some of them. ²³I do all this so I may proclaim the good news about the Messiah, so that I will also experience the good things the good news brings to us.

²⁴You know when people run in a race, they all run, but only one of them wins the prize. So you also should run to win the prize. ²⁵Every athlete is careful in how he trains. They are running so one of them may get a crown of victory that is put on their heads; but it is made of olive leaves, and it quickly perishes and fades away. But we are running so we might receive a crown that will last forever. ²⁶Therefore, in everything I do, I do it for a purpose. I do not waste my effort or exhaust myself by striking the air like a boxer who has no opponent. ²⁷I discipline my body and I make it obey my commands. I do not want to preach the good news to others and then lose my reward because I failed to fulfill what he commanded me to do.

Chapter 10

¹I want you to remember, brothers and sisters, that our Jewish ancestors were following God, who led them out of Egypt by means of a cloud during the day, and that they passed through the Sea of Reeds on dry land. ²And as we have been baptized into the Messiah, so the Israelites were to follow Moses as he followed God in the cloud and across the sea. ³They all ate the supernatural manna that God gave them from heaven, ⁴and they all drank the supernatural water that God gave them when Moses struck the rock. The rock was the Messiah. ⁵But God was angry with most of them because they worshiped other gods and rebelled against him, so their dead bodies lay on the ground all across the wilderness.

⁶Now these things were an example for us, so we would learn not to greatly desire evil things, as they did. ⁷Some of our ancestors also worshiped idols. As the scripture says, "The people sat down to eat and drink and then they rose up to dance wildly in a sexual way." ⁸Twenty-three thousand of our Jewish ancestors died in one day because of their sexual immorality. ⁹Let us not test the authority of the Messiah by disobeying him, as some of our ancestors did, and poisonous snakes killed them. ¹⁰Do not grumble about what God provides, as some of our ancestors did, and an angel destroyed them.

¹¹Now these things happened to our ancestors; they were written so we could learn from them—we, who are living very close to when the world will end. ¹²And so the lesson is this: If you think you are strong and are standing strong, be very careful, because this is just when you may fall. ¹³Every temptation you have fought against is shared by us all, but God has given us his promise and he will not permit the temptation to be greater than your ability to fight against the sin. When the temptation comes, God will provide a way for you to get free of it, so you may endure the temptation to sin.

¹⁴Therefore, my loved ones, run away as fast as you can from idol worship. ¹⁵I speak to you as people who consider carefully how you live; think about what I am saying here. ¹⁶When we drink the cup of wine that we bless, we share in the blood of the Messiah. When we break the bread, we share in the body of the Messiah. ¹⁷There is only one loaf of bread, and we, although we are many, all make up just one body together, and we all take and eat from the one loaf of bread together.

¹⁸Think about the people of Israel. Those who eat the sacrifices at the altar share in the altar. ¹⁹So I am saying that an idol is not something real and to eat food sacrificed to an idol is not significant. But even so, there are important issues here. ²⁰What I mean is this: When non-Jews make their sacrifices, they are really making them to demons, and not to God at all. And I do not wish that you share anything with demons. ²¹You must not drink from the Lord's cup and then later drink the cup of demons. You must not share in the Lord's supper and then later eat a meal with demons. ²²To do so would provoke the Lord to become jealous about split loyalty. You are not stronger than he is!

²³Some say, "Everything is lawful," but not everything is for our good or for the good of other people. Yes, "everything is lawful," but not everything helps people to grow strong in their life with God. ²⁴Do not work for your good only, but also for the good of other people. All of us must act toward everyone in such a way as to help them all. ²⁵Here is our rule: You may buy and eat whatever meat you want in the market without having to ask whether it was sacrificed to idols or not. ²⁶As the psalmist says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." ²⁷If a non-Jewish unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you desire to go, eat whatever he serves you. God does not require you to ask him about where he purchased the food. ²⁸But if someone says to you, "We bought this food at the idol temple and it was sacrificed to the gods," then do not eat the food, for the good of the person who served it, and so as not to cause conflict in the sense of right and wrong. ²⁹This is being careful about how that other person thinks about right and wrong, not how you think about it. My personal choices are not to be changed by what another person believes is right or wrong. ³⁰If I enjoy the meal with thanksgiving, I should not permit someone else to condemn me.

³¹The rule here is that whether you eat a meal or drink something offered to you, or whatever you do, do everything in a way so that you give praise to God. ³²Do not be offensive to Jews or to Greeks, nor even to those in the church of God, about matters such as these. ³³I make it my duty to please everyone I can, in every way that is possible. I do this by not seeking my own good. Instead, I try to build up other people by helping them, so that God might save them.

Chapter 11

¹Follow my example, just like I follow the example of the Messiah.

²I praise you because you remember me in all you do, and you hold tight to all the important teachings that I have passed down to you and you have kept them just as I taught them to you. ³I want you to understand that the Messiah has authority over every man, and that a man has authority over a woman, and that God has authority over the Messiah. ⁴So if any man covers his head when he prays or when he proclaims a message from God, he brings disgrace on himself. ⁵But if a woman prays or proclaims a message God gave her with her head uncovered, she brings disgrace on herself. For it is exactly the same as if she had shaved her head. ⁶If a woman refuses to cover her head, then she should cut her hair short, like a man's. But you know that it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to have her head shaved. So, instead, she should cover her head. ⁷A man should not cover his head because God made him like himself, and the man reflects some of what God himself is like. But women reflect some of what men are like. ⁸For God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve; instead, he made the woman Eve from the man Adam. ⁹It was not the man whom God created to help the woman, but the woman to help the man. ¹⁰This is why women should cover their heads, as a sign of the authority, and because of the angels.

¹¹So as we live joined to the Lord, women need men to help them, and men need women to help them. ¹²This is because the woman was made from the man, and the man is born from the woman. They are dependent on one another. But all things come from God. ¹³Judge this for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God without a cover on her head? ¹⁴Nature itself teaches us that it is a disgrace for a man to have long hair, ¹⁵but nature also teaches that long hair for a woman is a display of her beauty. Her hair is given to her by God to cover her beauty. ¹⁶But if anyone in the church wishes to argue about this matter, we do not have any other custom than this, nor do any of the churches do anything different.

¹⁷In these instructions, I cannot praise you for what you are doing about the Lord's supper. When you come together to eat, instead of encouraging and helping one another, you make the fellowship in the church much worse. ¹⁸The first matter of concern is that when you come together, you come with different groups and factions. This is what people have told me, and I believe that some of what they say is true. ¹⁹It appears that you need to have different groups among yourselves so that you can test and approve the ones that have places of honor, and others that do not. ²⁰When you come together you are not eating the Lord's Supper. ²¹When you eat, one person

brings an entire meal and eats it as soon as he arrives; he does not wait for anyone else. Another person goes hungry while other people drink so much wine that they get drunk. ²²You act as though you did not have houses to eat and drink in! You treat the church with dishonor, and you despise the purpose for which you gather. You humiliate those who are poor. I can say nothing good about this. This is a disgrace.

²³For I have passed on to you what I received from the Lord, that on the night when the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread, ²⁴and after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you, do this and remember me." ²⁵After the same manner, he took the cup, after they had eaten, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, remember me." ²⁶For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again.

²⁷All who come to this celebration of the Lord's Supper should come to give honor to God in the way it is shared. Those who eat the bread and drink the cup must do so in a manner that honors the Lord. Anyone who dishonors the bread and the cup will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Therefore we should all examine ourselves before we take the communion. We should only eat the bread and drink the cup after we have examined ourselves. ²⁹Anyone who eats and drinks this Supper and does not consider what is the Lord's body, eats and drinks the judgment of God on himself. ³⁰Many among you are physically ill, and several have even died because of the way you have treated the Lord's body. ³¹If we examine ourselves before we take the communion, God will not judge us. ³²But when the Lord judges and punishes us, he disciplines us to correct us, so that he will not condemn us along with the world that has rebelled against God.

³³My fellow believers, when you come together for the Lord's Supper, wait for one another. ³⁴If one of you is hungry, eat at home—so that when you come together as the church, it will not be an occasion for God to discipline you.

And when I come to you, I will give you instructions concerning the other matters you wrote me about.

Chapter 12

¹And now let me teach you about spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters. I want you to know how to use them. ²You may recall how, when you worshiped idols—idols that could not even speak a word—they led you astray. ³The Spirit of God helps you declare, "Jesus the Messiah is Lord." No one who is filled with the Holy Spirit would ever say, "Jesus is accursed!"

⁴The Spirit gives many different gifts to the people of the Messiah, but he is the same Spirit. ⁵There are also many different ways to serve God, but there is only one Lord. ⁶There are also many ways for people to work in God's kingdom, but it is God who gives the power to his people to work for him.

⁷God makes it possible for each believer to show that he has some of the Spirit's power; God does this in order to help all believers together to trust him and honor him more. ⁸For the Spirit makes one person able to speak a message with great wisdom from God, and he makes another person able to pass on to others some knowledge from God. ⁹To another believer the Spirit gives the gift of trusting God for wonderful things. To still another person he gives the ability to pray to God for him to heal people. ¹⁰The Spirit makes some believers able to do powerful deeds so that people will praise God. As for certain other believers, he makes them able to speak messages from God. The Spirit makes still other believers able to tell spirits who honor God from spirits who do not. To still others, the Spirit gives various kinds of languages in which to speak messages from God, and he makes others able to interpret those messages into our language. ¹¹Again and again we see the many different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives these gifts to individuals, as he chooses.

¹²As the human body is a union of many parts, and every part of the body makes the whole, so it is with the Messiah. ¹³For it is by the Spirit of the Messiah that, when we were baptized, we were each joined together into the body of the Messiah. It made no difference what our background was, either Jew or Greek, slave or free, but each of us received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴Remember, the body is not just one part, but many parts work together to make up the entire body. ¹⁵If your foot spoke to you and said, "I am not the hand, therefore, I am not part of your body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not like your hand. ¹⁶And if your ear said to you, "I am not an eye. For that reason, I have no place in the body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not an eye. ¹⁷If your whole body were an eye, there would be nothing with which to hear. If your whole body were an ear, there would be nothing with which to smell. ¹⁸But God fitted each part of the body together, and it works just as he designed it. Every part is needed. ¹⁹If each of us were exactly like all the other parts, we would not have a body at all. ²⁰We are all many members, but only one body. ²¹In your body, the eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you"; it surely does need the hand. Nor would the head say to the feet, "I do not need you." ²²Even the parts that are weak are all still essential to the body as a whole. ²³The parts that we would be ashamed for others to see, we take more care to cover them. In this way we show more respect for them. ²⁴but God has joined the distinguished parts with the less important ones. And God gives honor to those less presentable parts, because they are part of the body. ²⁵God honors the entire body in this way so there is no division in the church, and that members of the body of the Messiah might care for every member of the body with the same affection, no matter what their purpose or role, gifting or abilities. ²⁶Because we are one body, when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is given honor for something they accomplished for the Messiah, the entire body rejoices together.

²⁷Now you are the body of the Messiah, and individually, you are all members of it. ²⁸God has also given people as gifts to the church. He gave to the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who do powerful deeds, those who perform healing, those who provide helps, those who do work of administration, and those who have various kinds of languages that the Spirit has given them. ²⁹Not all of us are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all do powerful deeds. ³⁰Not all of us can heal the sick. Not all of us can speak in special languages. Not all of us can interpret messages into other languages. ³¹But I want you to eagerly seek after the greater gifts. And now, I will show you a more excellent way.

Chapter 13

¹If I could speak so that I could amaze and persuade people to do what I wanted, or if I could speak the language of angels—but if I did not love people, all my talking would be worth less than a noisy gong or a cymbal that only clangs. ²If I could proclaim messages for God, and if I could explain secret truths about God, and if I trusted in God so much that I could move a mountain—but if I did not love people, I would be worth nothing. ³If I gave away all I own to feed the poor, or if I sacrificed myself to be burned to rescue someone else—but if I did not love people, I would gain nothing.

⁴If you truly love others, you will endure hardships with joy. If you truly love, you will be kind to others. If you truly love, you will not resent that other people possess things you do not have. If you truly love, you will not boast about yourself or be proud. ⁵If you truly love others, you will not abuse them. You will not live to please yourself. No one will be able to make you angry quickly. You will not keep track of the wrong things people have done. ⁶If you truly love others, you will not be happy if anyone does wicked things; instead, you will be happy when people are faithful to God. ⁷If you truly love others, you will endure everything that happens. You will trust that God will do the best things for people. You will trust in God regardless of what happens. You will obey God regardless of what hardships you are facing.

⁸If you truly love, you will not stop loving. Those who are able to speak God's messages, speak in strange languages, or know hidden truths, do these things only for a while. One day they will stop doing these things.

⁹Now, in this life, we know only a small part of all there is to know. Those who proclaim God's messages do so only partially. ¹⁰But when things are complete, everything that is partial or incomplete will end. ¹¹When I was a small child, I talked as a child talks, I thought as a child thinks, and I made decisions as a child makes decision. But when I became an adult, I stopped acting like a child, and I started acting like an adult. ¹²What we understand about the Messiah now, we understand very imperfectly, not well at all. But when the Messiah returns, we will see him face to face. Now we know only part of what is true. But then we will know him fully, just as he knows us fully. ¹³It is

important that we trust in the Messiah now. It is important that we are certain that he will do for us everything that he has promised. And it is important that we love him and each other. But the greatest of these three things is love.

Chapter 14

¹Strive for how to love others and for gifts that strengthen your fellow believers. Especially strive to be able to proclaim his messages that he gives you to say. ²When a person speaks in a language given by the Spirit, he is not speaking to people, because no one can understand him, but he is speaking to God. He is saying things to him as the Spirit leads him. ³On the other hand, the prophet who proclaims the messages from God speaks directly to people. He does this in order to help them by making them stronger, to help them be unshakable, and to give them comfort so they can be happy even in hardship. ⁴A person who speaks in a language given by the Spirit builds himself up and gives himself help, but a person who proclaims the messages of God builds up everyone and helps everyone in the church to be stronger in their faith.

⁵Now I wish that all of you spoke in such languages, but it would be far better for the entire church if more and more of you had the gift of speaking God's messages. Anyone who speaks messages from God is helping to strengthen his fellow believers. For this reason, he is doing work that is more important than those who proclaim messages in various other languages—unless someone is able to interpret those messages.

⁶If I come to you and am only speaking in languages given by the Spirit, how can that help you? That cannot help you unless I speak to you and help you know matters that were hidden from you, or unless I help you understand facts you did not know, or unless I proclaim to you some message you did not hear before, or unless I teach you some rule that you had never learned before. ⁷If someone is playing the flute or harp (they are not living things), and if the notes on the flute or harp sounded no different from each other, no one would be able to tell which tune I was playing. ⁸And if a soldier blew the trumpet poorly, the army would not know whether to get ready for battle. ⁹This is what it is like when you say words that no one can understand: No one will know what you have said. ¹⁰There are certainly many languages in the world, and all of them give meaning to those who understand them. ¹¹But if I do not understand someone's language, I will be like a foreigner to him, and he will be like one to me. ¹²So because you want very much for the Spirit to work in you, try to help the believers in the church to trust the Messiah and obey him.

¹³For that reason, pray that God will enable you to interpret what you say in a language that God has given you. ¹⁴If anyone prays in such a language, his spirit certainly prays, but his mind does not. ¹⁵Therefore, we should pray with our spirit, but also pray with our mind. And it is the same if we sing praise to God. ¹⁶If you insist on praising God only in your spirit, the outsider will never understand what you are saying, and will never be able to agree with the message. ¹⁷For if you give thanks in your spirit, that is well and good for you, but you are not helping the other believers. ¹⁸I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you do. ¹⁹But to the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, words with which I can teach others, than say ten thousand words in a strange language.

²⁰Brothers and sisters, you should think like adults. But when you think about evil things, you should think like small children. Your thinking should be sensible. ²¹In the law it is written that God says,

"I will speak to my people Israel

by foreigners, men who speak in strange languages;

but my people will still not understand me."

²²So if a believer speaks in a language that God has given him, this impresses the unbelievers who might be listening. But if a believer speaks a message from God, this impresses the other believers. ²³You can see how confusing it would be if all the believers met together and spoke in different languages. Any unbeliever who heard them would call them all crazy. ²⁴But if you were all taking turns speaking true messages from God, any unbeliever

would realize that he was guilty of sinning against God. ²⁵This unbeliever would become aware of what was deep in his consciousness. He would fall down with his face to the ground in wonder and fright, and he would praise God and say that God is truly with you.

²⁶Brothers and sisters, it should be this way when you worship God together. Each of you should come with a psalm to sing, or something to teach from the scriptures, or something that God has told you, or with a message in a language that God has given, or with an interpretation of such a message. Everything you do together should encourage each other, for you are the Messiah's church. ²⁷If there are any who wish to speak a message in a language from the Spirit, there should be no more than two or three such persons. They should speak one at a time, and someone should interpret the messages. ²⁸However, if there is no one able to interpret those messages, then those who speak in languages from the Spirit should keep silent and speak only to God.

²⁹If there are any who want to speak a message from God, there should be only two or three such persons; and everyone else should judge those messages according to what the scriptures say. ³⁰But if God allows someone seated in the assembly to understand a message, then the one speaking the message should stop speaking. In this way, all the believers can listen to the meaning of the message. ³¹For each of those who proclaim the messages of God should do so. But they must do so one by one, in order, so that all the believers can learn and receive courage to love God better. ³²For those who truly speak God's messages control the spirit in which they do so. ³³For God does not create confusion; instead, he makes peace.

This next question is answered the same way in all the churches of God's people. ³⁴Women should keep silent in church for they are not permitted to speak. They must not interrupt the one who is speaking God's message, but they should always obey their husbands, as also the law says. ³⁵When women want to learn, instead of interrupting the worship, they should speak with their husbands at home. It dishonors her husband for a woman to interrupt the service. ³⁶Were you the people by whom God gave us his word? Or are you the only ones to whom it came? ³⁷Those of you who think you are prophets or spiritual should agree that the things I write are what the Lord has commanded and follow what I have written. ³⁸But as for those who do not acknowledge what I have written, you should not acknowledge them in your assembly.

³⁹So, brothers and sisters, with earnest desire speak God's messages to the church; and do not forbid anyone from speaking in languages that God gives. ⁴⁰All that you do in the worship of the church, do it in a pleasant and orderly way.

Chapter 15

¹And now I wish to remind you, brothers and sisters, about the good news I proclaimed to you. You believed this message and now you live according to it. ²This good news saved you, as long as you hold firmly to it—unless you did not truly believe it.

³For I have passed on to you what others first told me, that the Messiah died for our sins, as the scripture foretold he would; ⁴also that they buried him, and that God raised him to life on the third day, all just the way the scriptures said it would happen. ⁵Then the Messiah appeared to Cephas (known as Peter), and then he appeared to the rest of the apostles. ⁶He later appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters in the Lord when they were all together. Some of them have since died, but most are still alive and can verify this. ⁷Then he appeared to James, and then again to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all he appeared to me, although I am very unlike the other apostles. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles. I made the church of the Messiah suffer greatly, so I do not deserve to be an apostle. ¹⁰But God has been very kind to me, so I am an apostle, and he has done much good through me. Really, I have worked harder than all the other apostles. Still, it was not really I who worked, but God, who gave me the strength. ¹¹So whether it is the other apostles or I who preached to you, we proclaimed the good news about the Messiah, and you believed us.

¹²Now some of you are saying that those who are now dead will not rise anymore. This cannot be true, because we have announced to you that the Messiah rose from the dead. ¹³If no one rises from the dead, then God certainly has not raised the Messiah. ¹⁴And if he has not raised the Messiah from the dead, then what we preach makes no sense at all, and what you believe about the Messiah can do nothing for you in your life or in your death. ¹⁵In addition, people will see that we have told lies about God, if the dead really do not rise again. ¹⁶Again I say, if no one rises from the dead, then God has not even raised the Messiah. ¹⁷And if he has not raised the Messiah, then what you believe is useless, and God still condemns you because you have sinned. ¹⁸If that is the case, then all those who have died trusting in the Messiah have also died with no hope of resurrection. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in the Messiah, and we expect him to do nothing for us after we die, then of all people we most deserve the pity of others, for we have believed in a lie.

²⁰But in fact, God has raised the Messiah from the dead, and he is only the first of the many people that he will raise. ²¹For everyone in the world dies because of what one man, Adam, did. However, those who have died will live again—also because of what one person has done; that is, the man the Messiah Jesus. ²²Because, just as all die because Adam sinned, in the same way, all will live again because of what the Messiah has done. ²³But they will rise from the dead in a certain order: the Messiah is the first to have risen from the dead; then those who are joined to the Messiah will live again when he returns to earth. ²⁴Then the world will come to an end, when the Messiah will present all the world to God the Father, for him to rule. This is when the Messiah will bring to an end all who have the status of rulers, and everything that has reigning authority and all seats of power in this world. ²⁵For the Messiah must rule until God has conquered every one of his enemies, and placed them under the Messiah's feet to show that they have no more power. ²⁶The final enemy that God will destroy is death itself. ²⁷For the scriptures say, "God has placed everything under his feet," that is, the Messiah's feet. But it is clear that this does not include God himself. ²⁸After God has placed all things into the Messiah's power, then the Son also will place himself in the power of God the Father, so that God may be the same in relation to everyone and everything.

²⁹If there is no resurrection from the dead, as some say, then there is no reason for people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died, as some do. If God does not bring any dead people back to life, then here is no reason for living people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died. ³⁰And we apostles would have no reason to risk our lives every day, as we do, to proclaim the good news if there is no resurrection from the dead. ³¹My brothers and sisters, I am so proud of you; you are like my possessions that I show off to the Messiah Jesus our Lord. Every day I am in danger of dying! ³²If God will not raise the dead, then I fought with those wild animals at Ephesus for nothing. What the poets wrote would in that case be true: "Let us eat food and drink wine today, because we will die tomorrow." ³³Do not be tricked: "If you have bad friends, you will not care to live any longer in the right way." ³⁴Sober up! Live in the right way and do not keep sinning. Some of you do not know God at all. I say this to shame you.

³⁵Someone may ask you, "How can the dead rise? What kind of body could they ever have?" ³⁶You know nothing! You do not think about the fact that any seed you plant in the ground will not start to grow until it dies. ³⁷And what a farmer plants does not look the same as what will come up. It is only a bare seed; it will change into something entirely different. ³⁸God will give it a new body just as he chooses, and to each seed put into the ground he will give a different body. ³⁹Not all living creatures are the same. There are human beings, and there are animals on the land of many kinds, and there are the birds and fish. All of them are different. ⁴⁰There are also different kinds of things in the heavens. The nature of those bodies in the sky is different from the nature of the things on this world. ⁴¹There is one kind of the nature for the bright sun, and another kind for the softer moon. There is still another kind of nature for the stars, but the stars all differ one from another in many ways.

⁴²It is the same way when people rise from the dead. What goes into the ground has died, but what rises will never die again. ⁴³When it goes into the ground, it is in the dirt, but when God raises it again, it grows with honor and power. ⁴⁴What goes into the ground belongs to this earth, but what rises from the dead has God's power. So, there are things that belong to this earth, and there are things that have God's power, which lasts forever.

⁴⁵So the scriptures say, "The first man, Adam, was a living being who gave his children and descendants life." But the Messiah, the second Adam, gave people God's power to live forever. ⁴⁶What belongs to the earth came first, the natural, and then came what belongs to God, that is the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man, Adam, belonged to the earth, for he was made from dust. But the second man, the Messiah, belongs to heaven. ⁴⁸All those who are made from dust are just like Adam, the one who was made from dust. All those who belong to heaven are just like the Messiah, the man from heaven. ⁴⁹Just as God made us like the man who was made from dust, so he will also make us be like the man from heaven.

⁵⁰Now I say this, brothers and sisters, human beings who will die cannot obtain the things that God promises to give all those whom he rules. It is just as the things that die cannot become things that do not die. ⁵¹Look! I tell you something that God has hidden from us. Not all believers will die, but God will change all of us. ⁵²He will change us in an instant, as fast as one can blink his eye, when God's angels blow the final trumpet. For they will blow that trumpet and then God will raise the dead so as to never die again. ⁵³For it is these bodies that will die, but God will make them live forever, never to die again, and it is these bodies that now can be destroyed, but God will make them new, never to die again. ⁵⁴When this happens, then it will come true, what the scriptures say:

"God has totally defeated death."

⁵⁵"Death will never win again!

The pain of dying has been taken away!"

⁵⁶It is sin that brings such pain to us when we are dying. And sin's power comes into our lives because of the law.

⁵⁷But now we thank God because he gives us victory over death through our Lord Jesus the Messiah!

⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be solid in your faith, unmoveable in your life, doing more and more in the Lord's work. You know that whatever you do for him will last forever.

Chapter 16

¹Now I wish to answer your questions about the money that we are collecting for the people in Jerusalem who belong to God. You should do exactly what I told the believers in the churches in Galatia to do. ²Every Sunday, each of you should put some money aside, as you are able, so you will not need any more collections when I come. ³You must choose people, whomever you wish, to take your gifts to Jerusalem. And when I arrive, I will send letters with them about your gift. ⁴If it is the right thing to do, they will travel together with me to Jerusalem.

⁵I am planning to come to you when I travel through the region of Macedonia. ⁶Perhaps I will stay with you, and perhaps all through the winter, so that you can help me along the way in my trip. ⁷I do not want to see you for only a short time. I hope that the Lord will allow me to spend enough time together that we can help each other. ⁸I want to stay in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost, ⁹because the Lord has opened a door for me there, although there are still many who oppose us.

¹⁰Now when Timothy comes, treat him kindly and see to it that he has nothing to be afraid of, for he is doing the Lord's work, just like I am doing. ¹¹Do not let anyone treat him as unimportant. Help him on his way as much as you can; send him away in peace so that he may join me. I am expecting him to travel with other brothers who are coming my way.

¹²You asked about our brother Apollos. I urged him strongly that he should visit you when the other brothers came to you. He decided not to come now, but he will come to you later when he has opportunity.

¹³Be on guard, do not wander from your faith. Work for the Lord like grown men, and be strong. ¹⁴Do everything through the power of love.

¹⁵You know the people in the house of Stephanas. You know that they were the first ones in the province of Achaia to believe, and they are determined to help those who belong to the Lord. I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶obey people like them who help in the work and who work hard with us. ¹⁷I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here from Corinth, because they made up for the fact that you were not here. ¹⁸They encouraged and helped me in my spirit, and they helped you as well. Tell others about how much they helped you.

¹⁹The churches in Asia send greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you greetings as you do the work of the Lord, and the other believers that meet in their home do so as well. ²⁰The rest of the brothers and sisters greet you, too. Greet one another with a kiss of affection.

²¹I, Paul, am writing this sentence with my own hand. ²²If anyone does not love the Lord, let a curse be on him. O Lord, come! ²³May the kindness we do not deserve that comes from the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴I send you this reminder that I love all of you, as you all are joined together in the Messiah Jesus.

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, together with Timothy our brother, write this letter to you. The Messiah Jesus sent me to serve him and to obey God's will. We are sending this letter to those who come together as God's people in the city of Corinth; we are also sending it to the all the Messiahians who live in the region of Achaia—people whom God has set apart for himself. ²May God give you the free gifts of his love and peace—these things that come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

³May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah—he is the one who does us acts of kindness and who always comforts us. ⁴God comforts us when we go through any painful trial. His comfort heals our lives so we can comfort others with that very same comfort to people who are suffering. ⁵Just as we experience the sufferings of the Messiah which are beyond all measure, we also experience through the Messiah comfort that cannot be measured. ⁶So whenever we experience sufferings, it is so God may comfort you and rescue you from danger. Whenever God comforts us, it is so you can be comforted even more, so he can teach you to wait for God, when you suffer in the same way we suffered. ⁷We are certain about what will happen to you; because you suffer like we suffer, God will also comfort you, as he does us.

⁸Brothers and sisters in the Messiah, we want you to know about the trouble we had in the province of Asia. That trouble gave us such pain that we could not bear it. We were almost certain that we were going to die. ⁹They pronounced the sentence of death on us; we were waiting to be killed. That sentence of death taught us not to rely on our own strength but on God, who raises the dead and brings them back to life. ¹⁰But God rescued us from those terrible dangers, and he promises to rescue us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to rescue us. ¹¹He will do this as you help us by praying for us. Now many thank God because he has been so kind to us, since many have prayed for us.

¹²We can very happily say that we have we lived toward all people in an honest and sincere way. We lived in the world as God's own people and we have deep trust in God, that was a gift from him. We do not live in any way that the world values. We do not listen to the world's wisdom when we choose what we will do. Instead, God has made us honest and holy in how we live. ¹³You have read my letters. I have written them so you can understand them. I hope someday you will fully understand us, ¹⁴You know a little about us already, but on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, I hope that you will be very proud of us in his presence, and we will be very proud of you.

¹⁵I am so sure that this will be the case that I previously wanted to come to you first, so that you could benefit from two visits. ¹⁶I planned to see you both when I was on my way to Macedonia and then when I was coming back from there, so you could send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷My mind was made up that this would be the plan. I was not telling you "Yes" and then telling you "No." I was not making my plans like unbelievers often make plans. ¹⁸But God is faithful in guiding us, and we do not confuse you, either. We are making our plans and staying with them. ¹⁹Our "Yes" comes from the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah—the one I and Silvanus and Timothy proclaimed to you; and there has never been any confusion in him—with him there is no "Yes and then No." Instead, it has always been simply "Yes" in him. ²⁰For the promises of God are "Yes" because they come from him. And we add our confirmation to his "Yes." And we say about God's honor: "It is True! Yes!" ²¹It is God who establishes us, together with you, in a relationship with Messiah. And he is the one who sends us out to tell people the good news. ²²He put his official seal on us, so people will know he approves of us. And he gave us the Spirit who lives within us, as an unbreakable promise that he will do even more things for us.

²³May God himself assure you about my reason for not coming to you, the Messiahians in Corinth: It was so that you would not have to face me giving correction to you. ²⁴We are not like masters who give you orders about how

you must trust in God. However, we want to work with you, so you can learn to trust God no matter what happens, and have joy in trusting him.

Chapter 2

¹In the last visit I made to Corinth I know that I hurt you very much by what I said to you. I decided this time that I would not make another painful visit to you. ²I caused you much pain on my last visit, and the people who could cheer me up the most would be the same people whom I hurt when I was there. ³I wrote that letter to you so when I came to you, you would not make me feel sad again—you, who should actually make me rejoice! I was sure that we all have the reasons to be joyful. ⁴I wrote to you then because I still had much hurt and pain in my heart—I cried many tears for you, and I did not want to hurt you anymore. Instead, I want you to know how much I love all of you.

⁵This person who fell into sin—he did not just make me sad by what he did; his sin made all of you sad. ⁶We all agree what we should do about this man and his sin. He has now been punished by most of you and his punishment was fair. ⁷So now, instead of punishing him any longer, you need to forgive him and deal kindly with him. If you do not forgive him, he may become so sad that he will begin to think that you will never forgive him.

⁸In front of all the believers, tell him how much you love him. ⁹I wrote you to see if you would obey God and deal with this problem. ¹⁰So the man you forgave, I also forgive. Whatever I have forgiven—even the smallest matters—I have forgiven out of my love for you, and I forgive as though the Messiah were standing in front of me. ¹¹By forgiving this man, we made it so Satan could not trick us into doing something worse. We know all about his tricks and his lies.

¹²Even though the Lord opened many ways for us to share the good news of the Messiah in the city of Troas, ¹³I was worried about our brother Titus, because I did not find him there. So I left the believers in Troas and returned to Macedonia to look for him. ¹⁴We thank God that we are joined together with the Messiah, and the Messiah always leads us in his march of victory. Through our lives and our message, everywhere we go, we are like those who have been near burning incense; but our fragrance does not come from real incense, but it comes from knowing the Messiah, and because we know him we have his fragrant aroma. ¹⁵For we are like a sweet-smelling incense offered by Messiah to God, which spreads among those who are being saved and those who are being condemned. ¹⁶To those people whom God condemns to die, that aroma of the Messiah is like the smell of a dead person dying once again. But to those whom God is rescuing—they smell the Messiah, who is alive, coming to make them alive, too. Indeed, no one is able by himself to spread this fragrance! ¹⁷You know that many people go from city to city selling the word of God for money. But we are not like them. We work hard to please God and we do what he wants. And we speak about the Messiah because we know God sees everything we do, and we announce the Messiah because we are joined to him.

Chapter 3

¹You know us well, and you should trust us. A stranger might need someone you know to write you a letter to introduce him to you, but you know us very well. ²You yourselves are like a letter that introduces us to other people, because everyone who knows you can see how much you trust us. ³The way you live is like a letter that the Messiah himself has written and that we brought to you. Of course, it is not a letter written with ink or on stone tablets. No, it is a letter that the Spirit of the true God has written on your own hearts.

⁴I can confidently write these things about the work we have done among you. God knows that what I write is true because it is Messiah who has worked in us. ⁵We are not able to do anything for God in our own strength, so we cannot claim to be able to. Instead, it is God who gives us all we need to serve him. ⁶He has enabled us to tell people the message about the new promise he has made to his people. This is not a message about obeying all the written laws of his old agreement that he made with the Jewish people. Instead, it is a message about God giving

us his Spirit. Previously, God condemned people to be separated from him forever if they did not obey his laws. But by God's new promise his Spirit enables people to live eternally.

⁷God's law brings death, and he wrote it on stone tablets, and he gave it to Moses. It came with the brilliant light that always shines where God is. And that glory shined on Moses' face; his face shined so brightly that the Israelites could not look at his face. That bright light slowly faded from his face. ⁸Certainly the ministry of the Spirit shines much more brightly! ⁹Even the law shined with God's brilliant light. But that brilliant light of the law can only bring death to everyone. So how very much more does his brilliant light shine in us when God makes us right with himself! ¹⁰When the brilliant light of the law is compared with God's work of putting us right with himself, it is as if the law is not wonderful at all, because what replaced it is so much more wonderful! ¹¹So you can see that the law, which is passing away, was wonderful, but you can also see that what is replacing it will be even more wonderful; and it will last forever.

¹²Since we apostles trust in God for the future, we have great courage. ¹³We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the children of Israel would not have to look at the fading light from God. ¹⁴Long ago, the children of Israel refused to believe God's message. Even today, when the old law is read, it is as if they wear that same veil. Only when we are joined with the Messiah does God take the veil away. ¹⁵Yes, even today, whenever they read the law of Moses, it is as if they had a veil over their minds. ¹⁶But when a person turns to the Lord, God removes that veil. ¹⁷Now the word "Lord" here means "the Spirit." Where the Spirit of the Lord is, people become free. ¹⁸But for all of us who believe, it is as though we look at him with no veil over our faces, and we are being changed to reflect his brilliant light more and more. This is what the Lord does; and he is the Spirit.

Chapter 4

¹God gave us this responsibility to carry out, and he also had mercy on us. So we are not downhearted. ²We are careful not to do anything we would be ashamed of doing, and we have nothing to hide from anyone. We do not promise something that God will not give, and we do not twist God's message to make it say what we want. We proclaim only the truth. In this way, we present ourselves for you to judge us as we stand before God. ³If the good news which we preach is hidden with a veil, it is hidden only from those who refuse to believe and are dying apart from God. ⁴For them, the god of this world has made them blind to the truth because they do not trust the good news about the wonderful honor of the Messiah—for it is the Messiah who shows us what God is like. ⁵We do not proclaim ourselves to you as people who can rescue you from any evil. Instead, we proclaim the Messiah Jesus as our Master, and we are your servants because we are joined to Jesus. ⁶For God is the one who said, "Light will shine out of the darkness." It is as if he has shone his light into our hearts, so that when we trust in Jesus the Messiah, we can learn how wonderful God is.

⁷Now we carry these precious gifts from God in our bodies, which are fragile like clay pots. There can be no mistake about where our strength comes from: It comes only from God. ⁸We have suffered many different kinds of trouble, but they have not destroyed us. We may be confused about what we should do, but we never give up. ⁹Some people try to harm us, but we are never alone; it is as if some people knocked us down, but we always get up again. ¹⁰We are often in danger of dying, as Jesus died, but our bodies will live again, because Jesus is alive. ¹¹So, although we are still alive, we always realize that that people some day may kill us because we teach about Jesus. God allows us to suffer in order that people will see that Jesus is alive and that he is strengthening our bodies that are some day going to die. ¹²So you can see that although we apostles are constantly suffering and may soon die, the result of that is that all of you have now received eternal life.

¹³We are not discouraged. We are like the person who wrote in the scriptures: "I trust in God; this is why I speak." We also trust in God, and we also speak about what he has done for us. ¹⁴We know that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up from the dead with him, and that Jesus will take us along with you, and take us to be where God is. ¹⁵All that I have suffered is to help you, so that more and more people can know how God loves them freely, and so that they may praise him more and more.

¹⁶We are not discouraged. When our bodies are dying a little each day outwardly, God is making us new every day on the inside. ¹⁷For these short, easy times of suffering are getting us ready for the day when God will make us wonderful forever, wonderful in ways that no one can measure or explain. ¹⁸For we are not waiting for things that we can see, but for the things we cannot see. The things that we can now see are temporary, but the things we cannot see, they last forever.

Chapter 5

¹We know that these bodies are only like temporary dwelling places, like tents that do not last very long. But we know that when we die, God gives us a permanent place in which we will live, a body that lasts forever, a body that God has made. ²While we live in our physical bodies we suffer, We often groan with longing for the bodies we will have when we will live with God— ³because when God clothes us in our new bodies, that will be our covering, like clothing.

⁴It is true that while we are still living in these bodies that do not last forever, we often groan because we desire to be free from them. We are not longing to be without a body. Instead, we groan because we desire to receive our new bodies in heaven. We long for this to happen so that these bodies that are going to die some day will suddenly be changed into bodies that will live forever. ⁵God himself prepares our new bodies for us, and he guarantees that we will receive them by giving us his Spirit.

⁶So, because God's Spirit lives in us, we are always confident that God will give us new bodies. We know that as long as we live in our bodies here on earth, we are not yet living together with the Lord Jesus in heaven. ⁷(we live our lives by trusting in him, and not by trusting in what we can see). ⁸Because we have put our trust in him, we would much rather leave these present bodies in which we are now living so we could be with the Lord Jesus at our home in heaven. ⁹Therefore we make it our goal to obey him, whether we are here or in heaven. ¹⁰For we will all stand before the Messiah when he sits as the judge of all. He will judge what we did when we were in this life. The Messiah will give us what we deserve, and he will judge what was good or bad.

¹¹Therefore we know what it is to honor the Lord, so we make sure to tell people what kind of God he is. God knows what kind of people we are, and I expect that you also understand whether we are doing good or evil. ¹²We are not trying to prove again that we are genuine servants of God. We only want you to know what kind of people we are, and to give you a reason to be proud of us. We do this, so that you can answer those who praise their own actions, but do not care about what they really are in their inner being. ¹³There are some people who think we are crazy. That is okay. I simply want to please God. But on the other hand, if you think that I speak and act seriously, that is good also. I want you to know that I do that in order to help you. ¹⁴Our love for the Messiah drives us on. We are sure of this: the Messiah died for all, therefore we all have died with him. ¹⁵The Messiah died for all, so that those who live should not live for themselves, but should live for the Messiah, who died for their sins; and he is the one whom God raised from the dead.

¹⁶Since we live no longer for ourselves, we judge no one according to the way the unbelievers judge. We once even viewed the Messiah by these human standards. But as the Messiahians, now we judge no one like this. ¹⁷When anyone is joined with the Messiah and trusts in him, he becomes a new person. Everything from the past is gone— See!— God makes everything in you new. ¹⁸All these gifts come from God. He made peace with us so that we are no longer enemies of God. Now we have peace with God through the cross of the Messiah. Also, God has given us the responsibility of announcing that he is bringing people and himself together. ¹⁹That message brings God and people together and is how God made peace with the world by what the Messiah did. God is not applying their sins to their account. Instead, the Messiah has taken our sins away and has given us this message that makes peace and brings God and people together. ²⁰So God has appointed us to represent the Messiah. God pleads with you through us. So we plead with you on the Messiah's behalf: Through the Messiah, let him make peace with you and bring you to himself. ²¹You must believe that even though Jesus never sinned, God punished him for all the sinful things that we do, just as if Jesus had done those sinful things himself. And because of our close relationship with Christ, God has declared us no longer guilty for our sins.

Chapter 6

¹We work together, and we beg you not to receive the gift of God's love in a way that makes no difference for you.

²For God said,

"At a time when I displayed my loving mercy, I listened to you,

And when I completed the work of my salvation, I helped you."

Look, this is the day when God is having mercy on you; this is the day that he is rescuing you.

³We certainly do not want to give anyone reason to do wrong, because we want no one to accuse us of preaching the good news in order to encourage evil doing. ⁴We have proved again and again that we are God's true servants. We endure great suffering, we face with courage people who hurt us, and we live through hard times. ⁵People have beaten us very badly; others have locked us up in prisons; we were the cause for people to riot; we have done hard physical labor; we have passed many long nights without sleep, and we have often gone with very little food.

⁶But in all this, our lives are pure, our knowledge is deep, and we are able to wait until God ends our suffering. We know how kind the Messiah is to us; we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and we love others. ⁷We live according to God's true Word, and we have God's power. By means of the Messiah, God has put us right with himself. This is the truth that we continuously believe; it is like armor that a soldier wears, and like weapons for both of his hands.

⁸Sometimes people honor us; at other times, they dishonor us. Sometimes they say many evil things about us; at other times, they praise us. They accuse us of lying, even though we tell the truth. ⁹We live like persons whom nobody knows, but some people know us very well. Some try to kill us for announcing the message about the Messiah, even though no one legally ever condemns us to death. ¹⁰We live with great sorrow but we always rejoice. We live as some of the poorest people, but we have the treasure of the good news that makes many rich. You can see that we own nothing, but the truth is that all things belong to us.

¹¹We have spoken to you very openly and honestly, fellow believers at Corinth. We have freely shown you that we love you. ¹²We are not the ones holding back, but you seem to be reluctant to show that you love us. ¹³It would be a fair exchange—I am speaking as to children—for you to love us in return.

¹⁴Do not work in unsuitable ways with people who do not trust the Messiah. People who live by God's measure and rules have nothing in common with those who break his laws and do whatever they want. Darkness and light cannot be together. ¹⁵Messiah cannot in any way be in agreement with the demon Beliar. A person who trusts in God has nothing in common with another person who does not trust in God. ¹⁶It is not right to bring pagan idols into the temple of God. And our bodies are like the temple of the living God, just as God said:

"I will have my home among my people.

I will live my life among them.

I will be their God

and they will be my people."

¹⁷The scriptures therefore say:

"Come out from among the unbelievers

and be separate from them," says the Lord,

"Do not handle anything that makes you filthy and unable to worship me;

and I will open my arms and welcome you, ¹⁸and I will be your Father,

and you will be my sons and daughters.”

says the all-powerful Lord.

Chapter 7

¹Dear ones, since God has promised to do these things for us, we should stop doing anything with our bodies or minds that keeps us from worshiping God. Let us keep trying to avoid sinning; let us keep honoring God and trembling in his presence.

²Open your hearts to us! No matter what you may have heard about us, we have not wronged anyone. And we have never taken advantage of anyone. ³I do not scold you to condemn you. We love you with all our hearts! We are united in purpose and we will live with you and die with you. ⁴Moreover, I not only love you, I praise you to others—and I am filled up to overflowing with such joy because of you, even when we are going through severe afflictions.

⁵When we came to you in Macedonia, we were exhausted. We had troubles on every side—we faced hardships that other people caused, and we feared many things. ⁶But God always comforts us when we are discouraged, and he comforted us at that time by sending Titus to be with us. ⁷Titus’s coming was a great comfort, but you also comforted him when you were with him. When he came to us, he told us of your deep love for us, and how you were sorry for us in our sufferings. He also told us about how you were deeply concerned for me, so I rejoiced even more because of you.

⁸I know the letter I wrote to you made you sad, but I had to write it. I did regret it when I wrote it, but what I wrote to you was necessary to help you deal with the problems in the church. I knew that your sorrow would last only for a short time. ⁹And so now I can rejoice, not because you were sad when you read my letter, but because your sorrow turned you away from the sin that was hurting you so much, and it changed your sadness into a sorrow that God brought to you, a sorrow that gave you so much more than you had lost. ¹⁰This kind of sorrow turns a person away from sin so that God can rescue him; people are glad, in the end, to have had this kind of sorrow. On the other hand, worldly sorrow, a sadness for your sins only because you were caught in them, can lead only to death. ¹¹Now think about how much good you wanted to do because you had this sorrow that God gave you. You wanted to show me you were innocent. You were so concerned about that accusation of sin, and you were so worried about how that person had sinned. You wanted justice to be done. In sum, you showed that you were innocent. ¹²What I wrote to you was not intended for the wrongdoer, and it was not written either for the one who suffered the wrong, but it was written for you to understand how much you are faithful to us. God knows that you are faithful to us. ¹³By all of this we are very encouraged!

We were so happy about what Titus told us, and we were also happy because you had given him rest and helped him. ¹⁴I told him very good things about you, how proud I was of you, and you did not put me to shame when he came to you. We praised you so much to Titus, and you proved it was all true! ¹⁵Now his love for you has grown because he has seen for himself how much you follow God, and he knows how you welcomed him among yourselves—you welcomed him with fear, because God is holy, and with trembling, because you know God is great. ¹⁶I am filled with joy because in everything, I have confidence in you.

Chapter 8

¹We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about how God has been kindly working in wonderful ways among the churches in the province of Macedonia. ²Although the believers there were suffering very much, they were rejoicing so much that, although they are poor, they gave much money for the collection for the believers in Jerusalem. ³They gave as much as they were able—and I testify it is true—and some sacrificed and gave so much they suffered need themselves, but they still gave. They wanted to give, ⁴and they begged us over and over and

pleaded with us to allow them to give to this collection, so they could help those believers whom God has set apart for himself. ⁵We did not think they could give like that. But they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave themselves to us. ⁶Titus had already begun encouraging you to contribute money, so we urged him to guide the collection to its end. ⁷As you do better than others, not only in your trust in God, in your encouraging words, in what you have learned, in taking a task to completion, and in your love for us—make sure you do very well by completing this collection also.

⁸I am not giving you an order, but I want you to prove how much you love the Lord by comparing how you give to how others give to people in need. ⁹I say this, because you know how kind our Lord Jesus the Messiah has been to you. Although he possessed everything, he gave it all up and became poor. He did this in order to make you rich. ¹⁰And in this I have some encouragement to give you: You started this ministry of help a year ago, and when you began it you were eager to do it. ¹¹In the same way, you should finish this work. Just as you were eager to begin this work, you should be eager to end it, and to do this as quickly as you can. ¹²God will accept what you do in this task, if you are eager to do it. You must finish the work by giving money from the money that you have. You cannot give what you do not have. ¹³We are not taxing you because we do not want others to have to support themselves. But it is fair for you to help them. ¹⁴You have more than you need at this time; what you have left over will be enough for them, too. In the future, they will have more than they need, and perhaps then, they will be able to help you. That is fair for everyone. ¹⁵This is like the scriptures say:

“The one who had much did not have anything left to share;
but the one who had only a little did not need anything more.”

¹⁶We thank God because he has caused Titus to care for you as much as I do. ¹⁷When we asked him to help you, he agreed to do so. He was so eager to help you that he decided to visit you himself. ¹⁸We have sent Titus along with another the Messianian brother. All the believers in the churches praise him because he preaches the good news very well. ¹⁹The believers in the churches asked him to go with us to Jerusalem to help us take to the believers there what you and the others are giving to them. We all want to contribute this money in order to honor the Lord and to show everyone how much we believers help each other.

²⁰We are doing everything we can to keep anyone from asking why we are asking for this money that you are giving so generously. ²¹We are careful to do all this in an honest and open way. We want everyone to know how we are doing this, and we know that the Lord sees us, too. ²²And with these brothers we are sending to you, we are adding still one more brother. We have seen that this brother does important work in a very faithful manner. He now desires even more to help you because he trusts you very much. ²³As for Titus himself, he is my partner; he works alongside me. The other brothers—it is the churches in our region who have chosen them to go with us to Jerusalem. When other people see them, they will praise the Messiah very much because of them. ²⁴So show these brothers how you love them; show them why we spoke so well about you, and why we could not stop telling all the churches how proud we are of you.

Chapter 9

¹Now about this collection of money for the believers in Jerusalem—all those people whom God has set apart for himself, I really do not need to write anything more to you. ²I already know that you want to help, and I praised you for this to the believers of Macedonia. In fact, I told them that you, and the other people of the province of Achaia, have been preparing for this collection since last year. Your enthusiasm is an example that has moved the believers of Macedonia to take action. ³For I am sending the brothers ahead of me, so that when they meet you, they will see that we did not praise you for nothing; I also sent them ahead of me so that you would be ready to finish the work, as I promised others you would be. ⁴I am afraid that some Macedonians might come with me when I come a little later, and that they might find that you are not ready to give all that you want to give. If that happens, we will be ashamed that we spoke so well about you—and you would be ashamed, too. ⁵I decided it was necessary to make every effort to send the brothers to you, so they could set in order everything necessary to

receive the money you have promised to give. In this way, this money will be something you freely offer, rather than a tax that we make you pay.

⁶The point is, anyone who sows very little seed will also have a small crop to harvest, but anyone who sows a great amount of seed will gather a great harvest. Similarly, if you give just a little to help others, God will give you only a few blessings. But if you give willingly and cheerfully to help people, you will receive in return many blessings from God. ⁷First decide in your heart how much money to give, so when you give it you will not regret doing it. You should not feel that anyone is forcing you to give, because God loves a person who is happy to give. ⁸God can give you all kinds of gifts more and more, so that you will always have what you yourselves need, and also enough to do good things with. ⁹As it is written in the scriptures:

“He gives good things to people everywhere,

and he gives to the poor what they need.

He does these things forever.

¹⁰God gives seed to the one who sows, and he gives bread to one who bakes it. He will also supply your seed and increase what you are able to give away to others. ¹¹God will make you rich in many ways, so that you can be generous. As a result, many others will thank God for what they receive through the work that we apostles have done.

¹²We receive this money, not only to help our the Messiahian brothers and sisters in need; we also do it so that many, many believers will thank God. ¹³Because you began this task, you have shown what kind of people you are. You honor God by obeying him and believing what he says in the good news about the Messiah. You also honor him by giving generously. ¹⁴The ones to whom you will give will greatly desire to see you; they will pray for you, because of the wonderful way in which God has been kind to you. ¹⁵We give thanks to God for this gift from him—his gift is so great we cannot express it in words.

Chapter 10

¹Now I, Paul, beg of you—and I am humble and gentle as I do so, because the Messiah has made me that way: I, who was shy when I was in front of you, but forceful when I am writing you a letter from far away: ²I beg of you that, when I come, I will not have to be harsh with you. I am afraid, however, that I will have to be, in order to speak against the people who think that we work with human standards. ³For though we now are living in our physical bodies, we do not fight using the same principles like armies do when they fight. ⁴And we are fighting with weapons, but these weapons are not designed by human beings, but by God. These weapons are powerful, so powerful that they can tear apart any false arguments. ⁵In this way we can tear apart every false argument and all those who rise up against God. Those are the ones who try to keep people from knowing him. We keep and hold every thought that people have and we take those thoughts as our prisoners. God would work in those who did not obey him, and they will turn to him, and one day they will obey the Messiah. ⁶When you completely obey the Messiah yourselves, we will be ready to punish any who remain disobedient to him.

⁷You should look at the clear facts. If anyone has faith to recognize that he belongs to the Messiah, remind him that just as he belongs to the Messiah, they should recognize that so do we! ⁸When I praised myself about our authority as apostles, that may have been too much for you. But the Lord gave that authority to me not to destroy you, but to help you and make you strong. So I am not ashamed of the authority the Lord gave me. ⁹Though my letters seem strong when you read them, I do not want you to be afraid when you read them. That is not why I have written them to you. ¹⁰Some people who know me and read my letters say, “We should take his letters seriously because they say powerful things, but when Paul is with us, he is physically weak and he is not worth listening to.” ¹¹Let those who criticize me know that what we write to you in our letters when we are absent are the very things we do when we are with you.

¹²We will not even try to compare ourselves with those who praise themselves. When they compare themselves to one another, it proves only that they are foolish. ¹³We will praise ourselves only about what God has given us to do. And we will work only as he has told us to work; our work, however, includes you also. ¹⁴When we reached out to you, we did not go beyond where God assigned us to work. He assigned your region to us, and we were the first to tell you the good news about the Messiah.

¹⁵We are not boasting about the work God gave to others, as if we had done that work. Instead, we hope that you will trust God more and more, and that in the same way, God will assign us a larger region to work in. ¹⁶We hope for this, in order that we may share the good news with people beyond where you live. We will not take credit for work that any other servants of God are doing, in their own regions where they serve him. ¹⁷The scriptures say, "Let the one who is proud, be proud of the Lord."

¹⁸When a person praises himself for what he has done, the Lord does not reward him for doing that. Instead, he rewards those whom he approves.

Chapter 11

¹It is foolish for a person to praise himself, but that is what I am doing. Please allow me to continue a little. ²For I want to guard you carefully. I want to guard you the way God himself would guard you. I am like a father who promised you in marriage to only one husband and who wants to be the one who presents you, as a pure virgin bride, to the Messiah. ³But as I think about you, I have become afraid that someone has tricked you, like the devil tricked Eve. I am afraid that someone has convinced you to stop loving the Messiah with an honest heart. ⁴I say this because you do not seem to mind if someone else comes and tells you different things about Jesus than what we told you, or if he wants you to receive a different spirit from the Spirit of God, or a different kind of good news. ⁵People call those teachers "super-apostles," but I do not think they are greater than I am. ⁶It may be true that I never studied how to give wonderful speeches, but I certainly know many things about God, as you learned when I spoke to you.

⁷Was I wrong to serve you as a humble person in such a way that others praised you instead of me? Was I wrong to preach the good news to you without charging any money? ⁸Yes, I allowed believers in other churches to give me money so I could serve you. Maybe you will say that I was robbing them. But I asked you for nothing. ⁹There was a time when I was with you that I needed many things, but I did not ask you for any money at all. The brothers who came from Macedonia provided all I needed, instead. I have done everything I could for you not to be in hardship because of me, and this I will continue to do. ¹⁰I am telling the complete truth about the Messiah and how I have worked for him. So I will continue to let everyone in all the region of Achaia know about this. ¹¹Certainly you do not think that I refused your money because I did not love you. Far from it! God knows I love you.

¹²I will continue to serve you in this same way, so that I stop those who say that they are equal to us. They will have no excuse to offer for how they boast. ¹³Such people are false apostles claiming that God has sent them. They are workers who always tell lies, and they are pretending to be apostles of the Messiah. ¹⁴They should not surprise us. Even Satan pretends to be an angel shining with the light of God's presence. ¹⁵His servants also pretend to serve God; they pretend to be good. God will punish them as they deserve.

¹⁶No one should think I am a fool. But if you really do think of me as a fool, then I will go ahead and continue to praise myself a little more. ¹⁷When I speak in this way, this is not the way the Lord speaks of me; it is simply me speaking like a fool. ¹⁸Many have been proud about who they are in this life. Well, I can be that way, too. ¹⁹You will certainly gladly put up with my foolishness, since you are so wise yourselves! ²⁰I say this because you have tolerated leaders who treated you like slaves; you followed those who created divisions among you; you let your leaders take advantage of you; you permitted your leaders to imagine themselves to be better than others; and you permit them to slap you in the face but you do nothing about it. Such a thing is really not at all wise! ²¹I'm ashamed to admit it, but Timothy and I don't have the strength to do those things to you. Whatever other people

dare to brag about, I, like a fool, can also brag about. ²²Those people claim to be upright Hebrews. So am I. They claim to be Israelites. So am I. They claim to be descendants of Abraham. So am I. ²³Are they servants of the Messiah?—I speak like a man who is out of his mind! I worked harder than any of them; I have been in more prisons than they; I have had more severe beatings than they, and I have faced death more times than they have. ²⁴Five times the Jews punished me with the thirty-nine lashes, beating me each time until I nearly died. ²⁵Three times I was beaten by my captors with wooden rods. Once they threw stones at me to kill me. Three different ships I was on were lost to the storms, and I have spent a night and a day in the open ocean hoping for rescue. ²⁶I have been on many journeys and I have known dangers in rivers, I have been in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, the Jews, danger from the non-Jews, danger in cities, danger in the wilderness, danger in the ocean, danger from false brothers who betrayed us. ²⁷I have worked hard and been in hardship, often gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty with nothing to eat. I have been cold and without enough clothing. ²⁸In addition to all that, I worry every day about how well the churches are doing. ²⁹There is no fellow believer who is weak, without me being weak with him. There is no fellow believer who has led another person into sin, without me being very angry about it.

³⁰If I must boast, I will boast only about things like these, things that show how weak I am. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus the Messiah—may everyone and everything give him praise!—he knows I am not lying!

³²At the city of Damascus, the governor under King Aretas put a guard around the city, hoping to arrest me. ³³But my friends put me in a basket and let me down me out of the city, through a window in the wall, and I escaped from him.

Chapter 12

¹Even though it does no good, I must continue to defend myself, so I will continue by boasting about some visions that the Lord gave me. ²Fourteen years ago God took me, a man who is joined to the Messiah, up to the highest heaven—although only God knows whether he took me up only in my spirit or in my body, too. ³And I—whether in my body or only in my spirit, God alone knows—⁴I was taken up into a place in heaven called paradise. There I heard things that were so holy and that I am not able to tell them to you. ⁵I can boast about that—but God made all that happen, not I. For myself, I can be proud only about how God works in me, a weak man. ⁶Even if I kept on boasting about myself, I would not be foolish, because I would be saying only what was true. However, I will boast no more, so that you can judge me only by what you hear me say, or by what you already know about me. ⁷So I will leave the subject of the amazing visions that God gave me; except that I should tell you that God sent me something very difficult to bear, a device from Satan, in order to cause me to suffer. God did this so that I would not become proud about the visions I saw. ⁸I prayed three times to the Lord about this matter; each time I begged him to take this away from me. ⁹But he said to me, “No, I will not take this away from you. All you need is for me to love you and be with you, because I do my most powerful work in you when you are weak.” That is why I would rather be proud of my weakness, so that the Messiah’s power can come and make me strong. ¹⁰I can face anything because the Messiah is with me. It may be that I must be weak, or that others might treat me with scorn, or that I must have great hardships, or that others will try to kill me. It may be that I will continue to suffer hardships of various kinds. In any case, when my power is gone, then I am at my strongest.

¹¹When I write this way, I am praising myself. But I had to do so, because you should have had confidence in me. I am just as good as these “super-apostles,” even though I am really nothing at all. ¹²I gave you the true signs of being an authentic apostle—miracles that I did very patiently among you: Wonderful miracles that proved that I truly serve Jesus the Messiah. ¹³You certainly were just as important as all the other churches! The only way you were different was that I received no money from you as I did from them. Forgive me that I did not ask this from you!

¹⁴So listen to this! I am now ready to visit you for a third time, and on this trip, as on all the others, I will not ask you for any money. I do not want anything you have. What I want is you! You know the principle that we all follow in our families: The children should not pay the expenses of their parents, but the parents save up to pay the

expenses of the children. ¹⁵I will most happily do everything I can for you, even if it means losing my life. If this means that I love you more than ever, surely you should love me more than ever as well.

¹⁶And so, someone might say that although I did not ask you for money, I tricked you into letting me myself pay for everything I needed. ¹⁷I certainly never asked any of the men whom I sent to you to get money from you and bring it to me! ¹⁸For example, I sent Titus and the other brother to you, but they did not ask you to support them. Titus never made you pay his expenses. Titus and the other brother treated you the same as I did. We lived our lives in the same way; you never had to pay anything for us.

¹⁹Surely, you do not really think that I have been trying to defend myself in this letter. God knows that I am joined to the Messiah, and that I have written everything in order to strengthen you in trusting him. ²⁰But when I come to you, I may not find you as I wished. When I come you may not want to listen to me. I fear that you are arguing a lot among yourselves, that some of you are jealous of one another, and that some of you become very angry with each other. I fear that some of you are putting yourselves first, that you are talking about each other, and that some of you are very selfish. ²¹I am afraid that when I come to you and see you, God will humble me. I am afraid that I will have to mourn for many of you who disobeyed God earlier and have not stopped sinning in various sexual ways.

Chapter 13

¹This is the third time I am coming to you to deal with these matters. The principle in dealing with these issues is what the scripture says: "Every accusation against another must be based on the testimony of two or three persons," not just one. ²When I was there on the second visit I said to those who had sinned and who had been charged before the church, and to the entire church, and I will say it again: I will not overlook these charges. ³I tell you this because you are looking for proof that the Messiah is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you; instead, he is working in you by his great power. ⁴We learn from the Messiah's example, because they crucified him when he was weak, yet God has made him alive again. And we, too, are weak as we live and follow his example, but with him, God will strengthen us as we talk with you about these sins that some of you have committed.

⁵It is yourselves whom you must examine and see how you live. You must look for evidence that you trust in how God loves you and has mercy on you. It is you whom you must put yourself to the test and ask if Jesus the Messiah lives within you? He lives in every one of you, unless, of course, you fail this test. ⁶And I hope that you will find that we pass the test and the Messiah lives in us. ⁷Now we pray to God that you may not do anything that is wrong. We pray for this, not because we want to seem better than you by passing that test. Instead, we want you to know and do the right things. Even if we seem to have failed, we want you to succeed. ⁸The truth controls what we do; we cannot do anything against the truth. ⁹We have joy when we are weak and you are strong. We pray that you may always trust and obey God completely. ¹⁰I am away from you now as I write this to you. When I come to you, I do not have to deal harshly with you. Because the Lord made me an apostle, I prefer to encourage you and not to make you weaker.

¹¹The last thing, brothers and sisters, is this: Rejoice! Act and behave better than you have been acting, and allow the Lord to give you courage. Agree with each other and live in peace together. If you do these things, God, who loves you and brings you peace, will be with you. ¹²Welcome each other in a way that tells everybody how much you love each other. ¹³I pray that the Lord Jesus the Messiah, will bless you and be kind to you! May God bless you with his love, and may the Holy Spirit join all your hearts together. ¹⁴May the Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Galatians

Chapter 1

¹⁻²I, Paul, am writing to my dear brothers and sisters in the province of Galatia. I am Paul, the apostle. No group of people made me an apostle, and God did not tell anybody to make me one. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus the Messiah and God the Father have sent me as one—yes, God the Father, who made the Messiah live again after he had died! I and all the fellow believers who are here with me greet you all in the churches in the province of Galatia. ³I pray that God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah will kindly help you and give you peace. ⁴The Messiah sacrificed himself to God for our sins, in order to take us away from this world in which people act in such evil ways. He did this because God, our Father, wanted him to. ⁵Because that is true, let us now praise God forever and ever.

⁶As you know, the Messiah called you in his kindness to trust in him. But now I am amazed that you have stopped trusting in him! Now you believe a different message, which some people say is the true good news about God.

⁷The Messiah never told us another good news, but other people are confusing you. They want to change the good news about the Messiah; they want you to believe that the Messiah actually said something different. ⁸But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven should tell you a good news that is not the same as what we told you before, God should punish that person forever. ⁹As we have already told you, so now I say to you again that someone is telling you a form of the good news that he says is good, but it is not the same as what you believed. So I ask God that he condemn that person forever. ¹⁰I do not need people to like me, because it is God who approves of me. I am not trying to please people. If I were still trying to please people, then I would not really be serving the Messiah.

¹¹My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about the Messiah that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. ¹²I did not learn this good news from any ordinary human being, and no such person taught it to me. Instead, it was Jesus the Messiah himself who taught me.

¹³People have told you about what I did in the past when I worshiped God in the Jewish way. I never stopped doing the worst things to the groups of believers that God had established. I tried to destroy those believers and their groups. ¹⁴I honored God in the Jewish way more thoroughly than any other Jew my own age. I was very angry when I saw other Jews neglecting to obey the traditions that our ancestors had kept. ¹⁵However, I was still in my mother's womb when God chose me to serve him, and he did this because it pleased him to do so. ¹⁶He showed me that Jesus is his Son; he did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any mere humans in order to understand that message better. ¹⁷And I did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem to see the apostles there, the men who had become apostles before I became one. Instead, I went away into the region of Arabia, a region of wilderness. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸It was actually three years after God revealed this good news to me that I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter. I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹I also saw James, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus and the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, but I did not see any other apostle. ²⁰God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! ²¹After I left Jerusalem, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²At that time believers in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had never seen me. ²³They only heard others keep saying, "Paul, the one who in the past was doing violent things to us, is now proclaiming the same good news that we believe and he had been trying to stop!" ²⁴So they kept praising God because of what had happened to me.

Chapter 2

¹After fourteen years passed, Barnabas, Titus, and I went up again to Jerusalem. ²We did this because God had told me we should go. I explained privately to the most important leaders of the believers the content of the good news that I had been proclaiming in the regions of the non-Jews. I did this because I wanted to make sure that they approved of what I had been preaching. I wanted to make sure that I had not been working uselessly. ³But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. ⁴The people who would have required him to be circumcised were not true believers, but they pretended that they were fellow believers. They watched us closely to see how we obey God without following all the Jewish laws and rituals, since we know that the Messiah Jesus has freed us from those things. These false believers would like to make us like slaves to the law. ⁵But not even briefly did we agree with them about circumcision. We resisted them in order that the true good news about the Messiah might continue to benefit you. ⁶But those who others said were the leaders did not add anything to what I proclaim. Those leaders are important men, but they do not matter to me, because God does not favor certain persons more than others. ⁷Instead, the leaders understood that God was trusting me to proclaim the good news to the non-Jews, just as Peter was proclaiming the good news to the Jews. ⁸That is, just as God had empowered Peter to go as an apostle to take God's message to the Jews, he also empowered me to go as an apostle to take his message to the non-Jews. ⁹Those leaders understood that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the leaders of the believers in the Messiah—the same leaders that many people knew and honored—they were the ones who shook hands with us because we were fellow workers with them. We agreed that God had sent us to the non-Jews, that is, to those who were not circumcised, and that God had sent them to the Jews, that is, to those who were circumcised. ¹⁰They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

¹¹But later while I was in the city of Antioch, after Peter came there, I looked into his eyes and told him that what he was doing was wrong. ¹²This is what happened. Peter went to Antioch and started eating regularly with non-Jewish believers there. Later there were certain Jewish believers who came to Antioch who claimed that James, the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, had sent them. And when those men came, Peter stopped eating with the non-Jewish believers and would not associate with them. He was afraid that the Jewish believers from Jerusalem would criticize him for associating with non-Jews. ¹³Also, the other Jewish believers in Antioch joined in Peter's hypocrisy by separating themselves from the non-Jewish believers. Even Barnabas thought he had to stop associating with the non-Jews! ¹⁴But when I realized that they were not following the truth of the good news about the Messiah, and when all the fellow believers had come together, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are Jewish, but you have been living like a non-Jew who does not follow the law. So how can you possibly persuade the non-Jews to live like Jews?" ¹⁵We were born as Jews, not as non-Jewish sinners who know nothing about God's law. ¹⁶But we now know that it is not because a person obeys the law that God gave to Moses that God makes a person right in his sight. God does that only if that person trusts in Jesus the Messiah. Even some of us Jews have trusted the Messiah Jesus. We did that so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust the Messiah, and not because we try to obey the law that God gave to Moses. God has said that he will not declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey the law. ¹⁷But when we asked God to make us right in his sight by trusting in the Messiah, we stopped trying to obey the law, so the law proved us to be sinners for doing that. But this certainly does not mean that the Messiah is in favor of sin. Certainly not!

¹⁸If I again believed that God would make me right in his sight because I obey his law, I would be like a man who rebuilds a shaky old building that he had once torn down. Everyone would see that I was breaking God's law. ¹⁹As I was trying to obey God's law, I became like a dead man; it was as if the law had killed me. This happened so that I might live to worship God. ²⁰It is as though my old way of life ended when the Messiah died on the cross. I no longer direct my life. The Messiah who lives in my heart now directs how I live. And whatever I do now while I live, I do it trusting in God's Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as the sacrifice to provide God's forgiveness to me. ²¹I do not set aside God's kindness, as if keeping the law could make us right with God. Otherwise, the Messiah would have died on the cross for nothing.

Chapter 3

¹You fellow believers there in Galatia are very foolish! Someone must have bewitched you with their evil eye! I told you exactly how they had crucified Jesus the Messiah, did I not? ²So I want you to tell me only one thing: When the Holy Spirit came to you, did he come because you were obeying the law of Moses? Or did the Spirit come to you because you had heard the good news and trusted in the Messiah? Certainly this is what happened. ³You are very foolish! You first became Christians because God's Spirit enabled you. But now you think you will continue until you die by trying as hard as possible to obey the law. ⁴All the difficult things you have experienced after you believed in the Messiah would have been of no value at all if you had not been trusting in him. ⁵When God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, do you think that it is because you obey God's law? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah, you trusted in him!

⁶What you have experienced is just as Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that Abraham trusted God, and as a result God declared Abraham good in his sight. ⁷You should realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in the Messiah to save them whom God has made into descendants of Abraham. ⁸Even before God began to make non-Jews good in his sight when they trusted in him, men wrote in the scriptures that he would do this. God announced this good news to Abraham, as we read in the scriptures, "Because of what you have done, I will bless all the people groups in the world." ⁹So, we know by this that it is all those who trust in the Messiah whom God blesses along with Abraham, who also trusted in God. ¹⁰God curses all those who think they can please God by obeying his law. It is just as you can read in the scriptures, "God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that Moses wrote in the book of the law." ¹¹But God has said that if he declares any people good in his sight, it will not be because they obeyed his law. You can read in the scriptures, "Every person whom God declares to be good will live because he trusts God." ¹²Whoever tries to obey the law is not trusting in the Messiah, "Whoever starts to do the things in the law must obey them all."

¹³The Messiah stopped God from having to curse us as they wrote in the law he must. This happened when God cursed the Messiah in our place. You can read in the scripture, "God curses everyone whom they hang on a tree."

¹⁴God cursed the Messiah in order to bless the non-Jews who believe in the Messiah just as he blessed Abraham. And he blessed the non-Jews so that we might receive the Spirit, whom he promised to all who trust in the Messiah.

¹⁵My fellow believers, God's promise is like a contract between two people. After they sign it, no one can cancel it, nor can they add anything to it. ¹⁶God promised to bless Abraham and his special descendant. The scriptures do not say, "your descendants," that is, many people, but instead "your descendant," meaning just one person, the Messiah. ¹⁷This is what I am saying. God established an agreement with Abraham that the law which he gave to Moses 430 years later could not cancel. ¹⁸This is because if what God is giving to us forever comes because we keep his law, then he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. In reality, however, God gave Abraham this gift because he had freely promised to give it.

¹⁹So why did God later give his law to us? God gave his law to teach us that we all deliberately break it. And looking forward, God gave the law for the time when a descendent of Abraham would come. That descendent is the one who receives the promise that was made before to Abraham. The angels protected and applied the law by the authority of the one who would stand between God and people. ²⁰Now, when one person speaks directly with another, there is no mediator. And God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

²¹So do the words of the law speak against what God promises? Certainly not. If we could obey the law and then live forever with God, then he certainly would have regarded us as good in his sight. ²²But that was impossible. Instead, because we sin, the law in the scriptures controls us—and all things—just as if we were in prison. So when God promised to free us from that prison, he was speaking about anyone who believes in Jesus the Messiah.

²³Before God revealed the good news about how people should trust in the Messiah, his law was like a soldier who kept us in prison, unable to move about. ²⁴Like a father protects his small child by telling a slave to take care of him, God was supervising us by his law until the Messiah came. He did this so that he might now declare us good in

his sight, if we trust in the Messiah. ²⁵But now that we can trust in the Messiah, we no longer need God's law to supervise us.

²⁶I say this because you are all God's children because you have trusted in the Messiah Jesus. ²⁷All of you who trust in the Messiah and were baptized so that you are joined to him, have taken on the characteristics of the Messiah's life. ²⁸If you are believers, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews, slaves or free persons, males or females, because all of you are together joined to the Messiah Jesus. ²⁹Furthermore, since you belong to the Messiah, he makes you into descendants of Abraham, and you will receive everything that God has promised him and us.

Chapter 4

¹Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a son who will later possess all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, he is like a slave whom others control. ²Until the day that his father has previously determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property. ³Likewise, when we were like young children, we were under the evil rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves. ⁴But when the time that God had determined arrived, he sent Jesus, his Son, into the world. Jesus was born to a human mother, and he had to obey the law. ⁵God sent Jesus to rescue us from the law controlling us. He did this to adopt us as his own children. ⁶Because you are now God's sons, he sent the Spirit of his Son to live in each of us. It is his Spirit who enables us to call God, "Father, our dear Father!" This shows that we are God's sons. ⁷So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is a child of God. Since each of you is now God's child, God will also give you all that he has promised. God himself will do it!

⁸When you did not know God, you worshiped gods that really did not really exist. You were their slaves. ⁹But now you do know God as your God. Perhaps it would be better, however, to say that now God knows each of you. So why are you returning again to follow the weak and worthless evil rules of this world? You do not really want to become their slaves all over again, do you? ¹⁰It actually seems that you do! You are once more obeying what others insist you should do on certain special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. ¹¹I worry about you! I worked so hard for you, but it seems that it was all for nothing. ¹²My fellow believers, I strongly urge you to become like me, because I do not let the law control me. I became like you non-Jews when I became free from the law, so you too should free yourselves from the gods. When I first went to you, you did not harm me at all, but now you are making me worry about you very much.

¹³You remember that the first time I told you the good news, I did it because I was sick. ¹⁴Although you might have despised me because I was sick, you did not reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome the Messiah Jesus himself! ¹⁵But now you are no longer happy! I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. You would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me, if that would have helped me! ¹⁶That is why I have become so sad now. You seem to think that I have become your enemy because I have continued to tell the truth about the Messiah to you. ¹⁷Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are trying to get you to follow them, but they are not doing it for your good. They want to keep you away from me, because they want you to follow them, not me. ¹⁸Well, it is good to insist on doing the right things; you should do this always, and not only when I am with you. But make sure it is the right people who are teaching you what to do! ¹⁹You who are like my children, once again I am very worried about you, and I will continue to be worried until you become like the Messiah. ²⁰But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

²¹Let me try to explain this again. Some of you desire to obey all the law of God, but do you really pay attention to what the law says? ²²In the law we read that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. ²³Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the

female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God had promised Abraham that he would have a son. ²⁴Now these two women symbolize two covenants. God made the first covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. That covenant requires the Israelites to live like a slave to the law. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this covenant. ²⁵So Hagar symbolizes Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. But Hagar also symbolizes the city of Jerusalem as it is today. This is because Jerusalem is like a slave mother: She and all her children—that is, her people—are like slaves, because they all must obey the law that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. ²⁶But there is a new Jerusalem in heaven, and that city is like a mother of all us who believe in the Messiah, and that city is free! ²⁷That new Jerusalem will have many more people than the old Jerusalem. This is because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

“You who live in Jerusalem, you must rejoice!

Now you have no children,

like a woman who cannot have children!

But one day you will shout with joy

even though you have no children now.

Like a woman who cannot give birth to children,

and you feel deserted.

You will have more children than

any woman with a husband could have borne.”

²⁸Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because you believed in what God promised to give to us. You are like Isaac, who was born because Abraham had believed in what God promised to give to him. ²⁹But long ago Abraham’s son Ishmael, who was born naturally, caused trouble for Abraham’s son Isaac, who was born because the Holy Spirit made it happen. It is the same way now. The people who are slaves to God’s law persecute those of us who trust in what the Messiah has promised to give us. ³⁰But these are the words in the scriptures: “The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The slave boy will inherit nothing. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!” ³¹My fellow believers, we are not children who have a slave woman as our mother, but we are the children who are born from a woman who was free, and so are we are free too!

Chapter 5

¹The Messiah set us free from the law so that it may control us no longer. So stop anyone who says you are still slaves to the law, and do not let the law control you like slaves again. ²Consider very carefully what I, Paul, an apostle, now tell you. If you let anyone circumcise you, what the Messiah has done for you will not help you at all! ³Once again I solemnly declare to every man whom they have circumcised, that he must obey the law perfectly, for God to declare him good in his sight. ⁴If you expect God to declare you good in his sight because you try to keep the law, you have separated yourself from the Messiah; God will no longer act kindly toward you. ⁵We whom God’s Spirit enables to trust in the Messiah are confidently waiting for the time when God will declare us good in His sight. ⁶God is not concerned whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. Instead, God is concerned about whether we trust in the Messiah, with the result that we love others because we trust in him.

⁷You were following the Messiah so well! Who stopped you from obeying his true message? ⁸God, the one who chose you, is not the one who is persuading you to think like this! ⁹This false teaching that someone is teaching you is in danger of spreading to all of you, just like a little yeast in the dough causes it all to swell up. ¹⁰I am certain that the Lord Jesus will keep you from believing in anything else except his true good news. God will certainly

punish anyone who is confusing you by teaching this false message, whoever he is. ¹¹But, my fellow believers, maybe someone is saying that I still teach that you must let them circumcise you. I certainly taught that before I followed the Messiah, but I am not teaching that any longer. But what they are saying cannot be true; otherwise, no one would be persecuting me now. No, I tell you that if people think they have to be circumcised to follow the Messiah, then the fact that the Messiah died on the cross no longer make any difference to them. ¹²I wish that those who are confusing you would go all the way and castrate themselves!

¹³My fellow believers, God has called you to set you free. But do not think he set you free so you could sin. Instead, love and serve each other, because you are now free to do that! ¹⁴Remember something that Jesus said. He said all the law means this: "Love each person like you love yourself." ¹⁵So if you attack and harm each other like wild animals, you might completely destroy each other.

¹⁶So I tell you this: Always let God's Spirit lead you. If you do that, you will not do the sinful things you might want to do. ¹⁷When you want to sin, you go against God's Spirit. And God's Spirit goes against your desire to sin. These two are always fighting against each other. The result is that you do not always do the good things that you truly desire to do. ¹⁸But when God's Spirit leads you, the law does not control you.

¹⁹It is easy to recognize what is sinful. Sinful people commit evil sexual actions, sexual actions that even go against what is natural, and they desire things that are against good laws. ²⁰They also worship false gods and things that represent those gods. They try to get evil spirits to act for them. People are hostile to others. People quarrel with each other. People are jealous. People behave angrily. People try to get others to think highly of them and do not consider what others want. People do not associate with others. People associate only with those who agree with them. ²¹People want what others have. People get drunk. People get drunk and riot. And they do other things like these. I warn you now, just like I warned you previously, that the ones who constantly act and think like this will not receive what God has for his own people when he reveals himself to everyone as king. ²²But as we grow in trusting the Messiah, God's Spirit starts causing us to love others. We are joyful. We are peaceful. We are patient. We are kind. We are good. We are ones whom others can trust. ²³We are gentle. We control our behavior. There is no law that says people should not think and act in such ways. ²⁴Furthermore, we who belong to the Messiah Jesus have stopped allowing ourselves to do the evil things that we did in the past. It is as though we had nailed them to a cross and killed these evil things!

²⁵Since God's Spirit has enabled us to live in a new way, we should behave as the Spirit leads us. ²⁶We should not be proud about ourselves. We should not make each other angry. We should not envy each other.

Chapter 6

¹My fellow believers, if you discover that a brother or sister is doing wrong, those of you whom God's Spirit is directing should gently correct that person. Furthermore, as you correct another person, you should be very careful so that you do not sin either. ²When there are brothers or sisters who have problems, you should help each other. By doing that, you will do what the Messiah commands. ³I say this because people who think more highly of themselves than they should merely fool themselves. ⁴Instead, each of you should constantly test and decide if you can approve what you yourself are doing and thinking. You can be proud because what you yourself have done is good, and not because what you have done is better than what anyone else has done. ⁵I say this because you must each perform your own individual tasks.

⁶If fellow believers teach you the truth about God, then you should share your possessions with them. ⁷You should not deceive yourselves. Remember that no one can deceive God. Just like a farmer will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants, God will pay back people according to what they have done. ⁸God will punish eternally those who commit the sins that they wish to. But those who please God's Spirit will live forever with God because of what God's Spirit does for them. ⁹But we should not tire of doing what pleases God, because eventually, at the time that God has determined, we will receive a reward, if we do not stop doing the good things that we have been doing.

¹⁰So whenever we have opportunities, we should do what is good to all people. But especially we should do what is good to all our fellow believers.

¹¹I am now writing this last part of this letter to you in my own handwriting. Notice the large letters with which I am now writing. ¹²Some Jewish believers want to circumcise you so that the other Jews will think highly of them for making converts to Judaism. But they are doing this just so that the others will not persecute them for believing that the Messiah died on the cross to save us. ¹³The reason that I say this is that not even those people keep the law of God; instead, they want to circumcise you so they can boast that they have made more converts to the Jewish faith. ¹⁴I myself, however, desire very much never to boast about anything like that. The only thing I will be proud about is our Lord Jesus the Messiah and his dying on the cross. When he died on the cross, he made everything the unbelievers wish for to be nothing in my sight, and he made what I wish for to be nothing in their sight. ¹⁵I will be very proud about that, because God does not care whether people are circumcised or not. Instead, he cares only that he changes them into new people. ¹⁶May God give peace and act kindly toward all who live like this. These believers are the true nation of Israel that belongs to God!

¹⁷I say that people have persecuted me for declaring the truth about Jesus, and as a result I have scars on my body, unlike your new teachers. So let no one trouble me about these matters again!

¹⁸My fellow believers, may our Lord Jesus the Messiah kindly be good to all of you. Amen!

Ephesians

Chapter 1

¹I am Paul. The Messiah Jesus sent me to represent him because that is what God wanted. I write this letter to the people whom God has set apart for himself who are living [in the city of Ephesus]^[1] and who are loyal to the Messiah Jesus. ²{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! He has blessed us with every kind of spiritual blessing that comes from heaven because we belong to the Messiah. ⁴In fact, even before God created the world, he chose us to belong to the Messiah, so that the Messiah could make us completely holy for him. Because God loves us, ⁵he decided long ago to adopt us as his own children by means of Jesus the Messiah. It pleased him to do this, so he did what he wanted to do. ⁶Because of this, we now praise God for being so amazingly kind to us, far beyond what we could deserve, as he blessed us by means of his Son whom he loves.

⁷When Jesus died in our place, he paid the price for our sin. That is, when he died for us, God forgave us our sins because that is how abundantly and generously kind he is. ⁸God knew that we would need him to be extremely kind to us in this way because God knows everything and is completely wise. ⁹In this way, God has now revealed to us his plan that he had not revealed to anyone before—a plan that he was pleased to accomplish through the work of the Messiah. ¹⁰In this plan, when the time was just right, the Messiah would unite all things under himself so that all things in heaven and all things on earth would belong to the Messiah. ¹¹Because of what the Messiah has done, God has also claimed us as his own. He planned to do this long ago, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. ¹²In God's plan, we Jews, who were the first to trust in the Messiah, would live to praise God because he is so great. ¹³Then you non-Jews also heard the true message, the good news of how God saves you, and you believed in the Messiah. When you did that, God marked you as belonging to the Messiah by giving you the Holy Spirit, as he had promised to do. ¹⁴The Holy Spirit is like a down payment that proves that God will also give to us everything else that he has promised to give to us at that time when he will release everything that he has for us. Praise God because he is so great!

¹⁵Because God has done all of this for you, and because people have told me how you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love all the believers, ¹⁶I thank God for you constantly as I talk to God about you when I pray to him. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the glorious Father, will give you his Spirit to make you wise and to reveal God to you so that you can continually know him better. ¹⁸I pray that God may enable you to see things as they truly are so that you may know the wonderful plan that God has for us because he has called us to be his people. I pray that you may know how wonderful and abundant are the things he promises to give to us and to all the believers. ¹⁹And I pray that you will know how exceedingly powerfully God acts for us who believe in the Messiah. He is just as powerfully strong for us ²⁰as he was for the Messiah when he caused the Messiah to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. ²¹The Messiah rules as supreme there over every ruler and powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every being that people revere. He rules over them not only now, but forever. ²²God has made everything to be subject to the Messiah and has appointed the Messiah as the ruler over everything among all believers everywhere. ²³We believers relate to the Messiah as the parts of a person's body relate to its head. He supplies what is lacking for all believers just as he completes everything everywhere.

1:1 ^[1] .

Chapter 2

¹Before you trusted the Messiah, you were spiritually dead—you were unable to stop sinning. ²You used to live in a sinful way, guided by the spirit of this world. You were guided by the ruler of the evil spirits who controls the authorities of this world. This ruler is Satan, who now works through the people who disobey God. ³All of us used to live in the same way as these people who disobey God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. We deserved that God should be very angry with us, just as he is with the other people.

⁴But God is very merciful to us because he loves us very much. ⁵God loved us so much that even when we were spiritually dead and constantly sinning, he made us alive by joining us to the Messiah. Remember, when God saved you from being spiritually dead, he was being very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve. ⁶God saved us from being spiritually dead just as he raised Jesus from being physically dead and he made us spiritually alive with him. Then he gave us seats of honor to rule with the Messiah Jesus in heaven. ⁷He did that to show to everyone in all future times how exceedingly gracious he is in being kind to us by joining us to the Messiah Jesus.

⁸So God was very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve when he saved you from being spiritually dead. He did this because you trust in Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God— ⁹a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself. ¹⁰So God is making us what he wants us to be; through the Messiah Jesus he has created us as new people to do good things—things that God had previously arranged for us to do.

¹¹So remember that previously you non-Jewish people according to who your ancestors were did not belong to God's people. The Jews insulted you by calling you "the uncircumcised." They call themselves "the circumcised." By this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that humans do that only changes the body, not something that God does that changes the spirit. ¹²Remember that, at that time, you were separated from the Messiah. You were foreigners to the people of Israel. You did not share in the things that God promised in his agreements with them. You did not confidently expect that God would save you. No, you were living in this world completely without God. ¹³But now, because you have trusted in Jesus the Messiah, God has brought you into his family, even though before that you did not know him. This was possible because the Messiah died on the cross for you.

¹⁴It is the Messiah who has made it possible for Jews and non-Jews to live peacefully with each other. He made the two separate groups into one group. The two groups hated each other, but he took away every reason for hating each other when he died for all of us. ¹⁵He made it no longer necessary for us to obey the commandments and requirements of the Jewish law for him to accept us. He did this in order to make the Jews and the non-Jews into one new people who would live peacefully together because of their relationship to him. ¹⁶He did this in order to reconcile both groups to God as one group by dying on the cross for all of them. By dying for them, Jesus made it possible for them to stop being enemies to each other and to God. ¹⁷Jesus came and announced the good news that we can be at peace with God; he announced this to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. ¹⁸Because of what Jesus did for us, both Jews and non-Jews now can come to God the Father with the help of God's Spirit.

¹⁹Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer left out of God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's family. ²⁰You are like stones that God has put together into a building, and the apostles and prophets are like the foundation stones of that building. You depend on what they have taught, just as building stones depend on the foundation stones below them to form a wall that is upright and strong. The Messiah Jesus himself is like the cornerstone, which is the most important stone of the building. ²¹Jesus determines where each person belongs, just as the cornerstone determines where each stone fits in the building. Just as a builder joins stones together to make a holy temple, Jesus is assembling his family of believers to be one holy group which serves the Lord. ²²Because you belong to Jesus, he is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family that is like a building in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

Chapter 3

¹Because God is working out this plan for you non-Jews, I, Paul, pray to the Father for you, even as I am in prison because I serve the Messiah Jesus for your sake. ²I assume that people have told you about me, that God has given me the task of communicating to you non-Jews his plan to be extremely kind to you. ³God told me this message that people did not understand before by revealing it to me directly, just as I wrote to you before briefly. ⁴As you read that, you can perceive that I clearly understand things that God had not previously revealed about the Messiah. ⁵Formerly, God did not fully reveal this message to people, but now his Spirit has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. ⁶The message is this: the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God and belong to the same group of God's people and will share all the things God has promised to his people because they are joined to the Messiah Jesus as a result of believing the good news. ⁷I now serve God by telling people this good news. God was very kind to me and gave me this work to do even though I am not worthy of it, and he enables me to do it by powerfully working in me.

⁸Although I am the least worthy of all of God's people, God kindly gave me this gift: he appointed me to proclaim to the non-Jews the good news about the unending spiritual blessings that the Messiah has for us ⁹and to enable everyone to understand what God's plan is. This plan is something that God, who created everything, has kept hidden from long ago. ¹⁰God hid this plan so that as he reveals it now by making it happen in those who believe, he also reveals to the spiritual authorities at the highest levels how profoundly wise he is. ¹¹This is the plan that God has always had, and it is what he accomplished through the work of the Messiah Jesus, our Lord. ¹²So now, because of what Jesus has done, we can come to God freely and confidently because, when we trust in Jesus, he joins us to himself. ¹³So please do not be discouraged by the things that I am suffering here in prison on your behalf, because they produce a glorious result for you.

¹⁴Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. ¹⁵He is the original father, who gave the pattern for every family in heaven and on the earth to follow. ¹⁶I pray that God will give you his Spirit to strengthen your spirit in proportion to how abundantly great he is. ¹⁷I pray that the Messiah may stay as close to you as your own hearts because you trust in him, and that everything that you do and say will be a result of God's love for you and your love for him and others ¹⁸so that you may be fully able to understand, along with all of God's people, how very much the Messiah loves us. ¹⁹I pray that you will come to know how much the Messiah loves us, even though he loves us so much that we cannot understand it. I pray that God will give you a full measure of everything that he is.

²⁰Praise God, who is able to do much more than anything that we ask him to do, or even that we think that he can do, because of how powerfully he works within us! ²¹May all believers praise him for how great he is and for the awesome work that he has done through the Messiah Jesus! May they praise him throughout all generations forever! May it be so.

Chapter 4

¹Because of all this, as someone who is in prison because I serve the Lord Jesus, I appeal to you to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you to live for him. ²Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, enduring the bothersome things that others do because you love each other. ³Since God's Spirit has united you, do everything that you can to remain united with one another. Bind yourselves together by acting peacefully toward each other. ⁴God only has one family of believers and one Holy Spirit, just as he also called all of you to receive the one and only thing that people can hope for, that belongs to you whom God has called. ⁵There is only one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, only one way to believe in him, and they baptized us to show that we belong to him alone. ⁶There is one God, who is the Father of all of us, whether Jew or non-Jew. He rules over all of us, works through all of us, and is in all of us.

⁷To each one of us God has given spiritual gifts in just the way that the Messiah has decided that we should have them. ⁸That is why the scripture says,

As he went up to the high place,

he brought with him many people whom he had captured,

and gave gifts to his people.

⁹The words “he went up” certainly make us know that the Messiah had also previously gone down to the lower parts of the earth. ¹⁰The Messiah, who came down to earth from heaven, is also the one who returned upward to the most exalted position in heaven in order that he might fill the universe. ¹¹As gifts to his people, he appointed some of them to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to seek out people to tell them the good news about Jesus, and some to care for and to teach the groups of believers. ¹²God appointed all of them to prepare God’s people to do the work of serving others so that all the people who belong to the Messiah might become spiritually strong. ¹³This work will continue until all of us together become what God wants us to be: united as we together fully trust in the Son of God and experience his working in us, and completely mature as a group of believers—as fully mature in trusting and knowing God as the Messiah himself. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be spiritually immature, as little children are immature. We will no longer follow every new teaching, always changing what we believe like a boat that goes one way and then the other as the wind and waves change direction. We will not allow clever people who teach what is false to deceive us with their lies. ¹⁵Rather than that, as we lovingly speak to each other what is true, let us become more and more like the Messiah in every way as he directs us, just like a person’s head directs the person’s body. ¹⁶He is the one who joins us all together and keeps us connected to each other. He teaches us how to support each other and to work in a coordinated way as he gives the ability that is appropriate to each one of us, just as a person’s head does that for the parts of his body. In this way, as we love each other, we will grow together and make each other stronger.

¹⁷For that reason, and with the authority of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this: from now on you must not live in the same way as the other non-Jews live. The way that they live comes from an empty way of thinking. ¹⁸They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong because they try to live completely separated from God. They do this because they do not know what they are missing and because they stubbornly refuse to obey God. ¹⁹They have become unable to sense if something is good or bad, and so they have devoted themselves to doing whatever shameful things their bodies desire. They commit all kinds of immoral acts and want to do them more and more.

²⁰But that is not how you learned to live when you learned about the Messiah, ²¹to the extent that you have heard and understood the message about Jesus and have learned from him, since his way is the true way to live. ²²Your teachers taught you to stop living the way that you used to live. Because you desired to do evil things, you deceived yourselves into thinking that those things were good. Living like that was destroying you spiritually. ²³So you must let God give you a new spirit and a new way of thinking, ²⁴and you must start living like the new person that God created you in his own image to be. He created you to live in the right way with each other and with himself, in the true way of Jesus.

²⁵So stop lying to one another. Speak truthfully to each other because we belong to each other as members of God’s family. ²⁶Be angry about sinful behavior, but do not sin because you are angry. Before the end of each day, take care of whatever has made you angry ²⁷so that you will not allow the devil to do evil things among you.

²⁸Those who have been stealing must not steal anymore. Instead, they must work hard, doing good work by their own efforts so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. ²⁹Do not say harmful things. Instead, say good things that will encourage people when they need help so that God can work through your words to benefit those who hear. ³⁰God has marked you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, who will be with you until the day that the Messiah will rescue you from this world. So do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live.

³¹Do your best to completely stop behaving in these ways: Do not be resentful or furious toward others or even become angry with others. Do not shout abusively at others or slander others. Never act maliciously in any way.

³²Rather than behave like that, be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other in the same way that God also forgave you through what the Messiah has done for you.

Chapter 5

¹Because of what God has done for you, imitate him just as children imitate the father who loves them dearly. ²Do everything in a way that shows that you love others. Be like the Messiah, who loved us so much that he willingly died for us on the cross as the offering and sacrifice to God in our place. This sacrifice pleased God very much. ³But there should be no reason for anyone to even suggest that any of you are involved in sexual sin or any kind of immoral or obsessive sexual behavior. Such sins do not belong among God's people. ⁴When you speak to each other, do not tell obscene stories or say foolish things or joke about committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead, express the things that you are thankful for. ⁵It is quite true that these people will be excluded from the kingdom of the Messiah who is God: everyone who is sexually immoral or indecent, or who is obsessed with sex, which is the same as worshiping an idol. ⁶Do not let anyone deceive you by telling you that God will not punish people who do these things. It is because of these very things that God will punish the people who disobey him.

⁷So do not join with those people in doing these kinds of sins. ⁸Remember that before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you did not know what was true, just as people who are in a dark place do not know what is around them. But now it is as though you have come out into the light, because the Lord has shown to you what is true. So live in the way that the Lord has shown to you. ⁹Because just as people who have light will walk in the right way, as a result of knowing Jesus you can always live in a way that is good, right, and true. ¹⁰As you live this way, keep learning what pleases the Lord. ¹¹So do not participate together with those who are doing the worthless deeds that they do in spiritual darkness. Instead, expose to everyone how worthless those deeds are. ¹²Of course it is shameful for God's people to even talk about the evil things that those people do in secret, ¹³but it is necessary for us to expose them so that people can know and understand that these deeds are evil. This is like when we bring something into the light in order to reveal to everyone what it truly is. Then people can examine and judge that thing that light has exposed. ¹⁴Before you knew God you were like someone asleep or dead in a dark place. This is what believers are talking about when they say,

"You who are asleep, wake up!

You who are dead, come out of the darkness and live!

The Messiah will show you what is true,

just as a light that shines shows people what was in the darkness."

¹⁵So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. ¹⁶Do the most good that you can with the time that you have, because people are doing more and more evil things every day. ¹⁷So be wise, understand well what it is that the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

¹⁸Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, because people cannot control themselves when they are drunk. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. ¹⁹Sing to each other Psalms and songs about the Messiah and songs that God's Spirit gives you. Let this music come from deep within you as sincere praise to the Lord. ²⁰At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done for you. ²¹Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you deeply respect the Messiah.

²²⁻²³Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus because the husband is the leader of the wife as also the Messiah is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. ²⁴As for wives, just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of the Messiah, in the same way wives must also submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

²⁵Each of you husbands, love your wife as much as the Messiah loved all who would believe in him. He even gave up his own life for us on the cross ²⁶so that he might set us apart for himself. He purified us by telling us his plan to forgive us and by removing our sins as though washing them away in water. ²⁷He did this so that he could present the group of all believers to himself as a glorious group that does not have any sin or moral imperfection, but instead is holy and perfect, like a glorious bride ready to meet her groom. ²⁸In that same way, each man should love his own wife as much as he loves his own body. A man who loves his wife is also, by doing that, loving himself ²⁹⁻³⁰because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like the Messiah also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to him. ³¹The scriptures say this about people who marry:

“Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife, and the two of them will become as though they were one person.”

³²There is very much about this that we cannot understand, but I am telling you that this example of a husband and wife also helps us to understand the relationship between the Messiah and the group of people who belong to him. ³³However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must deeply respect her husband.

Chapter 6

¹As for you who are children, obey your parents as a way of serving the Lord Jesus because it is right for you to do that. ²God commanded in the scriptures,

“Greatly respect your father and mother.” That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised something. He promised,

³“If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth.”

⁴As for you who are fathers, do not treat your children in a way that makes them become angry. Instead, bring them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

⁵As for you who are slaves, very respectfully and sincerely obey those who are your masters here on the earth, just as you obey the Messiah. ⁶Obey them not only when they are watching you, as people do who only care about appearing to work hard. Instead, work as though you were slaves of the Messiah, doing enthusiastically what God wants you to do. ⁷Serve your masters willingly, as though you are serving the Lord Jesus rather than people. ⁸Do this because you know that the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done. It makes no difference whether that person was a slave or a free person.

⁹As for you who are masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, in the same way you must treat them well. Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is both their Lord and your Lord is in heaven and he judges all people equally whether their position is high or low.

¹⁰Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually because he is immeasurably strong. ¹¹Just as a soldier puts on all of his armor to be ready to fight his enemy, you should use every spiritual resource that God provides for you so that you may successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. ¹²Remember that we are not fighting against other human beings. Instead, we are fighting against the demons who have authority to rule over the people doing evil things in this evil time, that is, against the evil spirits who live in the air. ¹³That is why you must use well all of the spiritual resources that God has given you, like a soldier who puts on all of his armor. If you do that, you will be able to resist the evil spirits when they attack you. You will also be ready for when they attack you again and able to continue to live well for God.

¹⁴You must be ready to resist the devil and his evil spirits just as soldiers must always be ready to resist the enemy. To do that, keep thinking about the true things that God has shown you. Also, continue to act righteously. This will

protect you like a soldier's armor protects his chest. ¹⁵Just like a soldier who keeps his boots on, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the good news that tells people how to be at peace with God. ¹⁶Just as a soldier holds up a shield to stop the flaming arrows that his enemy shoots at him, you must keep trusting firmly in the Lord at all times. That will protect you from all of the things that your enemy, Satan, the evil one, will try to do to harm you spiritually. ¹⁷Also, as a soldier relies on a helmet to protect his head, rely on the fact that God has saved you. And just as a soldier uses a sword to defeat his enemies, use the weapon that God's Spirit gives you, which is the message that comes from God. ¹⁸Whenever you pray to God and request things from him, always let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. To be most effective, keep watching to see what God is doing, and be persistent as you continue to pray for all of God's people. ¹⁹Pray for me, also, that God would tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about the Messiah that people did not know before. ²⁰It is because I have been telling people about the Messiah that I am now representing him here in prison. Pray that as I continue to tell others about the Messiah, I may speak boldly because that is how I ought to speak.

²¹Now in order that you may know about what is happening with me and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully. ²²That is the reason that I am sending him to you with this letter; I want you to know how we are, and I want him to comfort and encourage you.

²³I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah may give to all of you fellow believers a peaceful spirit and enable you to love each other and to continue to trust in God. ²⁴I pray that God will continue to act graciously among all people who steadfastly love our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Philippians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter} to all of God's people who are joined to the Messiah Jesus in {the city of} Philippi. Timothy is with me. We are servants of the Messiah Jesus. {We especially write this letter} for the leaders of the believers and for those who assist {them}. ²May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³Every time I think about you, I thank my God whom I worship {because of you}. ⁴I always pray joyfully each time I pray for all of you. ⁵{The reason I pray joyfully is} because you have partnered with me in telling people the good news from the time you first believed {it} and you continue to partner with me now. ⁶God started his good work within you {when you first believed in him}, and I am confident that he will continue that work until Jesus the Messiah returns. ⁷I love you all greatly, so it is right for me to think about you in this way. God has kindly blessed us to share together {in this work}, both {as I endure} being a prisoner and also as I explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. ⁸I desire very much to be with you all, and I love you all in the same way as Jesus the Messiah loves you. God knows that this is true.

⁹I pray that God will enable you to love {God and others} in a way that continues to increase. As you increasingly love others, I pray that God will also help you to know {him} better and to understand {how to love others} in all situations. ¹⁰The reason I pray this is so that you will test and choose what is most pleasing {to God} so that then you will be completely free of doing anything wrong when the Messiah returns. ¹¹{Instead of doing wrong things,} you will be busy doing the truly good things that Jesus the Messiah enables us to do. These things will cause people to honor and praise God.

¹²My fellow believers, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have not hindered people from hearing the good news. Instead, even more people have been able to hear the good news because I am in prison. ¹³In fact, all the military guards here and many other people now know that I am in prison because I proclaim the good news about the Messiah. ¹⁴Also, because the believers {here} have seen what the Lord has done through me in prison, most of them now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly {than they did before}.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷Some people are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah because they want to {obey God} and because they love {me and others}. They understand that God has appointed me to explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. But some are not honest about why they are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah. They do it only because they want to promote themselves. They are envious of me and want to cause trouble for me. They think that I will suffer even more in prison as they become famous for proclaiming the good news. ¹⁸But what they want to do to me is not important! The important thing is that people are proclaiming {the good news about} the Messiah, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about the Messiah! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

¹⁹{I will rejoice} because I know how this situation will turn out: that God will deliver me {from prison}. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah is helping me. ²⁰{I know that this will happen, because} I very confidently expect that I will continue to faithfully honor the Messiah. {I expect and desire that} I will boldly honor the Messiah by my actions now and always, whether by the way I live or by the way I die.

²¹As for me, I live to honor the Messiah, and if I die, it will be even better for me. ²²But if I continue to live here in my body, I will be able to productively serve the Messiah. So I do not know which I prefer, {to live or to die}. ²³It is difficult for me to choose which I prefer, {living or dying}. I long to leave {this world} and go to be with the Messiah,

because to be with the Messiah is very much better {than being here}, ²⁴but I need to remain alive here on earth in order to continue to help you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all in order to help you to be even more joyful as you continue to trust in Jesus. ²⁶{I will do this} so that you will praise Jesus the Messiah even more because of me, because I will come and visit you again.

²⁷The important thing is that you act in a way that honors the good news about the Messiah. {Do this} so that people will tell me that you are working hard together in a unified way as you resist those who oppose the message about the Messiah and as you help people to live according to the good news. {You must act in this way} whether or not I visit you again. ²⁸Do not let the people who are against you make you afraid by anything {that they do or say}. When they see that you are not afraid of them, they will know that God will destroy them, but he will save you. All of this is from God. ²⁹God does this for you because he has given you the gift of suffering for the Messiah, along with the gift of believing in him. ³⁰You saw how I had to resist the people who opposed me {when I was there in Philippi}. Now you have to resist the people who are opposing you in the same way. As people tell you even now, I am still struggling to resist such people.

Chapter 2

¹Since the Messiah encourages us, since he comforts us with his love, since the Spirit has produced fellowship {among you}, since {God gives you} affection and compassion {toward one another}, ²make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, be closely united with one another, be united in your thinking. ³Never try to selfishly make yourselves more important than others, and do not think of yourselves as better than others. Instead, be humble, and treat others as more important than yourselves. ⁴Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. Instead, you should also be concerned about other people and their needs.

⁵Think the same way as the Messiah Jesus thought:

⁶Although he was in every way the same as God, he did not insist on keeping all the privileges of being equal with God.

⁷Rather, he gave up divine privileges

and became a servant to others

and became a human being. When he had become a human being,

⁸he humbled himself further. Specifically, {he humbled himself} by obeying God so far as to be willing to die. He was even willing to die by being crucified on a cross.

⁹Because {the Messiah humbly obeyed God,} God also honored him very much;

he honored him more than any other person or being,

¹⁰so that before Jesus,

every being will bow down and honor him,

beings who are in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth;

¹¹and every mouth will say,

that Jesus the Messiah is Lord,

so that God the Father is honored.

¹²As a result of these things, my dearly loved fellow believers, as you have always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, you also must obey him even more. Every one of you, work with God in his saving work within you, and do this humbly reverencing God. ¹³For God is doing something within you so that you will want to do—and then actually do—the good things that please him.

¹⁴Do everything without grumbling or quarreling. ¹⁵Behave like that in order that you may be completely faultless, children of God, who keep yourselves from evil as you live among the wicked people of this world. Then, as you live among them, you will stand out brightly against the darkness of sin. ¹⁶Tell others the message about how to have eternal life. {Do all these things} so that at the time when the Messiah returns, I will be able to rejoice that I did not work hard among you uselessly.

¹⁷And I am joyful and I will rejoice with you all, despite suffering daily or going through times when those who oppose the gospel try to kill me. I will gladly suffer along with you, adding to your service which you offer because you believe in him. ¹⁸In the same way also, each of you should rejoice regarding these things; you should rejoice together with me!

¹⁹I am hoping that the Lord Jesus will soon allow me to be able to send Timothy to visit you. I want this visit to happen because I hope he can encourage me when he returns with news of you. ²⁰I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. ²¹All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough about what Jesus the Messiah considers important. ²²But you know that Timothy has proved that he serves the Lord and others faithfully. You know that he has served the Lord closely together with me in proclaiming the good news to people. ²³I am hoping to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. ²⁴And I am confident that the Lord will allow me to be released soon, so that I myself will also come to you.

²⁵I have concluded that I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer and my fellow worker, and he endures difficulties together with me just like soldiers endure difficulties together. He is your messenger and servant, whom you sent to help me when I was needy. ²⁶Epaphroditus eagerly desires to be there with you at Philippi, and he is concerned for you {that you would be worried about him} since you learned of his illness. ²⁷Indeed, he was so sick that he almost died. But God pitied him, and he also pitied me{, and as a result, he healed him}. God pitied me so that I would not grieve even more. ²⁸So I am sending him back to you as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and so that I might grieve less. ²⁹Receive Epaphroditus joyfully as a fellow believer, and honor other believers who are like him. ³⁰Do this because, as Epaphroditus was working for the Messiah, he almost died. He knew that he might die as a result of helping me, and he nearly did die. He helped me in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do because you are far away from me.

Chapter 3

¹Finally, my fellow believers, rejoice in who God is, and rejoice about what he has done and is doing. Though I will now write to you about the same things that I mentioned to you before, this is not tiresome for me, and it will protect you from being led astray by those who teach things that are not true.

²Guard yourselves against the ones who are like dirty dogs. Guard yourselves against the ones who teach what is false. Guard yourselves against the ones who cut their bodies. ³But as for us—we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. The Spirit of God enables us to truly worship God, and we glory in the Messiah Jesus rather than trusting in religious acts such as circumcision. ⁴However, if anyone thinks they could trust in religious acts, I could; and I even more than others. {I will tell you why.}

⁵I was circumcised eight days after I was born. I am from the people of Israel and am a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew who has retained the Hebrew language and way of living. As regards obeying the laws of Moses, I was a Pharisee, and therefore I strictly obeyed all the laws of Moses and teachings of the scribes. ⁶With

regard to being passionate about what I believed, I was so extremely passionate about what I believed that I caused those who followed Jesus to suffer. With regard to doing what God required in the law of Moses and doing what the scribes required concerning it, I was without fault.

⁷But all the things that I formerly trusted in, these same things I now consider to be worthless because of the Messiah. ⁸Instead, even more, I now regard all things as worthless compared to how great it is to know the Messiah, Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have willingly given up all things and I think of them as feces to throw away in order that I might have the Messiah. ⁹I have willingly given up the things I formerly trusted in so that I might be fully united with the Messiah by believing in him, and not by obeying the laws that God gave to Moses. {I do this because I know} that the only way to please God is by believing in the Messiah. ¹⁰I want to know the Messiah better and better. I want to continually experience him working powerfully in my life, just like God worked powerfully when he caused the Messiah to become alive after he had died. I also want to be continually willing to suffer in order that I may obey God, just like the Messiah suffered in order that he might obey God. I want to become like him in his death. ¹¹{I want all of this because}I somehow want God to cause me to live again after I have died.

¹²I do not claim that I have already attained this. Nor do I say that God has already finished working in me to make me like Jesus. But I earnestly try to become more and more like Jesus, because this is why Jesus the Messiah took hold of me. ¹³My fellow believers, I certainly do not think that I have already become completely like Jesus. Nor have I fully known him. Rather, I have determined to forget about the things that are in the past and to work hard for the things that are in front of me. ¹⁴Instead, I concentrate only on continuing to become more and more like Jesus until I die. As a result, because of my relationship with Jesus the Messiah, God will reward me in heaven. ¹⁵So then, all of us who are mature believers should think this same way. But if you think differently about anything I have just written, God also will show this to you. ¹⁶However, regarding the true things that God has already revealed to us, let us all conduct our lives according to these things.

¹⁷My fellow believers, join together in imitating me, and observe closely those people who live as we do. ¹⁸There are many people who act in a way that shows that they oppose the message about the Messiah dying on the cross. I have told you about these people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. ¹⁹God will severely punish these people. These people serve their physical desires rather than God, and they are proud of the very things of which they should be ashamed. These people only think about earthly things instead of heavenly things. ²⁰As for us, we are citizens of heaven, and it is from heaven that we eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return and rescue us. ²¹God will change the weak and humble bodies that we have now to be bodies like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus. He will do this by his power, by which he is able to control all things.

Chapter 4

¹My fellow believers, I love you, and I greatly desire to see you. I rejoice because of you; you are the reason God will reward me. In the way that I have just described to you {in this letter}, continue to be steadfastly committed to the Lord, my fellow believers whom I love.

²I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord. ³And I also urge you, my faithful partner, to please help these women. {Please help them because} they have helped me spread the good news, as have Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names God has written in his book of those who will live with him forever.

⁴Always rejoice in who God is and what he has done and is doing! I say again, rejoice! ⁵Act in such a way that all people see that you are gentle. {Do this because} the Lord will return soon. ⁶Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, and tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. ⁷As a result God will enable you not to worry about anything, and he will protect how you think and feel, as you are joined to the Messiah Jesus.

⁸Finally, my fellow believers, think about whatever is true, whatever is worth honoring, whatever is right, whatever is faultless, whatever is pleasing, whatever is worth admiring, whatever is good, whatever is worth praising: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. ⁹Continually do the things that I have taught you and the things you have heard me say and the things you have seen me do. If you do these things, the God who causes us to be at peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord, because now, after some time, {by sending money to me} you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹Do not think that I am saying this because I am concerned about lacking something I need. Rather, I have learned how to be happy no matter what situation I am in. ¹²I have learned how to be happy when I do not have what I need and how to be happy when I have more than I need. I have learned how to be happy when I am hungry and when I have plenty of food to eat. I have learned how to be happy in all circumstances and at all times. ¹³Because the Messiah strengthens me, I am able to respond well to every situation. ¹⁴Nevertheless, you did the right thing to help me in my difficult situation.

¹⁵You yourselves, my friends there at Philippi, know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go out from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers except you sent me funds or helped me in any way! ¹⁶Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, more than once you sent me money to supply what I needed. ¹⁷I do not say this because I desire that you give me money. Instead, I desire that God will abundantly reward you {as a result of your helping me}.

¹⁸You have given me a very generous gift, and, as a result, I have all I require and more. I have an abundant supply of what I need, because you sent Epaphroditus to me with your gift. God considers that your gift is very acceptable, and he is very pleased with it. ¹⁹God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need, because you belong to Jesus the Messiah and because he owns all things. ²⁰Now, may our God and Father be praised and honored forever! Amen!

²¹Greet for me all God's people there. They all belong to Jesus the Messiah. The believers with me greet you also.

²²All of God's people here send their greetings to you. The fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, especially send their greetings to you.

²³I desire and pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly toward you all. Amen.

Colossians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Timothy our fellow believer {is with me}. God sent me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God chose to do. ²{I send this letter} to you who are God's people and faithful fellow believers united to the Messiah, {who live} in {the city of} Colossae. {May} God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and make you peaceful.

³We pray for you very often. {When we do,} we thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, ⁴{because} have learned that you trust in the Messiah Jesus and that you love all God's people. ⁵{You do these things} because you are confidently waiting for everything that God is keeping for you in heaven. You first learned about all that God has for you when you heard the true message, {which is} the good news about the Messiah. ⁶Just as you heard and believed this good news {in Colossae}, increasing numbers of people in many places are also hearing and believing it. These people are living in a different way now, just as you have been living in a different way since you first learned {about it} and truly experienced how God acts kindly {toward us}. ⁷This is what Epaphras told you {would happen}. He works with us for the Messiah, and we love him. He faithfully serves the Messiah as our representative. ⁸He told us that you love {all God's people}, just as God's Spirit {has empowered you to do}.

⁹Because of everything that Epaphras told us, since the time when he first told us {about you}, we have joined him in consistently praying for you. {When we pray for you,} we ask God to show you everything that he wants you to do and {to make you} able to understand everything that God's Spirit {is teaching you}. ¹⁰{We have been praying that you know what God wants} so that you can live in a way that honors the Lord and pleases him in every way. {When you live this way, you will be} doing every sort of good thing and continually knowing God better. ¹¹{As you live this way,} God will greatly strengthen you to be able to patiently endure in all situations, and to do so joyfully. God can strengthen you greatly because he is gloriously powerful. ¹²{Then you will continually} thank {God our} Father, {because} he has made you worthy to take part in everything that he has to give to his people when they are with him.

¹³God our Father has delivered us from the evil one, who used to control us, and he has given us to his Son, whom he loves, so that now we can obey his Son. ¹⁴Because we are united to his Son, God has set us free; {that is,} he has forgiven our sins. ¹⁵God's Son perfectly reveals who God is, even though no one can see God. The Son existed before God created anything, and he has first place over everything that God has created. ¹⁶{You can know that the Son existed before anything else existed and has first place over everything} because the Father and the Son together created everything that exists. {This includes} everything in heaven and everything on earth, and everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, {including the spiritual beings} such as thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities. The Father and the Son together created everything, and everything exists to honor the Son. ¹⁷The Son existed before any of creation existed, and he sustains and connects all of it. ¹⁸In regard to the church, {that is, all believers,} he rules over it as people's heads rule over their bodies. He made it possible for the church to begin {when he was} the first person to live again after dying{, never to die again}. Because of these things about him, he is greater and more important than anything and anybody else. ¹⁹{The Son rules over everything} because the Son is fully God, just as the Father gladly willed him to be. ²⁰{God the Father} also {gladly chose to work} through the Son to reconcile to himself everything {and every person that he created} in the whole universe. {God did this} through his Son when his Son died on the cross, which made everything peaceful between God and his creation.

²¹Before {you believed in the Messiah}, you did not want to be close {to God}, and you were hostile {to him} because everything you thought and did was evil. ²²But {that has all changed} now {that you believe in Jesus!} God the Father has repaired the relationship between himself and you {by working} through his Son when his Son

became human and died. {God the Father repaired the relationship} so that you can dwell with him as people who are completely free from sin. ²³{This is all true about you} as long as you continue confidently to believe {in the Messiah}, and as long as you do not give up confidently hoping {for God to do what he has promised} in the good news that you heard and that people all over the world have heard. I, Paul, serve God {by proclaiming to people} this same good news.

²⁴At the present time I suffer cheerfully {because it is} for your benefit. I am suffering physically to complete {my part of} the suffering that the Messiah began on behalf of {his people,} the church, which is like the Messiah's own body. ²⁵God called me to serve his church, and he appointed me {specifically} to carry out his plan that concerns you. {My part of this plan is} to proclaim {to you non-Jews} the full message from God. ²⁶God kept this message a secret, concealing it from people for a long time. But now he has made the message known to his people. ²⁷God has been wanting to tell his people this very glorious message that was secret, which applies to non-Jews {as well as to Jews}. The secret is that the Messiah is united to you {non-Jews}, which means that you can confidently expect to become glorious beings like the Messiah. ²⁸{This is the Messiah} whom we announce {to everyone}. {When we talk about him,} we warn and teach each person as wisely as we can. {We do these things} so that each of these people may become spiritually mature in each person's union with the Messiah. ²⁹I work hard in all that I do in order to accomplish that goal. {I can do this} because the Messiah is powerfully enabling me to do it.

Chapter 2

¹{I write these things} because I want to inform you about how hard I am working. {I work hard} for you, for the fellow-believers who live in {the city of} Laodicea, and for all fellow-believers who have not met me in person. ²{I work this hard} in order to encourage all of you {who have not met me} so that you unite yourselves together with love for each other. {I want you} to completely and confidently understand the secret that God had previously kept hidden. {This secret is about} the Messiah. ³This secret{, which is the Messiah,} includes within it everything that is valuable, including wise thinking. ⁴I am telling you about this secret in order that no person who argues persuasively will be able to convince you to believe what is not true. ⁵{You can know that those who argue persuasively are wrong} because I care about you and think about you, even though I am not with you in person. I am very happy to see that you are behaving properly and that you firmly believe in the Messiah.

⁶Now {that I have told you the truth about the good news and about me}, I want you to behave in a way that fits with how God has united you to the Messiah. You should keep behaving as you did when you accepted the Messiah Jesus the Lord. ⁷{Behaving in this way includes} staying firmly united to him, just as a plant's roots hold it firmly in place. {It also includes} depending completely on him, just as a house stands on its foundation. {It also includes} confidently trusting the Messiah, just as Epaphras taught you, and giving thanks more and more.

⁸Be on the alert so that no one who tries to lead you away from the truth will succeed. Anyone who tries to lead you away will use human thinking that is meaningless and deceptive. {Such a false message comes} from what older generations teach younger generations and from what humans normally think about the world, not from the Messiah. ⁹{I mention the Messiah} because he, a human, is fully God. ¹⁰In addition, you have everything you need since God has united you to the Messiah, who rules over {the spiritual beings, including} every ruler and every authority. ¹¹When God united you to the Messiah, it was as if God the Father had circumcised you. I do not mean that a human physically cut flesh off you. {Rather, instead of cutting off flesh,} God removed your weak and sinful parts. {God} circumcised {you in this way} through what the Messiah accomplished. ¹²{Here is another way to understand what God has done for you:} when they baptized you, it was as if {you died and} people buried you {because God the Father included you} when {the Messiah died and} people buried him. And it was as if God the Father brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This happened} because you believed that God the Father works powerfully, particularly when he brought the Messiah back to life. ¹³You used to be spiritually dead, because you {often} sinned against God and because you were non-Jews {and not part of God's people}. But God the Father brought you back to life spiritually {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This means that} he has forgiven us for all the wrong things we have done against him. ¹⁴It was as if God had an official list of the debts we owe{, which are our sins}. {When he

forgave us,} he wiped out that list of sins that counted against us, and he prevented it from coming between us and him. God accomplished this when {the Messiah died on the cross, as surely as if} he had nailed the list to the cross. ¹⁵Moreover, God defeated the spiritual beings that rule the world, and he publicly showed {that he defeated them}, just as if he had paraded them around as prisoners. {God did this when the Messiah died} on the cross.

¹⁶Because of these things {that God has done for you}, do not worry about what other people say you should do. {They may have opinions} about what to eat and what to drink. {They may have opinions about} what special days to observe, including days for worshipping God, days for celebrating when there is a new moon, or days for resting. ¹⁷{God used} these things {to} point to what he had planned for the future, which is the coming of the Messiah himself. ¹⁸{You will meet some people} who enjoy pretending to be humble and worshipping angels and who love to talk about {amazing} things that they have seen. They act like they are great—although without good reason, because they think only in human ways. Do not listen to these people who are trying to take away what God has ready to give to you. ¹⁹{These people} are not remaining loyal to the Messiah. It is he who leads the church, just like people's heads lead their bodies. The head directs how the whole body, each and every part, receives what it needs and how it works together. In this way the body grows. Just like that, the Messiah directs the church so that it grows as God wants it to grow.

²⁰It is as if you have died, {because God included you} when the Messiah died. {This frees you} from the spiritual beings that rule this world. So, you should not obey the rules {that these people have given to you}. {Doing so would mean that} you were really still part of this world. ²¹{These rules include commands like these:} “Do not feel {certain things}!” “Do not try {certain foods}!” “Do not take hold of {certain things}!” ²²All such rules concern things that perish when people make use of them. Further, people{, not God,} teach and require {these rules}. ²³Following these rules may seem to be a wise thing to do for people who worship God the way they want to, who pretend to be humble, and who treat their bodies badly {as part of their religion}. However, {following these rules} will not help you stop sinning.

Chapter 3

¹To return {to what I said before}, it is as if God brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {Because of this,} I want you to stay focused on what is in heaven, since the Messiah is there. He sits next to God the Father on the throne {and rules everything}. ²I want you to desire what {God has ready for you} in heaven, not what {you could have here} on earth. ³{You should think this way} because it is as if you have died. You are spiritually alive only because God has united you to the Messiah in close relationship with himself, and this cannot be seen {on earth right now}. ⁴You are alive because God has united you to the Messiah. {Therefore,} when {he returns again to earth and} everyone sees him, at that time you will be with him. Then, everyone will see that you too have become glorious {beings like him}.

⁵Because {this is your destiny}, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that you must kill. {The evil things that you might desire include} having improper sex, doing impure things, enjoying wrong emotions, desiring evil things, and wanting more than you need, which is the same as worshiping another god.

⁶Because people have these desires, God is angry with them and will punish them. ⁷You, just like them, used to have these desires to do evil things. {That was} when you acted out these desires. ⁸But now {that you have believed}, you must stop behaving in all evil ways. {These evil ways include} acting in angry ways, being angry with others, desiring to hurt others, talking bad about others, and speaking shameful words. ⁹You must not tell lies to one another. You are not the person you used to be, a person who normally behaved in these evil ways. ¹⁰You are a new person now, {a person} in whom God is working to make you know him more. {You are now a person} who is like God, who turned you into this new person. ¹¹Since {you are all new people}, {it is not important} whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or not, or whether anyone is a foreigner or an uncivilized person, or whether anyone is a slave or not. Instead, it is the Messiah who is most important, and God has united him to all {of you}.

¹²God has chosen you, he has set you apart as his own people, and he loves you. Because of these things and because {you are new people}, you must always behave properly {towards others}. {This includes} caring about them, being kind to them, not being proud, not behaving harshly, and taking a long time to become angry. ¹³You must not easily become irritated with one another. When you blame other people for the things they have done, you must forgive them. You should imitate how the Lord forgave you by {forgiving one another}. ¹⁴Finally, {what is} more important than everything {I have said} so far is that you love one another. By doing this you will unite yourselves together, just as God has called you to do.

¹⁵You must make the peace which the Messiah has given you a primary factor when you choose what to do. {You must do this} because God has chosen you to have peace as he unites you closely together, as closely as if you were one person's body. Also, you must give thanks to God. ¹⁶You must focus completely on the message about the Messiah as you think and act. You must teach and instruct one another very wisely using songs from the Scriptures, songs about Jesus, and songs that the Holy Spirit has given to you. You must thankfully and sincerely sing to God.

¹⁷Whenever you say or do anything, {you should behave} in every situation {as people who} represent the Lord Jesus. Also, you should thank God, {who is our} Father. {You can do this only} because of {the work of} the Messiah.

¹⁸Wives must treat their husbands as the leaders {in their families}, since this is appropriate behavior for those whom God has united to the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands must love their wives and not treat them harshly.

²⁰Children must obey their parents in every circumstance. This pleases God {and is appropriate} for those whom God has united to the Lord. ²¹Fathers must not make their children angry. Otherwise, the children may feel like giving up.

²²Slaves must obey those who are their masters in this world in every circumstance. {They should obey} not just when their masters are watching, which is how those who want to please only humans behave. Instead, {they should obey their masters} sincerely because they treat the Lord with reverence. ²³You must do whatever work you have to do diligently, as if {you were working} for the Lord instead of for merely human masters. ²⁴{You must obey and serve in this way} because you know that the Lord will justly repay you by giving you what he has kept for you. {Remember that} the Lord Messiah is {the real master} for whom you are working. ²⁵{You must remember who the real master is} because God will punish anyone who does wrong in proportion to those wrong actions. {This is because} God does not judge people based on how they look or who they are but on what they have done.

Chapter 4

¹Masters must treat their slaves justly and fairly. {You who are masters must do this} because you know that you too serve a Master{, one who is} in heaven.

²Pray {to God} persistently. Pay attention when you pray, and give thanks {to God}. ³When you are praying, pray for us too. {Pray} that God will make it possible for us to freely proclaim our message, which is the secret about the Messiah that we now share with others. Because {we proclaimed} this message, I am now in prison. ⁴{Pray} that I am able to explain the good news clearly, since this is what God has called me to do.

⁵Behave wisely around those who do not believe in the Messiah. Take advantage of every opportunity {you have to do this}. ⁶{When you talk with them,} you must always speak in a pleasant and interesting way. {When you do this,} you will know the best way to respond to each person.

⁷Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. {He is} a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves together with me as a man whom God has united to the Lord. ⁸I am sending Tychicus to you {with this letter} because I want you to know how we are doing and because Tychicus will help you live confidently. ⁹{I am sending him to you} with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer whom I love. He is from your group. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about everything {that has been happening} here.

¹⁰Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, send their regards to you. You already know that you should welcome Mark if he visits you. ¹¹Jesus, whom you may know by the name Justus, also {sends his regards}. These men{—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus—}are the only Jewish believers who are working with me for the sake of God's kingdom. They have encouraged me {in this work}. ¹²Epaphras, who is from your group {and} who serves the Messiah Jesus, sends his regards to you. He prays earnestly for you very often. {He prays} that God will make you able to be what God has called you to be and to be sure of everything that God wants {you to do}.

¹³{You know that he prays this way for you} because I can personally affirm this about him. {I tell you} that he works very hard for you, for the people {who live} in the city of Laodicea, and for the people {who live} in the city of Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas send their regards to you.

¹⁵Give our regards to the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, to Nympha, and to the group of believers {that meets} in Nympha's home. ¹⁶After the person who reads this letter to you finishes it, send {it to Laodicea} so that someone can read it to the group of believers there, too. Also, {ask for} the letter I sent to the believers in Laodicea so that you too can read it. ¹⁷{You must} tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do when God united him to the Messiah.

¹⁸I, Paul, send my regards {to you}. I am writing {these last words} myself {instead of having my scribe write them}. You must not forget that I am in prison. {I pray that God will} be gracious to you.

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter}. Silas and Timothy {are with me. We are sending this letter} to {you,} the assembly of believers in the Messiah in the city of Thessalonica, who are united to God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. {May God continue to be} kind to you and make you peaceful.

²We pray for you very often. {When we do,} we always thank God for you all. ³We thank our God and Father for the work that you do because you trust {in him}. We thank him for the way that you energetically help people because you love {them}. We thank him for the way that you patiently endure because you confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah {to keep his promises}. ⁴{We also thank God because} we know that he loves you, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, and chose you {to become his people}. ⁵{We know that God chose you} because when we told you the good news {about Jesus}, it was not only with words, but the Holy Spirit also powerfully worked {through us}. He also strongly assured {us that he had chosen you}. In the same way, you know what kind of people we are because when we were with you, everything that we did was to benefit you. ⁶As for you, you proceeded to live as we do and as the Lord {Jesus} lived. When you believed the message {of the good news}, people caused you to suffer {because you did that. But even though you were suffering,} the Holy Spirit caused you to rejoice. ⁷Because all of the people who trust {in the Messiah} throughout the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia heard {of how you remained joyful while people made you suffer}, they wanted to also live as you do. ⁸In fact, many people have heard you tell the message about the Lord {Jesus}. Then they also have proclaimed the message to other people who live throughout Macedonia and Achaia provinces. Even beyond that, people who live in many far-away places have heard about how you trust in God. As a result, we do not need to tell people anything {about what God has done for you}. ⁹These same people {who live far from you} are also telling {others} about how you {warmly} welcomed us. They also are telling {others} that you stopped worshipping {non-living} statues of false gods so that you could worship and obey the living God. He is the {only} real God. ¹⁰{They} also {are telling others that you stopped worshipping the false gods} so that you could eagerly wait for God's Son Jesus {to return to earth} from heaven. {As you know,} God resurrected Jesus after he died, and Jesus is the one who will rescue us {who believe in him} at the time when God will punish people {for their sins}.

Chapter 2

¹{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you are well aware that the time we spent with you was quite productive. ²As you know, people in the city of Philippi previously caused us to suffer and abused us. But, our God made us courageous to speak his good news to you, despite how hard we struggled {against those who tried to stop us from} speaking God's good news to you. ³Certainly, {when} we encouraged {you to believe} God's good news, we did not {try} to convince you to believe an incorrect message. {We were} not selfishly motivated. {We did} not {try} to deceive {you with our words}. ⁴Actually, God has examined us and approved that we are trustworthy to speak his good news. So, we speak God's good news because he approves us. When we speak God's good news, we are not {trying} to please people. Instead, {we are trying} to please God. {This is because God is the one} who {constantly} examines what motivates us to speak {his good news}. ⁵In fact, when we previously came, we did not flatter you. {We are} not greedily motivated, so we did not need to say things to try to hide greediness from you. You know {this is true}—{and} God confirms it! ⁶{We did} not {hope that} people would honor {us—}not you or others{—} ⁷{Yet,} we could have made you submit to us, since we are the Messiah's authorized representatives. Instead, we acted as gentle as infants while we were with you. We acted {as gentle} as a {nurturing} mother {who} comforts her own children. ⁸Since we are so fond of you, we delighted to share God's good news with you. Not only that, but {we} also {delighted to share} our own lives {with you}. {This is} because we started to love you {so much}. ⁹Certainly {our} fellow believers, you remember how hard we labored. We kept working during the night

and the day. This was so that we would not have to ask any of you to help us financially. Even though we were working, we {still} proclaimed God's good news to you. ¹⁰Both you and God testify to how faithfully, and righteously, and innocently we behaved toward {all of} you who trust {in God}. ¹¹Each one of you knows this personally: {we behaved} the same way {towards you,} as a father {behaves towards} his own children. ¹²{We kept} urging and encouraging and testifying that all of you should live the way that God wants his people to live! This is because God {is the one} who {keeps} inviting you to enter his own glorious kingdom.

¹³We also continually thank God for this reason: you accepted God's message when we reported it to you. You did not consider it to be merely a human message. {You accepted} the message as if God sent it himself. And the message did actually come from God! {We} also {constantly thank God} that for those of you who trust in him, God is effectively changing you to live like his people should. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵Certainly {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you imitated how God's assemblies in Judea suffered. {Like you, they are also} united to Jesus the Messiah. In fact, you also suffered the same things from your fellow countrymen, just as the Judean believers in the Messiah did from the Jews in Judea as well. Those Jews in Judea both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets. These unbelieving Jews also severely mistreated us {apostles}. God is thoroughly displeased with them. They are also enemies of the whole human race! ¹⁶The unbelieving Jews keep trying to stop us from telling God's good news to those people who are not Jews. These unbelieving Jews do not want those who are not Jews {to hear} us tell the good news that can save those who are not Jews. These unbelieving Jews continue to sin so much, that these sins are like a container that is almost full. Indeed, when they least expect it, God will punish them at the end {of time}!

¹⁷{Our} fellow believers, when we were far away it deprived {us} from seeing you for a short time. But, although we were far away from you, we did not become less affectionate {towards you}. We became even more eager and deeply desired to see you in person. ¹⁸Indeed, we wanted to visit you. I, Paul, even {tried to come} two times. But, {when we tried to come} Satan opposed us. ¹⁹We wanted to visit because we are so confident {about your trust in God. Being in your presence} also makes us joyful. {Since you are so faithful to God,} we are sure we have achieved what God wanted us to do. {Certainly, we are} also {convinced that we will all be together} in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes {again}! ²⁰Because of you, we glorify {God} and rejoice!

Chapter 3

¹So then, when we {felt like we} could not possibly wait any longer, we thought it was appropriate for only Silas and I to stay behind in the city of Athens. ²Yet, we sent Timothy {to you}. He works alongside us and serves God by {proclaiming} the good news about the Messiah. {Silas and I sent him} in order to support and encourage you to remain faithful {to God}. ³{We also sent Timothy to you} so that when people afflict us {apostles} are afflicted, it would not cause any of you to waver {in how you trust God}. You are well aware that {God} determined that people would afflict us {apostles}. ⁴In fact, even while we {apostles} were visiting you, we kept warning you ahead of time. We warned you that God determined for people to afflict us {apostles}. You are well aware that this is exactly what occurred. {So, you know that what we told you is true!} ⁵Again this is why, when I {felt like I} could not possibly wait any longer, I sent {Timothy to you. I was concerned} to learn if you were still trusting {in God. I was concerned that} somehow Satan tempted you {to stop trusting in God. If you would have stopped trusting in God} then all of the hard work we accomplished {among you} would turn out to be useless!

⁶Timothy recently returned to Silas and I from his visit with you. He told us the good news about how much you trust and love {God. He also told us} that whenever you think about us it makes you happy. {He told us} how much you desire to visit us. We have that same desire too! ⁷{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, during the whole time people abused and afflicted us—God encouraged us about you. We were encouraged {when learning from Timothy} that you {still} trust {in God}. ⁸Indeed, we feel revived whenever you continue {to trust} in the Lord {Jesus}! ⁹Indeed, we cannot thank God enough for what he has done for you! {When we pray} to our God, we abundantly rejoice because of {how much} you {trust in him}! ¹⁰We constantly and excessively beg God {that we would be able} to see you in person. {We} also {desire} to help you increase how much trust {in God}!

¹¹Now, we pray to God our Father, and to our Lord Jesus, that they will allow us to visit you {again!} ¹²{We} also pray that the Lord {Jesus} will cause you to flourish in loving each other. {We} pray that he will cause you to increase more and more in how you love all people. This is exactly the way we love you! ¹³{We pray that our Lord Jesus} will strengthen how much you desire {him. We pray that our Lord Jesus} will enable you to live in a way that God our Father considers faultless for those who belong to him. {We pray all of these things, so that you will be ready} when our Lord Jesus comes {a second time}, bringing all those who belong to him. Amen!

Chapter 4

¹⁻²{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, here is a summary {of this letter}. Since we are the spokespersons of the Lord Jesus—we urge and encourage you. Keep putting the teachings you received from us into practice. This is how it is necessary for you to live and to please God. Then you will excel even more. Because you are aware of the commands the Lord Jesus told us to give you.

³Certainly, God desires for you to live in a way that demonstrates that you completely belong to him: {He desires} that you refrain from committing {any} sexually immoral acts. ⁴{God desires} that each one of you knows how to control his own body. {He desires that you} treat your bodies like they belong to God and to honor them. ⁵{You must not use your body} to gratify your passionate lusts. This is how the pagans live who do not know God. ⁶{God also desires} that no one violates and exploits his fellow believer in the Messiah like this. This is because the Lord {Jesus} will avenge for all these {sexually immoral} acts. {This will happen} to you exactly as we previously said and strongly warned. ⁷Certainly God does not summon us {into his glorious kingdom} for the purpose of impure {living}, but {so that we would live} like those who belong to him. ⁸For this very reason, whoever {continues to} reject {what we have just said}, does not reject human teaching{—}but God himself—God who {continually} gives his Holy Spirit to all of you!

⁹Now, there is {really} no need {for anyone} to write to {remind} you how fellow believers in the Messiah should act affectionately toward each other. This is because God {personally} teaches all of you {how} to love each other.

¹⁰Certainly you are {already} acting lovingly to all the fellow believers in the Messiah throughout Macedonia. Yet, our fellow believers in the Messiah, we {want to} urge all of you to excel in loving {each other} even more! ¹¹{We} also {urge you} to aspire to live peacefully. {We urge you} to keep busy with your own matters. {We urge you} to focus on working to earn what you need to live. Do what we already commanded you. ¹²{We urge you to do these things,} so that you can set a good example towards those who do not believe in the Messiah {with your modest way of life.} Then you will not have to depend {on others} to provide what you need {to live}.

¹³{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we want to be certain that you are aware about {what will happen to} believers in the Messiah who are dead. This is so that you do not grieve {for believers in the Messiah} who have died. The rest of humanity {grieves} because they possess no confidence {about the resurrection of the dead}.

¹⁴Certainly, we {believers in the Messiah} trust that Jesus died and resurrected. This is why {we also trust that when Jesus returns to Earth again,} God will bring back alive those who are united to Jesus through death. {They will return} together with Jesus. ¹⁵In fact, what we are now telling you is a message from the Lord {Jesus himself}. When the Lord {Jesus} comes again{, all believers in the Messiah will greet him}. But, those {believers in the Messiah} who have {already} died will certainly greet him first, then we {believers in the Messiah} who are still alive. ¹⁶The Lord {Jesus} himself will give the command. The chief angel will shout. The trumpet of God will blast. {This is how} the Lord {Jesus} will come down from heaven. Then {all} the dead who are united to the Messiah will be the first to resurrect. ¹⁷After that, God will snatch up all of us believers in the Messiah who are still alive, so that we can meet the Lord {Jesus} in the air. Both groups of believers in the Messiah will meet together on the clouds. This is how we will remain together with the Lord {Jesus} forever! ¹⁸As a result, you must encourage each other with this message!

Chapter 5

¹{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we do not {really} need to write {anything} to you about the specific time {of our Lord's return}. ²This is because you yourselves already know accurately about the time when the Lord {Jesus} will come back. You also know that he will come {unexpectedly}, like when a robber comes at night. ³At a time when people are saying, "{We are} safe and secure!" Then suddenly {God's} destruction comes to overwhelm them! It will be similar to a pregnant woman overwhelmed by labor pains. Those people can never escape! ⁴But you, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you are not people who live spiritually unaware, so that the day {of the Lord} would surprise you in the same way as a thief. ⁵{Since} you are all God's children, {you should live ready for Jesus to return.} We are not {Satan's children,} who live spiritually unaware. ⁶So, this is why, {as God's children} we must be vigilant. {We must} not {live spiritually unaware} like the rest of humanity. Instead, we must stay alert and remain attentive, {expecting Jesus to return}. ⁷It is well known, that when people sleep, it is {usually} at night. And when people get drunk, it is {usually} at night. ⁸But {we do not live like these spiritually unaware people.} {Since} we are God's children, we must remain attentive. We must fully arm ourselves {like soldiers}. Faithful love {towards God should cover our chests,} like a breastplate. Confidence {that God} will save us {should fully protect our heads,} like a helmet.

⁹Since {we are his people,} God did not destine that he would judge us. Instead, {he destined} that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, would preserve and save us. ¹⁰Jesus died in our place, so that we would live {forever} with him. {This is true,} whether we are alive or dead {when he returns}. ¹¹As a result, continue your practice of encouraging each other and supporting each one!

¹²{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we request that you give recognition to your spiritual leaders, as {you would} to the Lord {Jesus}. They continually work hard among you, warning and instructing you. ¹³Because {of how hard} they work {for you,} we also request {that} you lovingly show the highest consideration to your spiritual leaders. Keep living peacefully with each other.

¹⁴{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we now urge that you warn and instruct those who live inappropriately. {We also urge that} you cheer up those who are discouraged. {We also urge that} you support those who are weak. {We also urge that} you live patiently with everyone. ¹⁵If someone treats you badly, make sure that you do not treat them badly in return. Instead, whenever {you can,} actively look for ways to treat all people kindly.

¹⁶Be joyful all the time! ¹⁷Constantly pray! ¹⁸Keep giving thanks to God in every situation! Indeed, this is what God desires for all of you who are united to Jesus the Messiah.

¹⁹Do not hinder the {Holy} Spirit {from working among you}! ²⁰Do not {show} scorn {toward} prophecies! ²¹Keep evaluating all of them. Retain {only} what is excellent. ²²Refrain from {engaging in} anything {that could be} considered wicked!

²³In summary, we pray that the peace-giving God will make you live like people who completely belong to him! We also pray that God will keep you completely innocent—for the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah comes {back again}. ²⁴The faithful God {continually} summons {all of} you {to completely belong to him. So,} he will also accomplish {everything you need}.

²⁵{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we also ask that you keep praying on our behalf! ²⁶When you meet with all believers in the Messiah, affectionately greet each other as is appropriate for those who belong to God. ²⁷I want you to swear an oath to the Lord {Jesus}, that you will read this letter to all the believers in the Messiah {among you}! ²⁸May our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} act kindly toward all of you!

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, and Silas and Timothy are writing this letter to you in the city of Thessalonica, who are a group of believers joined to God our Father and to Jesus the Messiah our Lord. ²We pray that God our Father, and Jesus the Messiah our Lord, will continue to act kindly toward you and that he will continue to give you peace.

³Our fellow believers, we are always thanking God, and we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. ⁴As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you are being patient and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people frequently cause you much trouble.

⁵Since you are enduring all that trouble, we clearly know that God will judge all people justly. In your case, he will declare to everyone that you are worthy for him to rule forever, because you are suffering as you trust in him. ⁶God will certainly cause trouble for those people who are troubling you, because it is right for him to do so. ⁷He also considers that it is right that he should reward you by bringing you through your hardships. He will do that for both you and us when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone when he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. ⁸Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who are not loyal to him, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. ⁹Our Lord Jesus will drive them far from himself, where he will destroy them forever, far from where he rules with very great power. ¹⁰The Lord Jesus will do this when he comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. And you will be there, too, because you believed what we solemnly told you.

¹¹In order that you might praise Jesus like this, we are also always praying for you. We pray that God will make you worthy to live in the new way he has called you to live. We pray also that he will make you able to do good in every way that you desire, and that since he is so powerful, he will also make you able to do every kind of good thing because you trust in him. ¹²We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because God, whom we worship, and our Lord Jesus the Messiah keep acting kindly toward you.

Chapter 2

¹Now I want to write to you about the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah will return and when God will gather us together with Jesus. My fellow believers, I urge you ²to think calmly about any message that may have come to you. It does not matter if it is a message that someone claims God's Spirit revealed to him, or if it comes from some person, or if it is a letter that someone claims that I wrote: I do not want you to believe that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. ³Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe such a message.

The Lord will not come immediately. First, many people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will sin very greatly against God, the one whom God will destroy. ⁴He will be the supreme enemy of God. He will proudly work against everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. As a result, he will even enter God's temple and sit down there to rule! He will publicly proclaim that he himself is God!

⁵I am sure that you remember that I kept telling you these things while I was still with you there in Thessalonica.

⁶You also know that there is something that is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God will allow him to. ⁷Although Satan is already secretly causing people to reject God's laws, the one who is preventing this man from revealing himself now will continue to

prevent him until God removes him. ⁸It is then that God will allow this man, who rejects God's laws completely, to show himself to everyone in the world. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a single command that will destroy him. Just by showing himself to everyone when he returns, Jesus will cause that man to become completely powerless.

⁹But before Jesus destroys him, Satan will give that man very great power. As a result, he will do all kinds of supernatural miracles and amazing deeds, and many people will believe that God was making him able to do those things. ¹⁰And by doing wicked deeds, that man will completely deceive those who are doomed to perish. He will be able to deceive them because they did not agree to love the true message about how Jesus could save them. ¹¹So God will enable this man to easily deceive them, so that they will believe what this man falsely claims that he is.

¹²The result will be that God will judge and condemn all those who refused to believe the truth about the Messiah, people who instead enjoyed doing everything that is wicked.

¹³Our fellow believers, you whom our Lord Jesus loves, we should always thank God for you. We should do this because he chose you to be among the first people to believe in the truth about Jesus, among the first people that God would save, and to set you apart for himself by means of his Spirit. ¹⁴We thank God that he chose you as a result of our proclaiming the message about the Messiah to you, in order that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

¹⁵So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in the Messiah. Continue believing the true things that we have taught you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

¹⁶We pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself and God, our Father—he who loves us and will encourage us forever and who kindly makes us expect to receive good things from him—¹⁷may God and Jesus the Messiah together encourage you! And may they cause you to continue doing and saying good things.

Chapter 3

¹As for the other matters, our fellow believers, pray for us that more and more people will soon hear our message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. ²Pray also for us that God will keep wicked and evil people from harming us, for not everyone believes in the Lord.

³Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is trustworthy! So we are sure that he will cause you to continue to be strong. We are also sure that he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. ⁴Because we are all joined to our Lord Jesus, we are confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what we are commanding you in this letter. ⁵We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you know how much God loves you and how much the Messiah has endured for you.

⁶Our fellow believers, we command you—and it is as if the Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this—that you stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. That is to say, you must stay away from those who are not conducting their lives in the manner that others taught us and that we in turn taught you.

⁷We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave like we behaved. We did not merely sit around without working while we were living among you. ⁸That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard to support ourselves during the day and the night, in order that we would not have to depend on any of you for what we needed. ⁹We have always had the right to depend on you for money because I am an apostle, but instead, we worked hard in order to be good examples for you, in order that you should behave like we behave. ¹⁰Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. ¹¹Now we tell you this again, because someone has told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

¹²We command those fellow believers who are not working, and urge them, just as if the Lord Jesus, the Messiah himself were speaking, that they should mind their own business, earn what they need to live on, and support themselves.

¹³Fellow believers! Do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

¹⁴If any fellow believer does not obey what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed. ¹⁵Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

¹⁶I pray that our Lord himself, who gives peace to his people, will give peace to you always and in every situation.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. ¹⁷Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I always end my letters. ¹⁸I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 Timothy

Chapter 1

¹{From} Paul, a man who represents Jesus the Messiah. This is what God, the one who saves us, and {our} Lord Jesus the Messiah, in whom we hope, commanded me to do.

²You, Timothy, are {like} a true son to me as a fellow believer. May God the Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly and mercifully to you, and keep you peaceful. ³{I urge you now,} just as I urged you when I was going to the province of Macedonia, to remain in the city of Ephesus. Stay there so that you can command certain men there to stop teaching people things that are different {from what is true}. ⁴Instruct them to stop focusing on old useless stories and endless lists of ancestors. Those things {only} cause people to argue with each other. They do not help God's plan to move forward. That happens when we trust in God. ⁵We insist on these things so that {God's} people will love {each other}. They will do this when they desire only what is good, when they know confidently that they are doing the right things, and when they genuinely trust in God. ⁶Some people have rejected these good things. Instead, they prefer to teach useless things. ⁷They desire to be teachers of the laws {that God gave to Moses}, but they do not understand the things that they talk about, nor the things that they insist are true.

⁸But we know that the laws {that God gave to Moses} are helpful if people use them in the right way. ⁹We know that God does not establish laws for people who do what is right, but for people who act as though there are no laws and who refuse to obey anyone. God establishes laws for those who do not honor God and for those who sin, for those who do not revere God and who pay no attention to him. He establishes laws for those who murder their fathers, for those who murder their mothers, and for those who murder other people. ¹⁰{God establishes laws for} people who are sexually immoral, men who have sexual relations with other men, those who kidnap people {and sell them as slaves}, liars, those who are false witnesses {in courts of law}, and every other action that is contrary to {our} true teaching. ¹¹{This teaching} comes from the good news about {our} wonderful God, whom we praise. This is the good news that he gave to me {to announce to others}.

¹²I am grateful to Jesus our Lord the Messiah who enabled me {to do this work}, because he considered that he could trust me. So he appointed me to serve {him}. ¹³Formerly I said false things about him, I caused his people to suffer, and I acted very violently {toward them}. But the Messiah acted kindly to me since I did not know that what I was doing was wrong. I did not know that what I was doing was wrong because I did not believe in him. ¹⁴Our Lord abundantly did {for me} what I did not deserve, allowing me to believe in the Messiah Jesus and to love him as someone who belongs to him.

¹⁵Everyone should trust this statement and accept it completely: "Jesus the Messiah came into the world to save sinful people {so that God would not punish them for their sins}." {As for me,} I have sinned worse than all the others. ¹⁶But this is why the Messiah Jesus acted mercifully to me. Since I am the person who has sinned worse than all others, he used me as an example to show how perfectly patient he is with people. He wanted to show this to the people who would later believe in him and, as a result, would live forever.

¹⁷So let us honor and praise the one who is the eternal king, the one whom no one can see and who can never die! He alone is God. Let us praise him forever and ever! May it be so! ¹⁸Timothy, you are like a son to me. I am telling you to do these things in agreement with what people previously prophesied about you. I want those messages to encourage you to serve God as diligently as a soldier would obey a commanding officer. ¹⁹Continue to trust {in the Lord Jesus} and to do only what you know to be right! Some people have stopped doing this and so have destroyed their relationship with God. ²⁰Among the ones who have done this are Hymenaeus and Alexander. I put them into the control of Satan so that {when Satan makes them suffer} they may learn not to insult God.

Chapter 2

¹Because of those things, the most important thing that I encourage {believers to do} is to {continually} pray to God on behalf of everyone. They should ask God for what they need, and also for what other people need, and they should thank God {for everything that he does}. ²{They should pray} for kings and for everyone who governs {over others} so that we can live peacefully and quietly. {That way we can do} all that God and others consider to be right and proper. ³It is good {to pray like that}, and it pleases God, who saves us. ⁴God desires to save all people. He wants everyone to fully know and accept his true message. ⁵That is because there is only one God {of everyone}, and there is only one person who can bring God and human beings together. That person is the Messiah Jesus, who is human himself. ⁶He willingly died {as a sacrifice} in order to rescue all people {from sin and death}. {He died} at the perfect time, and his death showed {that God desires to save all people}. ⁷It is to declare this message that God has appointed me to speak for him and has sent me to represent him. As surely as I belong to the Messiah, I am telling the truth. I am not lying! {God sent me} to teach those who are not Jews that they should believe God's true message.

⁸Therefore, I want men in every place {where believers worship} to pray {to God}. They should live in a way that pleases God, lifting their hands to pray rather than because they are angry or quarreling {with someone}.

⁹Similarly, {when gathering to worship God,} the women should wear appropriate clothing that is modest and sensible. They should not try to beautify themselves with elaborate hairstyles, or gold jewelry, or pearls, or expensive clothing. ¹⁰Instead, {they should beautify themselves by doing} the things that women who claim to worship God should do. That is, {they should be doing} good things {for other people}. ¹¹Women should learn quietly {from the leaders of the congregation}, remaining subordinate to them at all times. ¹²But I do not allow women to teach men, nor to have authority over men. Instead, women should remain quiet. ¹³After all, God made Adam first, and afterwards he made Eve, ¹⁴and the snake did not deceive Adam. The snake deceived the woman {so that she did what God had told her not to do,} and she become a sinner. ¹⁵But {even though she did that,} God will save women, although {they must still endure the pain of} bearing children, if they continue to trust in God, and to love others, and to live in a way that pleases God, and to behave sensibly.

Chapter 3

¹Everyone should trust this statement: "If anyone aspires to be a leader of the believers, he desires to do a good task." ²For that reason, a leader of the believers must be someone whom no one can rightly accuse of doing anything bad. He must be faithful to his wife. He must not do anything excessively. He must think in wise ways. He must behave well. He must welcome guests into his home. He must be able to teach others. ³He must not be a drunkard and must not be quick to fight. Instead, he must be gentle and must not be quarrelsome. He must not love money. ⁴He must lead and care for his own family well. His children should obey and completely respect him. ⁵After all, if anyone does not know how he should lead and care for the people who live in his own house, he certainly cannot care for the gathering of God's people! ⁶Do not appoint a new believer {to be a leader of the believers}, because he might become proud. Then God would judge him for the same reason as he judged the devil. ⁷A leader of the believers must also conduct himself in such a way that nonbelievers will speak well of him. Then people will not say bad things about him, and the devil will not capture him like an animal in a trap.

⁸In the same way, those who {are appointed to} assist the leaders should be people who are serious and mature. They should be sincere when they speak. They should not drink too much wine, and they must not have a strong desire for money. ⁹They must always believe the message that God has now revealed to us about believing in him, while knowing within themselves that God approves of what they are doing. ¹⁰But {just as you do for the leaders,} you must first examine the way these assistants behave. Then, if you do not find any fault with them, you may let them serve {as assistants}. ¹¹Their wives likewise must be serious and mature, they must not talk badly about people, and they must do everything in moderation. They must be trustworthy in everything that they do. ¹²An assistant must be faithful to his wife, and he must lead and care well for his children and the rest of the people in

his house. ¹³Assistants who serve well will increasingly benefit {from serving in this way} because people will respect them, and they will learn to speak very boldly about what they believe concerning the Messiah Jesus.

¹⁴I hope that I will be able to come to you soon. But I am writing these things to you now ¹⁵in case I am not able to come soon. I want you to know how believers should behave in the family of God, which is the group of all those who believe in Jesus and belong to the living God. The people in this group believe and teach the true message.

¹⁶And everyone must agree that this true message that God has revealed to us is marvelous:

“The Messiah was God who came to the world in a human body.

The Holy Spirit proved that he was genuine.

God’s messengers saw him.

Believers announced who he was to the nations.

People in many parts of the world believed in him.

God powerfully took him up {to himself in heaven}.”

Chapter 4

¹Now God’s Spirit tells us clearly that in these later times some people will stop believing the true message about Jesus. Instead, they will listen to evil spirits who deceive people, and to the false things that these evil spirits teach.

²The evil spirits teach these things through people who lie and only pretend to do what is right. These people do not even feel guilty when they teach false things. ³They prevent people from marrying. They tell them that they must not eat certain kinds of food. But God created that food as something for us to receive from him and to thank him for. He created it for us who believe in him and who know what is true. ⁴Everything that God has made is good. Any kind of food is acceptable to eat if we thank God for it when we eat it. ⁵When we pray to God and believe what he said, {that everything he created was good,} then the food that we eat is acceptable to him. ⁶If you keep teaching these things to your fellow believers, you will be serving Jesus the Messiah well. You will become strong spiritually as you obey the true message that we all believe. That true message is the good teaching that you have been following. ⁷But have nothing to do with the worthless, foolish stories. Instead, train yourself to do the things that please God. ⁸Remember that “training your body helps you a little bit, but learning to do the things that please God helps you in every way. {It is good for you} both as you live now on earth and as you live in the future with God.” ⁹Everyone should trust this statement and accept it completely. ¹⁰For this reason we work as hard as we can, because we confidently expect that the living God will do the things that he has promised. He is the Savior of all humanity, but particularly the Savior of those who believe. ¹¹Teach the believers about these things and insist that they do them.

¹²Do not allow anyone to say that you do not matter because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them this by how you speak, how you behave, how you love others, how you trust God, and how you keep yourself sexually pure. ¹³Until I come back to you, be sure to continue reading {the Scriptures to the believers when you meet together}, teaching {the Scriptures to the believers}, and urging {them to obey the Scriptures}. ¹⁴Be sure to use the gift that you have, which God gave to you when the leaders of the church laid their hands on you and told you what God had revealed to them about you. ¹⁵Put into practice all these things {that I have told you to do}! Concentrate on them so that everyone will see how much you are improving {as a follower of Jesus}.

¹⁶Be very careful about the way that you behave and about the things that you teach. Keep doing these things, because God is using them to save not only you, but also the people who listen to you.

Chapter 5

¹Do not speak harshly to a man who is older than you are. Instead, advise him as if he were your father. Advise younger men as if they were your brothers. ²Advise a woman who is older than you as if she were your mother. Advise younger women as if they were your sisters. As you do all of this, you must act in a completely proper way.

³Make sure that {the congregation} takes care of widows who truly have no one else to care for them. ⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these children or grandchildren should first learn that they must take care of their own family. {In this way} they can repay their parents {and grandparents} {for the things that they did for them when they were young,} because doing that pleases God. ⁵A widow who is truly alone and has no one to help her confidently expects that God will help her. So she prays persistently, and she earnestly asks God to help her.

⁶But a widow who lives only to please herself is spiritually dead even though she is still physically alive. ⁷Teach these things as well, so that no one will say that the believers are behaving badly. ⁸But if anyone does not take care of his own relatives, and especially those who live in his own house, he has rejected what we believe. He is worse than a person who does not believe in the Messiah.

⁹Add a widow to the list {of true widows} only if she is at least 60 years old. She also must have been faithful to her husband. ¹⁰People must report that she did good works. They must report that she brought up her children well, that she welcomed strangers, that she humbly served the believers, that she helped people who were suffering, and that she was eager to do all kinds of good works. ¹¹But do not add younger widows {to the list of true widows}. When they feel strong desires, they will change their minds about being devoted only to the Messiah and they will want to get married again. ¹²{When they do this,} they will become guilty of violating the vow that they made at first {to remain as widows}. ¹³In addition to that, they also become accustomed to doing nothing. They go from one house to another house, not only doing nothing {good}, but also talking about people and meddling in other people's affairs. They say things that they should not say. ¹⁴So, {instead of the church adding young widows to the list of true widows,} I prefer for younger widows to remarry and have children. These women should manage their homes well. In that way they will not give the enemy, {Satan,} an opportunity to accuse them of doing wrong. ¹⁵{I write these things} because already some {younger widows} are {no longer obeying the Messiah but instead are} obeying Satan.

¹⁶If any believing woman has widows {among her relatives,} she should help them. In that way, the group of believers will not have to take care of more widows than it is able. The group of believers will then be able to help the true widows {who have no family members to care for them}.

¹⁷The believers should both honor and pay the elders who lead them well, especially the elders who work hard at preaching and teaching {what the Scriptures say}. ¹⁸{We know that this is right} because we read the following in the Scriptures {that Moses wrote}: "While an ox is threshing grain, you must not tie its mouth so that it cannot eat any grain." And {we also know this is right because Jesus said,} "People should pay those who work for them."

¹⁹Only listen to someone who accuses an elder of doing wrong if {at least} two or three people testify about the matter. ²⁰{When you meet to worship,} correct those who sin in front of everyone, so that the rest {of the people} will be afraid {to sin}.

²¹With God and the Messiah Jesus and God's chosen heavenly servants watching me and listening to me, I solemnly call upon you to obey the instructions that I have just given to you. Judge every matter fairly and do not favor one person over another.

²²Do not be in a hurry to appoint someone {as a leader in the group of believers}. If he sins, it will be as though you have sinned, too, so do not do that. You must avoid sinning. ²³Stop drinking only water, {Timothy.} Instead, also drink a little wine to help with your frequent stomach sicknesses. ²⁴When some people sin, everyone knows about it and {knows that God} will judge them {for it}. But when other people sin, no one knows about it until a much later time. ²⁵In the same way, everyone knows about {many of} the good things that people do. But even when people do good things secretly, everyone will find out about them later.

Chapter 6

¹All {believers} who are slaves should honor their masters in every way. Then people will not {have a reason to} speak evil about God or about the things that we teach.

²Also, slaves who have masters who believe in the Messiah should not disrespect those masters because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve their masters even better because those who benefit from their good work are fellow believers in the Messiah, and God loves them. Teach these things and urge {our people to do them}.

³Some people teach things that are not true. They do not accept the reliable message about our Lord Jesus the Messiah. And they do not accept the teaching about how to live in a manner that pleases God. ⁴These people are proud, but they do not understand anything. Instead, they abnormally desire to argue about unimportant matters and about certain words. Their behavior causes them to envy other people. They quarrel with others, they say bad things about others, and they suspect that others have evil motives. ⁵They constantly quarrel with other people. Their whole way of thinking has become completely wrong. They have rejected the true teaching. As a result, they think that the purpose of living in a godly way is to gain material things.

⁶But we do gain great benefit when we live in a godly way and when we are content with what we have. ⁷This is true because we brought nothing into the world {when we were born}, and we are not able to take anything out of it {when we die}. ⁸So if we have food and clothing, we should be satisfied with those things. ⁹But some people strongly desire to be rich. As a result, they do wrong things to get money. Then bad things happen to them, and they cannot escape from them. They foolishly desire many things that will hurt them and, in the end, these things destroy them. ¹⁰You see, people do all sorts of evil things when they strongly desire to have a lot of money. Some people started desiring money and so they stopped desiring to follow Jesus. By doing this, they have made themselves sorrowful in many ways.

¹¹But you, as a man who serves God, must avoid these {evil} things. Instead, decide that you will do what is right, and that you will live to please God. Trust God, and love {others}. Endure {the difficult things that happen to you}. Always be gentle {with people}. ¹²Try earnestly to live according to what you believe, knowing that this is a good thing to do. Make sure that you have the gift of eternal life that God chose for you to have when you openly said before many witnesses that you belonged to the Messiah.

¹³{We are in the presence of} God who gives life to all things. {We are in the presence of} the Messiah Jesus who boldly declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. In their presence, I give you this command: ¹⁴Obey what the Messiah has commanded us. Do not do anything wrong. That way no one will be able to criticize you. Continue to obey until our Lord Jesus the Messiah comes again. ¹⁵God will cause Jesus to come back at the perfect time. We praise God. He is the only Ruler! He is the King over all other kings and the Lord over all other rulers! ¹⁶God is the only one who will never die. He lives {in heaven} in light that is so bright that no one can approach it! He is the one whom no person has ever seen and whom no person is able to see! My desire is that all people will honor him and that he will rule powerfully forever! May it be so!

¹⁷Tell the believers who are rich here in this present world that they should not be proud. They should not trust in their many possessions because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, tell them to trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything that we have, and he wants us to enjoy it. ¹⁸Tell these rich believers to do good things. Tell them they should want to do a lot of good works {instead of acquiring a lot of money}. They must be generous {with their possessions} and be willing to share {what they have with others}. ¹⁹{If they do that,} it will be as though they were storing up for themselves many good things for their future life {in heaven}. {Having done all of those good deeds} will prepare them well for the life that God wants to give them. That is the real life. ²⁰Timothy, protect the true message that God has given to you. Avoid people who want to chatter about things that are not important to God. Avoid also people who falsely claim that they have true knowledge, but who say things that oppose the true things that we teach. ²¹Certain people believe these things and have stopped believing the truth about God. May God be kind to you all.

2 Timothy

Chapter 1

¹{From} Paul, a man who represents Jesus the Messiah because this is what God wants {me to do}. I tell others that God has promised that we can live {forever} with the Messiah Jesus. ²To Timothy. I love you as if you were my own son. May God our Father and the Messiah Jesus our Lord act kindly and mercifully to you, and keep you peaceful.

³I serve God just as my ancestors did, because I truly want to do what he wants. I thank God when I pray for you. I always mention you in my prayers at all times. ⁴As I remember how you cried {when we separated}, I really want to see you {again}. Then I will rejoice greatly. ⁵I also remember how you truly believe {in Jesus}. Your grandmother Lois first believed, and then your mother Eunice believed as well. I know that you also truly believe like they do!

⁶Because you strongly believe in Jesus, I remind you to start using again the {spiritual} gift that God gave you. You received this gift {that enables you to do the work that God has chosen you to do} when I put my hands on you {and prayed for you}. ⁷{Use this gift confidently,} because God did not give us his Spirit to cause us to be afraid. Instead, his Spirit causes us to be powerful {as we work for God}, to love {him and others}, and to control ourselves.

⁸So do not be ashamed to tell people about our Lord. Do not be ashamed of me, even though I am a prisoner because I preach about him. Instead, be willing to suffer hardship along with me as you {also} tell others about the good news, because God will empower you {to endure these hardships}. ⁹{He will do this because} he saved us and called us to be a people that he sets apart {as his own}. God did not save us because of any good works that we did. Instead, he saved us because it was his plan to be kind to us even though we did not deserve it. He planned this for us before the world began through what Jesus the Messiah would do for us. ¹⁰Now Jesus the Messiah, the one who saves us, has come. As a result, everyone can know {God's gracious plan to save us}. {Specifically}, Jesus has declared the good news that we will not remain dead after we die. Instead, we will live forever in bodies that will not decay! ¹¹God assigned me to go as his representative to people in order to preach and to teach this good news. ¹²This is the reason that I am suffering here {in this prison}, but I am not ashamed {of being here}, because I know the Messiah Jesus and I trust him. I am convinced that he is able to keep me faithful to him until the day {when he returns}.

¹³Be sure that you tell others the same accurate message that you heard from me. {As you tell it,} keep trusting in the Messiah Jesus and keep loving others as the Messiah Jesus enables you to do so. ¹⁴Protect this good message that God has entrusted to you {for his people}. The Holy Spirit who lives in us will help you {to do that}.

¹⁵You know that almost all the believers in {the province of} Asia {Minor} have left me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶{But} I pray that the Lord will be kind to the family of Onesiphorus, because he often helped me, and he was not ashamed that I am in prison. ¹⁷On the contrary, when he came {here} to Rome, he kept searching for me until he found me. ¹⁸You also remember very well how much he helped {me when I was} in {the city of} Ephesus. {So} I pray that the Lord will be merciful to Onesiphorus on the {final} day {when the Lord will judge everyone}.

Chapter 2

¹So {as for} you, {Timothy,} let the Messiah Jesus strengthen you as he acts kindly towards you. You are like a son to me. ²You have heard my teachings in the presence of many people who can confirm them. {Now you must} carefully teach these things to {some other people. These must be} reliable people who will, in turn, be qualified to teach others.

³Join {me} in suffering as we obey Jesus the Messiah, just as a good soldier must suffer {as he obeys his commander}. ⁴{You know that} people who serve as soldiers, in order to please their commander, do not become involved in civilian occupations. ⁵Likewise, athletes competing in games cannot win unless they obey the rules. ⁶The farmer who works hard should receive his share of the crops first. ⁷Think about what I have just written, because{, if you do,} the Lord will enable you to understand {it} completely. ⁸{As you suffer hardships,} remember Jesus the Messiah, whom God raised from the dead. He is a descendant of King David. This is the good news that I preach. ⁹For this {good news} I have suffered many things, which now include that soldiers have imprisoned me as a criminal. But no one can imprison the message from God! ¹⁰Therefore I willingly endure all that I am suffering for the sake of those whom God has chosen. I do this in order that the Messiah Jesus will save them, too, and that they will be forever with him in his glorious presence. ¹¹You can depend on this message {that we preach}:

“When Jesus died for us, it was as though the old, sinful person that we were also died with him. If we have done that, then we will also live with him.

¹²If we accept the suffering {that comes from obeying Jesus in this life}, then we will also rule {over everything} with him {in the next life}.

But if we say that we do not know him, he also will say that he does not know us.

¹³If we are unfaithful {to Jesus}, he continues to be faithful {to us}, because he cannot be false to himself.”

¹⁴Keep reminding {the believers} about these things {that I have told you}. Warn them that God is listening and that they must not fight over {which} words {are correct for expressing God’s message}. Arguing like this does not help anything and can cause those who listen to give up on following Jesus.

¹⁵Do your best to be a person of whom God approves. Be like a worker who knows that he is doing good work as you correctly teach the true message.

¹⁶Stay out of useless conversations that ignore God, because this kind of talk causes people to dishonor God more and more. ¹⁷This way of speaking will spread like an infectious disease. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two examples of men who talk like this. ¹⁸These men believe and teach things that are not true. They {wrongly} say that God has already raised his people from the dead {and will not do so again}. In this way they convince some {believers} to stop trusting {in the Messiah}. ¹⁹However, the truth about God still exists. It is like a firm foundation of a building, on which someone has written these words: “The Lord knows those who belong to him” and “Everyone who says he belongs to the Lord must stop doing wicked deeds.”

²⁰In a wealthy person’s house there are not only containers made of gold and of silver, but also containers made of wood and of clay. The owner uses the gold and silver containers on great and honorable occasions. But he uses the wood and clay containers to do ordinary and dishonorable things. ²¹Therefore, anyone who gets rid of what is evil in his life will be like a container that someone has cleaned completely so that the owner can use it for any occasion, even the most special ones. In the same way, when a person gets rid of what is evil in his life, God considers him worthy and can use him to do any good task. ²²So avoid doing the sinful things that young people usually desire. Instead, together with people who worship the Lord sincerely, strive to do things that are right, trust in God and love him and others, and live peacefully with other people.

²³Do not let anyone begin to debate with you about matters that only uneducated and foolish people talk about. You know that when people talk about such things, they begin to quarrel. ²⁴But the one who serves the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, he should be kind to all people. He should be able to teach {God’s truth well}. He should be patient with people. ²⁵He should gently instruct the people who argue against him. Perhaps God may lead them to repent {of their wrong thinking} and to know the truth. ²⁶In that way they may think correctly again. They will realize that the devil has been deceiving them and controlling them so that they will do what he wants.

Chapter 3

¹But you need to realize that the final time period {before the Messiah returns} will be very dangerous {for believers}. ²This is because people will love themselves more than anyone else. They will love money. They will boast about themselves. They will be proud. They will insult others. They will not obey their parents. They will not thank anyone for anything. They will not honor God. ³They will not love others. They will refuse to be at peace with anyone. They will slander others. They will not control themselves. They will be brutal toward others. They will hate anything that is good. ⁴They will betray {the ones they should protect}. They will do dangerous things without thinking. They will be proud. They will do what pleases them instead of loving God. ⁵They will maintain the {outward} appearance of being religious, but they will refuse to allow God to actually do his powerful work {within them}. Stay away from such people. ⁶Some of them deceive people into allowing them into their homes, where they begin to control what the foolish women think. These are women who sin continually, and who just do whatever they feel like doing. ⁷Even though these women are always wanting to learn new things, they are never able to recognize what is actually true. ⁸In the same way that Jannes and Jambres{, Pharaoh's magicians,} tried to stop {Pharaoh from believing what} Moses {was telling him}, so do these men also try to stop {people from believing} the true message {about Jesus}. These men are ruined in how they think. {They are not fit to be teachers because} they only pretend to believe in Jesus. ⁹So although they have been able to teach wrong things to some people, they will not continue to succeed, because most others will clearly perceive that these men understand nothing. This will happen to them in the same way that it happened to Jannes and Jambres, when the people realized that they were foolish.

¹⁰But as for you, you know very well what I teach and that is what you teach. You know and imitate my way of living and how I do everything to serve God. You have trusted God as I have. You have seen that I have peace even when I am suffering. You have seen that I love God and the believers. You have seen that I keep on serving God even when it is very hard to do so. ¹¹You have seen people persecute me. You saw what I suffered when I was in {the cities of} Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. {You saw how} I endured the ways that people persecuted me {in those places}, but the Lord enabled me to survive all of those situations. ¹²It is true that people will make all believers suffer who want to live in a way that honors God through their relationship with the Messiah Jesus. ¹³Evil people who pretend {to be believers} will continue to become more and more evil. They will cause people to believe things that are not true, as they themselves believe more and more things that are not true. ¹⁴But you, in contrast, must continue to believe what you have learned and firmly believe. {You can trust that these things are true,} because you know {that} the people who taught you these things {are trustworthy}. ¹⁵{You} also {know that these things are true} because you have known what God says in the Scriptures from the time when you were a child. The Scriptures enable you to understand how God saves us when we trust in the Messiah Jesus. ¹⁶All the Scriptures come from God's Spirit. They are useful for teaching {people the truth about God}. They also help {people} to know when they are wrong and help {them} to understand what is correct, and they are useful for training {people} how to do what is right. ¹⁷In these ways, the Scriptures enable believers who serve God to be fully prepared and to have everything that they need to do every kind of good deed.

Chapter 4

¹{Timothy,} I am now going to solemnly charge you {to do some things, and} as God and the Messiah Jesus see and hear us{, they will also expect you to do them}. {Remember that} the Messiah Jesus is coming to judge all the people who have ever lived. As strongly as you want to see Jesus and to be a part of his kingdom when he comes again to rule as king, I solemnly charge you ²to proclaim the message {about the Messiah}. Be ready to do this when it is easy to do so and also when it is not easy. Correct people when they have done wrong. Warn them {not to sin}. Encourage them to do what is right. {As you do all of these things,} keep teaching them very patiently. ³{I tell you these things because} later on people will not want to listen to accurate teaching. Instead, they will collect as many teachers as they can who will tell them that they can do what they want to do. This is what they will be eager to hear. ⁴So not only will they stop listening to what is true, but instead they will let these teachers deceive

them with foolish stories. ⁵But as for you, Timothy, control yourself no matter what happens. {Be willing to} endure difficult things. Do the work of preaching the good news. Complete the work you must do to serve the Lord.

⁶{I tell you these things} because my life is like a drink offering to God that the priest is almost done pouring out. The time of my death is near. ⁷I am like an athlete who has done his best in a contest. I am like a runner who has finished his race. {By these comparisons, I mean that} I have always continued to obey God. ⁸So{, just like a runner who has won his race,} what remains for me now is {to receive} the prize for having lived in a way that pleased God. The Lord, who judges rightly, has kept this prize for me and he will give it to me when he comes again. He will not only give it to me, but also to everyone who waits eagerly for him to come again. ⁹{Timothy,} try to come to me soon ¹⁰because Demas has abandoned me and has gone to {the city of} Thessalonica. He loves life in this world {too much}. Crescens {has gone} to {the province of} Galatia, and Titus {has gone} to {the district of} Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is still with me. Get Mark and bring him with you. {Do this} because he can help me with the things that I need. ¹²As for Tychicus, I have sent {him} to {the city of} Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the outer garment that I left with Carpus at {the city of} Troas. Also bring the scrolls, especially the leather ones.

¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did many evil things to me. The Lord will punish him for what he has done. ¹⁵You also should be on guard against him because he did everything possible to stop us from preaching.

¹⁶The first time I defended myself {in court}, no believers came to support me. They all stayed away. May God not hold them responsible for that. ¹⁷But the Lord was with me. He made me strong, so that I could fully speak his word and so that all the Gentiles could hear it. God saved me from a very dangerous situation as if he had rescued me from a lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil thing that they do. He will bring me safely to where he rules in heaven. May people praise him forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁹Greet Priscilla and Aquila. Greet the people in the home of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stayed in {the city of} Corinth. As for Trophimus, I left him in {the city of} Miletus because he was sick. ²¹Try your best to come before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and {many of} the {other} believers {here} greet you. ²²May the Lord be with your spirit{, Timothy}. May he be kind to all of you {believers who are there}.

Titus

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, write this letter to you, Titus. I am a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus the Messiah. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. ²His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. God does not lie. Even before the world began, he promised to cause us to live forever. ³Then, at the right time, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. ⁴I am writing to you, Titus; you have become like a real son to me because we both now believe in Jesus the Messiah. May God the Father and the Messiah Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and to give you a peaceful spirit.

⁵I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders for the group of believers in every city, just as I told you to do. ⁶Now every elder must be someone whom no one can criticize. He must also have just one wife, his children must trust in God, and people must not consider his children to be out of control or disobedient. ⁷Everyone who leads God's people is like the person who manages the servants and property of someone else, but he is doing this for God. So it is necessary for this person to have a good reputation. He must not be proud and he must not get angry quickly. He must not be an alcoholic, not someone who likes to fight and argue, and not a greedy man. ⁸Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always control his emotions. ⁹He must always believe the true things we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this so that he can persuade people to live like this too, and so that he can correct people if they do not want to live like this.

¹⁰I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. What these people say has no value. They persuade people to believe wrong things. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of the Messiah to become circumcised. ¹¹You and the leaders whom you appoint should prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful! ¹²One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, "Cretans frequently lie to each other! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food." ¹³What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. ¹⁴They should stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that did not come from God. These commandments came from people who have stopped obeying what is true. ¹⁵If some people only want to do or think about doing good things, then everything that they do is good. But if people are wicked and do not believe in the Messiah Jesus, everything that they do is bad. Such people's way of thinking has been ruined. They do not even feel guilty when they do what is evil. ¹⁶Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

Chapter 2

¹But as for you, Titus, teach people the things that agree with what you know is true about God. ²Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult. ³Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that

they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good. ⁴In this way, they will be able to advise the younger women to love their own husbands and children. ⁵The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a wrong way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God's message to us. ⁶As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well. ⁷You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. ⁸Teach people what is right with messages that no one can criticize, so that if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us. ⁹As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not be argumentative with them. ¹⁰They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us. ¹¹The believers should behave in these good ways because God is offering to save everyone as a gift that no one deserves. ¹²By means of this free gift, God trains us to stop doing what is wrong and what people of the world want to do. He teaches us to be sensible, to do what is right, and to obey him while we live during this present time. ¹³At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in a glorious way. ¹⁴He gave himself to die in our place so that we can be free to live in the way that God wants us to live, and to remove our sin from us so that we can be a special group of people who belong only to him, and who eagerly desire to do what is good.

¹⁵Titus, speak about these things. Urge the believers to live as I have described and correct them when they do not, using your right to command them if necessary. Make sure that everyone pays attention to what you say.

Chapter 3

¹Titus, continue to tell our people again that they should obey the people who rule over them. They need to be ready to do good whenever they are able. ²They should not say disrespectful things about anyone. They should be peaceful. They should treat everyone gently and as more important than themselves. ³We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unwilling to obey God. Our own passions and our desire for pleasure took us in the wrong direction and we served them as if we were their slaves. We were constantly envying each other and doing other evil things. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other. ⁴But when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us, ⁵he saved us by removing our sin from us as though he had washed it away as the Holy Spirit made us new and enabled us to start our lives again, living in a new way for God. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful. ⁶God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah saved us. ⁷By this free gift, God has declared that everything is made right between him and us. He gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him. ⁸This is a statement that everyone can trust. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone. ⁹But many people will want to debate with you about senseless things, such as about lists of Jewish ancestors. They will want to argue with you and dispute with you about religious law. Stay away from all of that. Those kinds of things are useless and they do not help you in any way. ¹⁰If someone insists on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned him one or two times to stop doing it, then have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹because you know that someone like that has rejected the truth; he is sinning and condemns himself.

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter. ¹³Do everything you can to equip Zenas the law expert and Apollos for their journey, making sure that they have everything that they need. ¹⁴In the same way, make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people who need help. By doing this, they will be living in a useful way for God.

15Titus, all those who are with me greet you! Please greet for us everyone there who loves us as fellow believers. May God continue to be kind to all of you.

Philemon

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, am currently in prison for serving the Messiah, Jesus. I am here with Timothy, our fellow believer. {I am writing this letter} to {you,} Philemon. You also serve the Messiah, and we love you. ²{I also write} to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is {like} a soldier {in the way he serves the Messiah} with us. {I also write} to the group of believers that meets in your house. ³{I pray that} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you all and make you peaceful.

⁴When I pray, I always thank my God for you, {Philemon,} ⁵because {people tell me} how much you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love him and all of God's people. ⁶I also pray that as you trust in the Messiah, just as we trust in him, you will understand even more all the good things the Messiah has given to us for serving him.

⁷My dear friend, you have greatly encouraged me and have caused me to rejoice a lot. For you have been encouraging God's people by how much you love them.

⁸So {because you love God's people,} and because {I am an apostle} of the Messiah, I am completely confident that the Messiah would allow me to command you to do what you should do. ⁹But {instead of commanding you,} {because we love each other,} I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner because I serve the Messiah, Jesus, only request {that you do this.} ¹⁰I am asking you do something for Onesimus. He has become like a son to me {since I told him about the Messiah here} in prison. ¹¹He was useless to you in the past, but now he is useful both to you and to me!

¹²Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. ¹³I wanted to keep him here with me in order that he might serve me in your place, especially while I am still in prison for preaching the good news {about the Messiah.} ¹⁴However, {I am sending him back to you} because you did not tell me I could keep him here. I want you to help me {because you want to help me,} and not because I have forced you to help me. ¹⁵It may be {that God allowed Onesimus} to be apart {from you} during this short time so that he could return to you {as a believer} and be with you eternally. ¹⁶This is because {Onesimus} is no longer just a slave, but he is much more than a slave. For now you can love him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he is certainly even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you {as a slave,} but he also belongs to the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me to be your companion {in doing the work God has given us,} then welcome Onesimus into your home in the same way you would welcome me. ¹⁸But if he has taken anything from you, or if he is in debt to you for anything, I will repay you. ¹⁹I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you whatever he owes you. I am certain that I do not have to remind you that you owe me {even more than Onesimus might owe you,} {because God saved} your life {when I told you about the Messiah.} ²⁰Yes, my fellow believer, {I am saying what you think I am saying}. I want {you to do this for me} because of what the Lord {did for you}. Give me another reason to be glad that we are both joined to the Messiah.

²¹As I write {this letter} to you, I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

²²As {you do what I am asking you to do}, I also ask you to prepare to receive me into your home. Because all of you have been praying for me, I confidently expect that {God will allow me to leave prison} and to come to you all.

²³Epaphras, who is {suffering} with me in prison {for serving} Messiah Jesus, says hello to you. ²⁴Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my partners here, {also say hello to you.} ²⁵{I pray} that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you. Amen.

Hebrews

Chapter 1

¹In the past God communicated to our ancestors at various times and in many different ways by what he told the prophets to do, say, and write. ²But now when this final age is beginning, God has communicated to us by his own Son. God has chosen him to possess all things. By him God also created the universe. ³By looking at God's Son, we can see how wonderful God is. He shows exactly what God is truly like. He sustains everything by his powerful commands. After he sacrificed himself to take away people's sins, he rose into heaven and sat down at the highest place of honor, where he rules with God as king.

⁴By doing that he demonstrated that he is as much greater than the angels as the name that God has given him, 'Son of God,' is greater than theirs." ⁵In the scriptures no one ever reported that God said to any angel what he said to his Son:

"You are my Son!

Today I have declared to all that I am your Father!"

And he never said about any angel what he said in another scripture passage about his Son:

"I will be his Father,
and he will be to me a Son."

⁶And again, when he brings his honored Son, his only Son, into the world, he commanded:

"All the angels of God must worship him."

⁷And in the scriptures he said about the angels:

"God has made his angels to be like winds,
and his ministers who serve him to be like flames of fire."

⁸But in the scriptures, he also said about God's Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,
and you will reign justly over your kingdom.

⁹You have loved people's righteous deeds and you have hated people's sinful deeds.

So God, whom you worship, has caused you to be more joyful than anyone else besides you."

¹⁰We also know that his Son is superior to angels because someone wrote,

"Lord, it was you who created the earth in the beginning.

You also made the rest of the universe, the stars and everything in the sky.

¹¹Those things will no longer exist, but you will keep on living forever.

They will all wear out as clothing wears out.

¹²You will roll them up like a cloth, as if they were old clothes.

Then you will change all that is in the universe for something new,
like someone putting on new clothes.

But you stay the same, and you live forever!”

¹³God has never said to any angel what he said to his Son:

“Sit in the most important place next to me and rule with me
while I defeat all of your enemies for you to rule over them!”

¹⁴The angels are only spirits whom God has sent out to serve and care for believers whom God will soon save completely, as he has promised to do for them.

Chapter 2

¹So, since that is true, we must pay very great attention to what we have heard about God’s Son, so that we do not gradually stop believing it. ²When the angels spoke God’s law to the people of Israel, what they said was valid. God justly punished all who disobeyed him and violated his law. ³We will certainly not escape God. He will certainly punish those who ignore such an important message about how he saves us. It was the Lord Jesus who first told us about this, and the disciples who heard him have assured us that he did so. ⁴God also confirmed to us that this message was true by giving believers power to do mighty deeds that prove these things are true. And the Holy Spirit also gives many gifts just as he desires to distribute them.

⁵God has not put the angels in charge of the new world he will make. That is the new world about which we are speaking. ⁶Someone solemnly spoke to God about this somewhere in the scriptures, saying,

“No human being is worthy enough for you to think about him!

No human is worthy enough for you to care for him!

⁷You created humans a little less important than the angels,

Yet you have greatly honored them, as people honor kings.

⁸You have put everything under their control.”

Mankind will rule over everything. That means that nothing will be left out from him ruling it. But now, at this present time, we do not see mankind ruling over everything. ⁹However, we do know about Jesus, who appeared in this life as a little less important than the angels. Because he suffered and died, God has made him the most important of all. He has made Jesus king over everything, because Jesus died for everyone. It was because God was so kind to us that this happened.

¹⁰Since by him all things exist and all things are for him, it was proper that he brought many children to share his glory. By means of his suffering God showed that the one who saved them was perfect. ¹¹Jesus, the one who sets his people apart for God, and also those same people whom God declares as good before him, are all from the same source, God himself. So Jesus is not embarrassed to proclaim them to be his own brothers and sisters. ¹²The psalmist wrote that the Messiah said to God,

“I will proclaim to my brothers how awesome you are.

I will sing praise to you in the middle of the assembly of believers!”

¹³And a prophet wrote in another scripture passage what the Messiah said about God:

“I will trust him.”

And in another scripture passage, the Messiah said about those who are his children,

“I and the children whom God has given me are here.”

¹⁴So since those whom God calls his children are all human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. The devil has the power to cause people to be afraid to die. So that by his dying, Jesus was able to defeat death and make the devil powerless. ¹⁵Jesus did this in order to free all of us who, all our lives, could not rid ourselves of a fear of dying. ¹⁶For it is not angels that he has come to help. No, it is us who trust God as Abraham did whom he wants to help. ¹⁷So God had to make Jesus to be exactly like us, like his human “brothers.” He became a high priest who acts mercifully to the people and who acts faithfully for God, so he could make a way for God to forgive the people’s sins. ¹⁸Jesus is able to help those who are tempted to sin because he himself suffered and was tempted.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, God has set you apart and has chosen you to belong to himself. So consider Jesus. He is God’s apostle to us and is also the high priest whom we say we believe in together. ²He faithfully served God, who appointed him, just like Moses faithfully served all of God’s people, whom we call God’s house. ³⁻⁴Now just as every house is made by someone, God made everything. So God has considered that Jesus is worthy for people to honor him more than they honor Moses, just as the one who builds a house deserves for people to honor him more than they should honor the house. ⁵Moses very faithfully served God as he helped all of God’s people, just as a servant faithfully serves his master. So Moses testified about what Jesus would say in the future. ⁶But the Messiah is the Son who rules over God’s people. And we are the people he rules if we continue to courageously believe in the Messiah and confidently expect God to do all that he has promised to do for us.

⁷So then, it is just as when the Holy Spirit caused the psalmist to write these words in the scriptures to the Israelites:

“Now, when you hear God speak to you, ⁸Do not stubbornly disobey him, as your ancestors rebelled against him when he tested them in the wilderness. ⁹There your ancestors repeatedly tested me to see whether I would be patient with them, even though they saw all the amazing things I did.

¹⁰For forty years I was angry with those people, and I said about them, ‘They are never faithful to me. They do not understand how I wanted them to conduct their lives.’

¹¹So then I was angry with them. I solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land of Canaan where I would let them rest!’”

¹²So, fellow believers, be careful that none of you develop evil thinking that would lead you to stop obeying the only God who actually lives. ¹³Instead, each of you must encourage each other every day, while you still have the opportunity. If not someone among you could behave stubbornly and lead others to sin. ¹⁴We are now joined to the Messiah if we continue to seriously and confidently trust in him, from the time we first trusted in him to the time when we die. ¹⁵The psalmist wrote in the scripture that God said,

“Now, when you hear me speaking to you, do not stubbornly disobey me. Your ancestors did that when they rebelled against me.”

¹⁶For remember who it was who rebelled against God, even though they heard him speak to them. It was certainly all of God’s people who Moses led out of Egypt. ¹⁷And remember who it was with whom God was disgusted for forty years. Certainly it was God’s people who sinned, and their dead bodies lay there in the desert. ¹⁸And

remember about whom God solemnly declared, “They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.” It was certainly those Israelites who disobeyed God. ¹⁹From that example we know that it was because they did not trust in God. So they were unable to enter the land where God would allow them to rest.

Chapter 4

¹God’s promise that we may enter his place of rest still exists. We are afraid then lest some among you seem to fail to enter his place of rest. ²Indeed, we have heard the good news about God’s promises, just as they did. But that message did not benefit them because they did not go along with those who believed God, listened and obeyed. ³Oh yes, we do enter that rest, as do those who have believed. But those who do not believe do not enter, as he has said, “Because I was angry with the people of Israel, I solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.’”

God said this even though his plans for a place of resting had been finished from the time he created the world.

⁴What the scriptures say about the seventh day shows that this is true. God spent six days creating the world and then rested.

“Then, on the seventh day, God rested from his work of creating everything.”

⁵But note again what God said about the Israelites in the passage that I quoted previously:

“They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.”

⁶So then, it is clear that some people still enter God’s rest. But the Israelites who first heard God promise that they would rest—they did not enter that place of resting, because they refused to believe God. ⁷But God set another time when we may enter that place of resting. That time is now! We know that is true because much later than when the Israelites rebelled against God in the desert, he caused King David to write what I have already quoted,

“Right now, when you understand what God is saying to you, do not stubbornly disobey him.”

⁸If Joshua had led the Israelites to enter the only place of resting God would give them, then much later God would not have spoken again about another day of rest. But he did give them another promise of rest. ⁹So, just as God rested on the seventh day after he finished creating everything, there remains a time when God’s people will rest eternally. ¹⁰Whoever enters God’s place of resting has also ceased from his work, just as God finished doing his own work of creating everything.

¹¹So we eagerly enter into that rest of God, in order that there be no one among us who fails to believe as the others failed to believe. ¹²God’s words are alive and powerful, and they are able to cut sharper than any two-edged sword—cutting so deep that it can separate out the difference between our soul and our spirit. God’s words cut deeply, down through the joints into the marrow within the bones. God’s words are like a judge, deciding what thoughts are good or what thoughts are bad, and his words show the motives hidden deep within each of our hearts. ¹³God knows everything about everyone. Nothing is hidden from him. Everything is completely open to him and he sees everything we do. We must all appear before God and we must tell him how we have lived our lives.

¹⁴So we have a great high priest who ascended through the heavens. He is Jesus, God’s Son. So let us courageously say openly that we trust Jesus the Messiah. ¹⁵Our high priest can indeed have mercy on us and encourage us, we who tend to sin easily, because Satan also tempted him to sin in every way that he tempts us to sin—but he did not sin. ¹⁶So let us come boldly to the Messiah, who rules from heaven and does for us what we do not deserve, so that he might kindly help us and have mercy on us when we need him to do so.

Chapter 5

¹In the case of every high priest God chooses, he selects a man from the people. This man must serve God for the people; he must give God gifts and sacrifice animals to him for the people's sins. ²A high priest can be gentle with those who know little about God and with those who sin against him. This is because the high priest himself is weak with sin. ³As a result, he also must sacrifice animals for himself, because he sins just like the people do. ⁴But no one can honor himself by deciding to become the high priest. Instead, God chose each man to become a high priest, as he chose Aaron to be the first high priest. ⁵Similarly, the Messiah also did not honor himself by becoming high priest. Instead, God the Father appointed him by saying to him what the psalmist wrote in the scriptures:

"You are my son! Today I have declared that I am your father!"

⁶It is just as he also said to the Messiah when the psalmist wrote in another scripture passage:

"You are a priest eternally in the way that Melchizedek was a priest."

⁷In the days when the Messiah was living here in the world, he prayed to God and cried out loudly to him in tears. He asked God, who could save him from dying. He prayed and God listened to him, because the Messiah honored him and obeyed him. ⁸Although the Messiah is God's own son, he learned to obey God by what he suffered. ⁹By accomplishing everything that God wanted him to do, he has now become fully able to save eternally all who obey him. ¹⁰God has designated him to be our high priest in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

¹¹I want to tell you much about the many ways in which the Messiah resembles Melchizedek. This is hard for me to explain to you because you find it so difficult to understand. ¹²You became the Messiahians long ago. So by now you should be teaching God's truths to others. But you still need someone to teach you again the elementary truths of the words of God from the scriptures, starting from the beginning. You need those basic truths like babies need milk. You are not ready to learn more difficult things, things that are like the solid food that mature people need. ¹³Remember that those who are still learning these basic truths do not understand what God says about becoming righteous. For they are just like babies who need milk! ¹⁴But the more difficult spiritual truth is for people who know God better, just like solid food is for people who are adults. They can tell the difference between what is good and what is evil, because they have trained themselves by learning what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

¹⁻³So, we must not keep discussing what we first learned about the Messiah, things that all believers must learn at first. Some of these things are how to stop doing sinful deeds, those that lead to death, and how to start trusting in God. There are also important things we teach: various kinds of baptism, why we often pray while putting our hands on each other; and also about how God will raise us all from the dead and judge everyone in a way that will last forever. Indeed, we will discuss these things again later, if God gives us the chance to do it. But now we must discuss things that are harder to understand; these are things that will help us to trust in the Messiah in all times, no matter what happens. ⁴For it is impossible to persuade some people to turn away from their sinful behavior. For although they once had God's light and had experienced the good things given by God and shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵They experienced for themselves the goodness of God's word and the spiritual powers of the age to come. ⁶But now, if these people reject the Messiah, no one will be able to persuade them to stop sinning and to trust in him again! That is because it is as though these people have nailed the Son of God to his cross again! They are causing people to despise the Messiah in front of others. ⁷Think about this: God has blessed land on which rain has frequently fallen and on which plants grow for the good use of the farmers who cultivate the soil. ⁸But what will happen to people who do not obey God is like what happens to land on which only thorns and thistles grow. Such land is worthless. It has become land that the farmer will curse and whose plants he will burn away.

⁹You can see that I am warning you, dear friends, not to reject the Messiah. At the same time, I am certain that you are doing better than that. You are doing the things that show that God is saving you, even though we speak like

this. ¹⁰Since God always acts justly, he will not overlook all you have done for him; he will not overlook how you have loved and helped your fellow believers, and how you are still helping them. ¹¹We greatly desire that each of you continue to show the same effort you are showing now, so that to the very end of your lives, you will be sure you will receive all that God promised to give you. ¹²I do not want you to be lazy. Instead, I want you to do what other believers have done, those who are receiving what God promised them, because they trusted in him and were patient.

¹³When God promised to do great things for Abraham, there was no one greater than himself whom he could ask to force himself to do those things. So he asked himself. ¹⁴Then he said to Abraham, "I will certainly bless you and I will certainly greatly increase the number of your descendants." ¹⁵So after Abraham patiently waited for God to do what he promised, God did for him what he had promised. ¹⁶Keep in mind that when people promise something, they ask a more important person to punish them if they do not do what they promise. This is how all such disputes are settled. ¹⁷So when God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to us who would receive what he had promised that he would not change what he had planned to do, he said that he would declare himself guilty if he did not do what he promised. ¹⁸He did that to strongly encourage us, because he has done two things that cannot change: He promised to help us, and would declare himself guilty if he did not. Now, God cannot lie. That is why we have fled to him in order that we might continue confidently to expect to receive what he promised us. ¹⁹Yes, we confidently expect to receive what God has promised to do for us. It is as if we were a ship, whose anchor is holding us firmly in one place. The one we confidently expect to hold us is Jesus. As well, this is why he is just like the high priests who go behind the curtain into the innermost part of the temple, where God is present. ²⁰Jesus went into God's presence ahead of us to allow us to enter in that same place with God, too. Jesus has become a high priest forever, in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

Chapter 7

¹Now I will say more about this man Melchizedek. He was the king of the city of Salem and was also a priest of God, who rules the universe. He met Abraham and his men who were returning home from defeating the armies of the four kings. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. ²Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of all the things he took after winning the battle. Now Melchizedek's name means first, "king who rules righteously," and, since Salem means "peace," his name also means "the king who rules peacefully." ³The scriptures provide us with no record of Melchizedek's father, mother, or ancestors; nor do the scriptures tell us when he was born or when he died. It is as if he continues to be a priest forever. In this way, he is a little like the Son of God.

⁴You can realize how great this man Melchizedek was from the fact that Abraham, our famous ancestor, gave him a tenth of the best things he took from the battle with the kings. ⁵According to the laws God gave Moses, the descendants of Abraham's great-grandson Levi, who were priests, should take tithes from God's people who were their relatives, that is even though those people also were fellow descendants of Abraham. ⁶But this man Melchizedek, who was not among the descendants of Levi, received a tenth of everything from Abraham. He also blessed Abraham, the man to whom God promised many descendants. ⁷Now everyone knows that the more important people bless the less important people, just as Melchizedek blessed Abraham. So we know that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. ⁸In the case of the priests who are descendants of Levi, they are all men who will die one day, but even they received tithes. However, in the case of Melchizedek, who received a tenth of everything from Abraham—it is as if God testified that Melchizedek keeps on living, since scripture does not speak about him dying. ⁹And it was as though Levi himself, and all the priests descended from him—those who received tithes from the people—paid tithes to Melchizedek because their ancestor Abraham paid tithes to him. When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek it was as though they acknowledged that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. ¹⁰This is true because we can say that Levi and his descendants were still in Abraham's body when Melchizedek met Abraham.

¹¹God gave the law to his people at the same time he gave regulations about the priests. So if the priests who were descended from Aaron and his ancestor Levi could have provided a way for God to forgive people for disobeying those laws. Those priests who came after Aaron would have been adequate. In that case, no other priest like

Melchizedek would have been necessary. ¹²But we know those priests were not adequate, because a new type of priest like Melchizedek has come. And since God has appointed a new type of priest, he also had to change the law. ¹³Jesus, the one about whom I am saying these things, is not a descendant of Levi. Instead, he came from the tribe of Judah, which never gave any person who served as priest. ¹⁴For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, but Moses never spoke about priests coming from that tribe. ¹⁵Furthermore, we know that the priests descended from Levi were inadequate, since it is even more obvious that another priest has appeared who is like Melchizedek. ¹⁶This priest is Jesus; he became a priest, but not because he fulfilled what God's law required about being a descendant of Levi. Instead, he has the kind of power that came from a life that nothing can destroy. ¹⁷We know this since God confirmed it in the scripture passage in which he said to his Son,

"You are a priest eternally, just as Melchizedek was a priest."

¹⁸God withdrew what he had first commanded about the priests because those priests are unable to make sinful people holy. ¹⁹No one was able to become good by obeying the laws that God gave Moses. On the other hand, God gave us a better reason to have confidence in him, because he makes it possible for us to come near to him.

²⁰Furthermore, when God appointed the Messiah as a priest, he made certain of it when he solemnly declared it. The men from the tribe of Levi become priests without such a declaration. ²¹But when he appointed the Messiah to be a priest, it was by these words that the psalmist wrote in scripture:

"The Lord has solemnly declared

and he will not change his mind,

"You will be a priest forever!"

²²Because of that, Jesus himself guarantees that the new covenant will be better than the old one.

²³And formerly, priests could not keep serving as priests because they would always die. So there were many priests to take the place of the ones who died. ²⁴But because Jesus lives eternally, he will continue to be a high priest forever. ²⁵So Jesus can completely and eternally save those who come to God, since he lives forever to plead with God to forgive them and keep them safe.

²⁶Jesus is the kind of high priest that we need. He was holy, he did no wrong, and he was innocent. God has now separated him from living among sinners, and has now taken him up to the highest heaven. ²⁷The Jewish high priests need to sacrifice animals day by day as well as year by year. They do this, firstly, to cover their own sins, and then to cover the sins of other people. But because Jesus never sinned, he does not need to do that. The only thing he needed to do to save people was to sacrifice himself once, and that is exactly what he did! ²⁸We need a high priest like Jesus, because the priests, who were appointed as commanded in the law, sinned like all humans sin. But God solemnly declared after he had given his laws to Moses that he would appoint his Son to be high priest. Now his Son, who is God the Son, Jesus, is forever the only perfect high priest.

Chapter 8

¹The most important part of everything that I have written is that we have a high priest who has sat down to rule as the king in heaven. ²He serves in the sanctuary, that is, in the true place of worship in heaven. That is the true sacred tent, for the Lord set it up, not Moses.

³God appoints every high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people's sins. So since the Messiah became a high priest, he also had to offer something. ⁴Now if Christ were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the law. ⁵The priests in Jerusalem perform rituals that are only a copy of what the Messiah does in heaven. This is because when Moses was about to set up the sacred tent, God told him, "Be sure that you make everything according to what I showed you on Mount Sinai!" ⁶But now the Messiah serves

in a much better way than the Jewish priests do. In the same way, the agreement that he has agreed to toward his people is made of promises that God has given and so is better than the laws that God gave Moses.

⁷God needed to establish this second covenant, because the first covenant was defective. ⁸Because God declared that the Israelites were guilty of not obeying the first covenant, he wanted a new covenant. This is what a prophet wrote about that:

“The Lord says, ‘Listen! There will soon be a time when I will fulfill a new covenant toward the people of Israel and the people of Judah.

⁹That agreement will not be like the agreement I made with their ancestors when I led them out of Egypt like a father leads his young child.

They did not continue to obey, so I let them alone,’ says the Lord.

¹⁰This is the agreement that I will make with the Israelites, after the first agreement has ended,’ says the Lord:

‘I will enable them to understand my laws, and I will enable them to truly obey them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

¹¹No one will need to teach a fellow citizen or tell his fellow kinsmen, ‘You acknowledge that the Lord is God,’ because all my people will acknowledge me.

Everyone among my people, from the least important to the most important, will know me.

¹²I will mercifully forgive them for the wicked things they have done. I will no longer consider that they are guilty for their sins.”

¹³Since God said that he was making a new agreement, we know that he considered that the first agreement was old and no longer in use, decaying and that it would soon disappear.

Chapter 9

¹According to the first agreement God made rules for how the people of Israel should worship, and he told them to make a place to worship him. ²The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was the sacred tent. In its outer room there were the lampstand and the table on which they put the bread on display before God. That room was called the holy place. ³Behind the curtain on one side of the holy place there was another room. That was called the very holy place. ⁴It had an altar covered with gold for burning incense. It also had the Agreement Chest. All its sides were covered with gold. In it was the golden pot which contained pieces of the food they called manna. In the chest there was also Aaron’s walking stick that had budded to prove that he was God’s true priest. In the chest were also the stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments. ⁵On top of the chest were figures of winged creatures that symbolized God’s glory. Their wings overshadowed the sacred chest’s lid where the high priest sprinkled the blood to atone for the sins of the people. I cannot now write about these things in detail.

⁶After they have arranged all these things in this way, the Jewish priests habitually go into the outer room of the tent to do their tasks. ⁷But into the inner room only the high priest goes once a year. He always takes the blood of animals that they have slaughtered. He offers the blood to God for his own sins and for the sins that the other Israelites have committed. This includes the sins they committed but they did not know they were committing sins. ⁸By those things the Holy Spirit indicated that God did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter into the inner room, the very holy place, while the outer room still existed. In a similar way, he did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter the presence of God while the Jews offered sacrifices in the old way. ⁹This was a symbol for the time in which we are now living. The gifts and sacrifices offered in the sacred tent cannot make a person always know right from wrong or always do right from our hearts and in a way that he pleases God. ¹⁰Those rules about what to eat and drink, and about what to wash—all those rules were about physical things that applied only until the time when God would make a new agreement for us, by which he would restore everything in the right way.

¹¹But when the Messiah came as our high priest, he brought the good things that we have now. Then he went into God's presence in heaven, which is like the sacred tent. But it is unlike the tent Moses set up here on earth, meaning it is greater and completely perfect. It was not made by human effort. ¹²When a high priest goes into the inner room in the tent each year, he takes goats' blood and calves' blood to offer as a sacrifice. But the Messiah did not do that. It was as though he went into that very holy place only once because he gave his own blood on the cross, just one time. By doing that, he paid the price for our sins forever. ¹³The priests sprinkle on people goats' blood and bulls' blood and the water that has been filtered through the ashes of a red heifer that they have completely burned. By performing that ritual, they then say that God will now accept that the people should worship him. ¹⁴Since this is true, much more is accomplished by the blood of Messiah! Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice to God. His blood will purify our inner criticisms from useless rituals, so that we may serve the living God.

¹⁵Because Messiah offered himself to God, he is able to bring about a new agreement from God. Through his death he paid the price to set people free from the sins they committed under the first agreement. He did this so that those who are called to be his children can be guaranteed an inheritance that will last forever. ¹⁶A covenant is like a will. In the case of a will, in order to put its provisions into effect, someone must prove that the one who made it has died. ¹⁷A will goes into effect only when the one who makes the will has died. Otherwise, it is not in effect when the one who made it is still alive. ¹⁸And so God put the first covenant into effect only by means of animals' blood that flowed when the priests sacrificed them. ¹⁹After Moses had declared to all the Israelites everything that God commanded in the laws that God gave him, he took calves' and goats' blood mixed with water. He dipped into this blood scarlet wool that he tied around a sprig of hyssop. Then he sprinkled with some of the blood the scroll itself containing God's laws. Then he sprinkled more of that blood on all the people. ²⁰He said to them, "This is the blood that brings into effect the covenant that God commanded that you obey." ²¹Likewise, he sprinkled that blood on the sacred tent and on every object that they used in working there. ²²It was by sprinkling blood that they cleansed almost everything. That was what was stated in God's laws. If blood does not flow when they sacrifice an animal, God does not forgive the sins of those people.

²³So by animal sacrifices it was necessary for the priests to cleanse the things that symbolized what the Messiah does in heaven. But God has to cleanse the things in heaven by means of much better sacrifices than those. ²⁴The Messiah did not enter the very holy place that humans made, which only represented the true very holy place. Instead, he entered heaven itself, in order to now be in God's presence to represent us. ²⁵The high priest enters the very holy place once every year, taking blood that is not his own, to offer it as a sacrifice. But when the Messiah entered heaven, it was not in order to offer himself repeatedly like that. ²⁶If that were so, he would have needed to suffer and shed his blood repeatedly since the time when God created the world. But instead, in this final age, the Messiah has appeared once so that by sacrificing himself, God will forgive all our sins and will not condemn us any more because we have sinned. ²⁷All people must die once, and after that God will judge them for their sins. ²⁸Likewise, when the Messiah died, he offered up himself once to be a sacrifice, he accepted the punishment in the place of the many people who were his. He will come to earth a second time, not in order to sacrifice himself again for those who have sinned, but in order to save us who wait for him and expect him to come.

Chapter 10

¹The law does not show very well the good things that God will give us later. The law is like a shadow of something else. If people come to worship God by offering the same kinds of sacrifices every year, they can never become perfect. ²If God had removed the guilt of those who brought these sacrifices, they would not feel that they were still guilty. So they would certainly have stopped offering those sacrifices! Those who worship would have been clean from their sin once and for all. Their thoughts toward themselves would have been at peace. ³But rather, the fact that they offer those sacrifices each year reminds them that they are still guilty for their sins. ⁴So we know that even if we offer animals such as bulls or goats to God, even if he sees their blood flow, that will not stop us from being guilty.

⁵That is why, as the Messiah was coming into the world, he said to his Father,

“It is not sacrifices and offerings that you have wanted,

but you have prepared for me a body to offer.

⁶Animals that completely burn up when people offer them to you, these animals have not pleased you,

and neither do other sacrifices please you.

⁷Because of this, I said, ‘My God, listen!

I have come here in order to do what you want me to do,

just as they have written about me in the scriptures.’”

⁸First the Messiah said, “It is not sacrifices and offerings and animals that the priests have completely burned up and other offerings to atone for those who have sinned that you have really wanted. They have not pleased you.” He said that even though those things were offered according to the laws that God gave Moses! ⁹Then, concerning his offering himself as a sacrifice to atone for people’s sin, he said, “Listen! I have come here to do what you want me to do!” Thus God took away the first way of sacrificing for sin in order to establish the second way by sacrificing the Messiah. ¹⁰Because Jesus the Messiah did what God wanted him to do, God set us apart for himself. This happened when Jesus the Messiah offered his own body once as a sacrifice that he will never need to repeat.

¹¹As every priest stands daily in front of the altar, he performs rituals and offers the same kind of sacrifices that could never remove the guilt for anyone’s sins. ¹²But the Messiah offered a sacrifice for sins that will be enough forever, and he offered it only one time! After that, he sat down to rule beside God in the place of highest honor.

¹³From now on, he is waiting for God to completely defeat all his enemies. ¹⁴By offering himself once as the sacrifice, he perfected forever those in whom God has worked his cleansing and purity. ¹⁵The Holy Spirit also confirms to us that that is true. First he says:

¹⁶“When the time of the first agreement on behalf of my people has finished,

I will make a new agreement on behalf of them.

I will do this for them,” says the Lord:

“I will cause them to understand my laws

and I will cause them to obey my laws.”

¹⁷Then he said:

“I will forgive them for their sins,

and I will consider that they are no longer guilty for having sinned.”

¹⁸When God has forgiven someone's sins, that person does not need to make any more offerings to make up for his sin!

¹⁹So, my fellow believers, because we trust in what Jesus accomplished when his own blood flowed for us, we can confidently go into God's very presence that was symbolized by the very holy place in the sacred tent. ²⁰He has enabled us to go into God's presence by making a new way in which we can live forever. This new way is Jesus, who died for us. ²¹The Messiah is a great priest who rules over us, we who are God's people. ²²So we must approach God sincerely by confidently trusting in Jesus. It is he who has made our thinking clear after having sinned. It is as if he sprinkled his own blood over our thinking and purified our desires, and as if he had washed our bodies in pure water. ²³We must unwaveringly keep stating what we believe. Since God faithfully does all he promised to do, we must confidently expect him to do these things. ²⁴And let us think how each of us can best encourage each other to love one another and to do good deeds. ²⁵We must not cease assembling ourselves to worship the Lord, as some people have done. Instead, each one of us must encourage the others. Let us do that all the more since we know that the time that the Lord will return is near.

²⁶If we deliberately and habitually sin after we have learned the true experience about the Messiah, no other sacrifice will help us. ²⁷Instead, we must fearfully expect that God will judge us, and then he will righteously punish all his enemies in a furious fire. ²⁸Everyone who rejected the laws that God gave Moses had to die without mercy when at least two or three people testified against him. ²⁹That is severe punishment. But the Messiah is God's Son, and he is also God. If anyone rejects the agreement that he has made and despises the blood that flowed from him—if that person rejects the blood in exchange for which God forgave him—if that person rejects the Spirit of God, who acted so kindly toward him—then God will punish him very, very severely. ³⁰We can be sure of this, since we know that God said, "The right and power to give people what they deserve for having sinned belongs to me. I will punish them as they deserve." And Moses wrote, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It will be a terrible thing if the all-powerful God who really lives seizes and punishes you!

³²Remember the earlier times when you first understood the truth about the Messiah. You endured much hardship, and when you suffered, you continued to trust God. ³³At times people insulted you in public; at other times they made you suffer. At other times you suffered with other believers in their hardships. ³⁴You not only were kind to those who were in prison because they believed in the Messiah, but you also accepted it joyfully when unbelievers took away your possessions. You accepted it because you yourselves knew very well that you had possessions in heaven forever, possessions that are much better than those that they took from you! ³⁵So do not become discouraged when they cause you to suffer, because if you continue to trust in God, he will greatly reward you. ³⁶You must patiently continue to trust in him in order that, because of your doing what God wants you to do, he will give you what he has promised. ³⁷A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said about the Messiah:

"In just a short time the one I promised would come will surely come;

he will not delay coming.

³⁸But those who belong to me, who act righteously, will continue to live trusting in me.

If they are cowards and stop trusting in me,

I will not be pleased with them.

³⁹But we are not people who are cowards and cause God to destroy us. Instead, we are people who trust in him, so that he will save us forever.

Chapter 11

¹Faith is when people trust God and they are sure they will receive the things they confidently expect him to give them. Faith is when people are certain they will see those things happen, though, for now, those things cannot be

seen. ²Because our ancestors trusted in God, he approved of them. ³Because we trust in God, we understand that God formed the universe by commanding that it exist. So the things we see were not made from things that already existed.

⁴Because Adam's son Abel trusted God, he sacrificed something better to God than what his older brother Cain offered to God. So God spoke well about what Abel sacrificed, and God declared that Abel was righteous. And although Abel is dead, we still learn from him about trusting God.

⁵Because Enoch believed God, God took him up to heaven. Enoch did not die, because God took him, but no one could find him. Before God took him away, he testified that Enoch pleased him well. ⁶Now it is possible for people to please God only if they trust him, because anyone who wants to come to God must first believe that God exists and that he rewards those who try to know him.

⁷God warned Noah that he would send a flood, which Noah had never seen before, and Noah believed him. He honored God by building a ship to save his family. In this way he showed that the rest of the people deserved for God to punish them. So Noah became a person whom God made right with himself, because Noah trusted him.

⁸God called Abraham to go to the land that he would give his descendants. Because Abraham trusted him, he obeyed God and left his country, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹Because Abraham trusted God, he lived as though he were a foreigner in a land that God had promised to give his descendants. Abraham lived in tents, and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob did also. God promised to give to Isaac and Jacob the same things that he promised to give Abraham. ¹⁰Abraham was waiting to live in the permanent city that God himself would design and build. ¹¹And even though Sarah was unable to have children because of her old-age, by faith she received the ability to bear a child, because she considered Yahweh to be faithful because he had made the promise to her that she would have a son. ¹²So, although Abraham was too old to have children, from that one man people descended who are as many in number as the stars in the sky and are as countless as the grains of sand along the shore, just like God promised him.

¹³While they still trusted in God, all these people died. Even though they had not yet received the things that God had promised to give them, it was as though they had seen those things in the distance, and they were glad. It was as though they had admitted that they did not belong to this earth, but that they were only here temporarily. ¹⁴As for people who say such things, they clearly show that they long for a place that will become their true native land. ¹⁵If they had been thinking that their true native land was the place from which they had come, they could have simply returned there. ¹⁶But, instead, they desired a better place in which to live. They desired a home in heaven. So God has prepared a city for them to live with him, and he is pleased for them to say that he is their God.

¹⁷Because Abraham trusted God, he was ready to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God tested him. Abraham, to whom God promised to give a son, was going to sacrifice the very son whom he had given him, the only son whom his own wife had borne! ¹⁸It was about this son that God had said, "It is only from Isaac that I will consider your family to descend." ¹⁹Abraham considered that to fulfill that promise, God could make Isaac live again even if he died after Abraham had sacrificed him! The result was that when Abraham did receive Isaac back after God told him not to harm Isaac, it was as though he received him back even after he died.

²⁰Because Isaac trusted God, he prayed that God would bless his sons Jacob and Esau after he died.

²¹Because Jacob trusted God, as he was dying, he prayed God would bless each of the sons of his own son Joseph. He worshiped God as he leaned upon his walking stick before he died. ²²Because Joseph trusted God, when he was about to die in Egypt, he thought ahead to the time when the Israelites would leave Egypt, and he instructed his people to carry his bones with them when they left Egypt.

²³Because Moses' father and mother trusted God, they hid their son for three months shortly after he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful. They were not afraid of disobeying what the king of Egypt had commanded, that all the Jewish male babies must die. ²⁴The daughter of the king, whom they called Pharaoh, raised Moses, but when Moses had grown up, because he trusted God, he refused to accept the royal privileges

that would have been his if people considered him as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” ²⁵He decided that it was better for others to mistreat him for a time along with God’s people, than to temporarily enjoy living sinfully in the king’s palace. ²⁶He decided that if he suffered for the Messiah, it would be worth far more in God’s sight than owning the treasures of Egypt that he would receive as one of Pharaoh’s family. He looked forward to the time when God would give him an eternal reward. ²⁷Because he trusted God, Moses left Egypt. He was not afraid that the king would be angry because he left. He kept going because it was as though he kept seeing God, whom no one can see. ²⁸Because Moses believed God would save his own people, he obeyed God’s commands about Passover, which became a yearly festival. He commanded the people to kill lambs and sprinkle their blood on their doorposts so that the angel who causes people to die would not kill the oldest male Israelites with the oldest sons in each Egyptian family.

²⁹Because the Israelites trusted God when they walked through the Sea of Reeds, it was as though they were walking on dry land! But, when the army of Egypt also attempted to cross where the sea had been, they drowned, because the sea came back and flooded them!

³⁰Because the Israelite people trusted God, the walls around the city of Jericho collapsed, after the Israelites marched around the walls for seven days.

³¹Rahab was a prostitute, but because she trusted God, she did not perish with those inside Jericho who disobeyed God. Joshua had sent spies into the city to find ways to destroy it, but God saved Rahab because she welcomed those spies peacefully.

³²I do not know what more I should say about others who trusted in God. It would take too much time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets. ³³Because they trusted God, some of them did great deeds for him. Some conquered lands ruled by powerful men. Some ruled Israel and justly treated men and nations. Some received from God the things that he promised to give them. Some forced lions to keep their mouths shut. ³⁴Some escaped from burning up in fire. Some escaped from others who tried to kill them with swords. Some became well again after being sick. Some became powerful when they fought wars. Some caused armies that came from foreign lands to run away from them. ³⁵Some women who trusted God received their relatives back again when God made them live again after they had died. But others who trusted God were tortured until they died. They were tortured because they refused to agree when their enemies said, “We will release you if you deny that you believe in God.” They refused to do that, because they wanted to live with God forever, which is better than continuing to live on earth. ³⁶Other people who trusted God were mocked. Some had their backs cut open by being struck with whips. Some were chained and put in prison. ³⁷Some of those believers were stoned to death. Others were sawn completely in two. Others were killed with swords. Others of these people who trusted God wandered around the land wearing garments made only of skins from sheep and goats. They did not have any money. People constantly oppressed them and harmed them. ³⁸The people on earth who caused those who trusted in God to suffer like this were so bad that they did not deserve to live with people like those who trusted God. Some who trusted God wandered in deserts and mountains. Some lived in caves and in other large holes in the ground.

³⁹Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not give them what he had promised them. ⁴⁰God knew ahead of time that what he would give us and them later would be better than giving them immediately what he promised. What God intends is that only when they and we are together will we have all that God intends us to have.

Chapter 12

¹We know about many people like these who proved that they trusted in God. Let us put off everything that weighs us down and so we put away the sin that clings to us. Then let us run our race patiently and do everything God gives us to do until we make it to the finish line. ²And let us keep thinking about Jesus and give him all our attention. He is the one who leads us and he makes our faith complete. He is the one who endured the terrible suffering on the cross and he paid no attention to the people who tried to shame him. He did this because he knew

how joyful God would make him later. He now sits at the place of highest honor in the throne where God rules in heaven.

³Jesus patiently endured it when sinful people hatefully acted against him. Strengthen your hearts and minds with Jesus' example so that you will not give up trusting God or become discouraged. ⁴While you have struggled against being tempted to sin, you have not yet bled and died because of resisting evil, as Jesus did. ⁵Do not forget these words that Solomon spoke to his son, which are the same with which God encourages you as his children:

"My son, pay attention when the Lord is disciplining you,
and do not be discouraged when the Lord punishes you,

⁶because everyone the Lord loves he also disciplines,
and he severely corrects everyone he calls his own."

⁷God may discipline you by requiring you to endure difficult things that happen to you. When God disciplines you, he is treating you as a father treats his children. All fathers discipline their children. ⁸So if you have not experienced God disciplining you like he disciplines all his children, you are not true children of God. You are like illegitimate children who have no father to correct them. ⁹Furthermore, our natural fathers disciplined us when we were young, and we respected them for doing that. So we should certainly more readily accept God our spiritual Father disciplining us so we will live eternally! ¹⁰Our natural fathers disciplined us for a short time as they considered right, but God always disciplines us to help us share in his holy nature. ¹¹During the time God is disciplining us, it does not seem to be anything about which we can rejoice. Instead, it pains us. But later it causes those who have learned from it to live righteously, which produces peace in us.

¹²So, instead of acting as though you were spiritually tired out, trust God's discipline to renew you. ¹³Go straight forward following the Messiah so that believers who are weak in trusting the Messiah will gain strength from you and not become crippled. Instead, they will be spiritually restored as an injured and useless limb becomes well again. ¹⁴Try to live peacefully with all people. Do your best to be holy, since no one will see the Lord if he is not holy. ¹⁵Make sure that everyone among you experiences the kind things that God does for us. Kind things that we do not deserve. Be on guard so that none of you act in an evil way toward others, because that will grow like a root grows into a big plant, leading many believers to sin. ¹⁶Do not let anyone be immoral or disobey God like Esau. He exchanged the rights he had as a firstborn son for only one meal. ¹⁷For you know that Esau later wanted to get back his birth rights and all that his father Isaac's blessing would give him. But Isaac refused to do what Esau requested. For Esau found no way to change what he had done, even though he sought it tearfully.

¹⁸In coming to God, you have not experienced things like what the Israelite people experienced at Mount Sinai. They approached a mountain that God commanded them not to touch because he himself had come down to that mountain. They approached a blazing fire, and it was gloomy and dark, with a violent storm. ¹⁹They heard a trumpet sound, and they heard God speak a message. It was so powerful that they pleaded for him not to speak to them like that again. ²⁰For God had commanded them, "If a person or even an animal touches this mountain, you must kill him." The people were terrified. ²¹Truly, because Moses was terrified after seeing what happened on the mountain, he said, "I am trembling because I am very afraid!" ²²Instead, you have come to the presence of God who truly lives in heaven, to the "New Jerusalem." That is like what your ancestors did when they came to worship God on Mount Zion in Israel, upon which the earthly Jerusalem was built. You have come to where there are countless angels who are rejoicing as they have gathered together. ²³You have joined the assembly of all the believers who have privileges as firstborn sons, whose names God has written down in heaven. You have come to God, who will judge everyone. You have come to where the spirits of God's people are, people who lived righteously before they died, and whom God has now made perfect in heaven. ²⁴You have come to Jesus, who arranged a new covenant between us and God by the blood that flowed when he died on the cross. Jesus' blood made it possible for God to forgive us, and his blood confirms better promises for us than Abel's blood.

²⁵Beware that you do not refuse to listen to God who is speaking to you. The Israelite people did not escape God punishing them when they rejected his warning to them here on earth. For we shall surely not escape God punishing us if we reject what he says when he warns us from heaven! ²⁶When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." ²⁷The words "again, one more time" indicate that God will remove those things on earth that he will shake, everything that he has created. He will do this in order that the things in heaven that cannot shake may remain forever. ²⁸So let us thank God that we are becoming members of a kingdom that nothing can shake. And in this kingdom we please God by worshiping him and by showing him great honor and respect. ²⁹Remember that the God we worship is like a fire that burns up everything that is impure!

Chapter 13

¹Continue to love your fellow believers. ²Do not forget to be hospitable to needy travelers. By caring for strangers, some people have welcomed angels into their home without knowing it. ³Remember to help those who are in prison because they are believers, as though you were in prison with them and were suffering physically as they are suffering physically.

⁴Men and women who are married to each other must respect each other in every way, and they must be faithful to each other. God will surely condemn those who act immorally or adulterously. ⁵Live without constantly wanting money, and be happy no matter how much or little you own in your present circumstances. Remember what Moses wrote that God said:

"I will never leave you;

I will never stop providing for you."

⁶So we can say confidently as the psalmist said,

"Since the Lord is the one who helps me, I will not be afraid! People can do nothing to me that will keep God from helping me."

⁷Your spiritual leaders have told you the message of God about the Messiah. Remember how they have conducted their lives and imitate how they have trusted in the Messiah. ⁸Jesus the Messiah is the same now as he always has been, and he will be the same forever. ⁹So do not let other people mislead you to believe other things about God, strange things that you have not learned from us. For our true strength comes from God's acts of kindness towards us, rather than following various rules about what to eat and not to eat.

¹⁰Those who serve in the sacred tent have no right to eat at the sacred altar where we worship the Messiah. ¹¹After the high priest brings into the very holy place the blood of animals that they have sacrificed to atone for sins, other people burn the bodies of those animals outside the camp. ¹²Similarly, Jesus suffered and died outside the gates of Jerusalem in order that he might make us, his people, special for God. He did this by offering his own blood as a sacrifice for our sins.

¹³So we must go to Jesus to be saved. We must leave behind other rules and rituals and allow others to insult us just like people insulted him. ¹⁴Here on earth, we believers do not have a city such as Jerusalem. Instead, we are waiting for the heavenly city that will last forever.

¹⁵Because Jesus has died for us, we must continually praise God no matter what happens. That will be something we can sacrifice to him instead of animals. We must be ready to openly say to others that we trust in the Messiah.

¹⁶Always be doing good deeds for others and sharing the things you have, because doing things like that will be as though you are offering sacrifices that will please God.

¹⁷Obey your leaders and do what they tell you, since they are the ones who are guarding your welfare. Some day they will have to stand before God so that he can say if he approves of what they have done. Obey them in order that they can do the work of guarding you joyfully and not have to do it sadly, because if you cause them to do it sadly, that will certainly not help you at all.

¹⁸Pray for me and those with me. I am certain that I have not done anything that displeases God. I have tried to act well toward you in every way. ¹⁹I urge you earnestly to pray that God will quickly remove the things that stop my coming to you.

²⁰Jesus provides for us, protects us, and guides us as a great shepherd does for his sheep. And God, who gives us inner peace, raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. By doing that God confirmed his eternal covenant with us by the blood that flowed from the Messiah when he died on the cross. ²¹So I pray that God may equip you with everything good that you may do what he desires. May he accomplish in us what pleases him, as he watches us follow Jesus, who offered up himself for us. May all people praise Jesus the Messiah forever. Amen!

²²My fellow believers, since this is a short letter that I have written to you, I ask you that you patiently consider what I have just written to encourage you.

²³I want you to know that our fellow believer Timothy has gone free from prison. If he comes here soon, he will accompany me when I go to see you.

²⁴Tell all your spiritual leaders and all your other fellow believers who belong to God in your city that I greet them. The believers in this area who have come from Italy greet you also.

²⁵May God continue to love you and protect you by his kindness.

James

Chapter 1

¹I, James, serve God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. I am writing this letter to you who believe in Jesus and are living in various parts of the Roman Empire. I greet you all.

²My fellow believers, consider it something to rejoice over greatly when you experience various kinds of hardships.

³Understand that as you trust God in hardships, this helps you to become a stronger person. ⁴Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow the Messiah in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

⁵If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, and God will tell him. God gives generously to everyone. God does not scold people {who ask for things}. ⁶But when you pray to God, you must trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and help you. People who doubt God first decide to do one thing, but then they want to do something else. They never settle on a single course of action. ⁷Indeed, people who doubt should not think that God the Lord will give them what they ask for {so uncertainly}. ⁸People like this can never decide what to do. They make a plan, but then they do not follow it.

⁹Believers who do not have much money should be glad, because God has honored them. ¹⁰But believers who have a lot of money should be glad that God has humbled them {by showing them that their wealth does not make them better than other people}. After all, like wildflowers {that bloom for only a short time and then wither}, rich believers will die {like anyone else}. ¹¹A wildflower only lasts a short time because when the sun rises, its scorching heat dries out the plants so that their flowers fall off. They are no longer beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are trying to make money.

¹²God honors those who remain faithful to him in difficult circumstances. Indeed, God will reward them by having them live forever. That is what God has promised to do for all who love him.

¹³When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us. No, no one can persuade God to do evil, and God never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. ¹⁴But people want to do evil because of their own desires. When they do, it is just as if they had fallen into a trap. ¹⁵Then, because they have desired to do evil things, they begin to do them, and eventually they do them habitually. {If they do not turn away from their sinful behavior,} they will be separated from God forever.

¹⁶My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. ¹⁷Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He created the sun, moon, and stars. But God does not change the way shadows change, appearing and disappearing. God never changes. He is always good! ¹⁸God became our spiritual father when we trusted in his true message. That was what he wanted to do. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to experience the kind of relationship with God that many more people will have in the future.

¹⁹My fellow believers whom I love, I want you to know that every one of you should listen patiently {to what others have to say}. You should speak {your own thoughts} carefully. You should control your anger, ²⁰because when we get angry, we cannot do the good things that God wants us to do.

²¹So stop doing all kinds of evil. Without resisting proudly, do what God has told you to do. God will help you to remember and understand it. This will show that you belong to God. ²²It is important to what God commands, do not just listen to it. People who only listen to it and do not obey it are fooling themselves {into thinking that this will save them}. ²³Now some people hear God's message, but they do not do what it says. Those people are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. ²⁴Although he looks at himself, he goes away {from the mirror} and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But other people consider God's message carefully. It is perfect and it

enables people to do voluntarily {what God wants them to do}. If these people remember what they have heard and continue to do what God tells them to do, then God will bless them because of what they do.

²⁶Some people think that they worship God properly, but they say bad things. Those people are wrong in what they are thinking. God is not impressed with our worship activities if we continually say bad things. ²⁷{One of the things that God has told us to do is} to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. People who do that truly worship God, who is our Father. People are also truly worshiping God if they do not think or act immorally like others who do not obey God. God approves of people who do these things.

Chapter 2

¹My fellow believers, do not honor some people more than others and at the same time trust in our great Lord Jesus the Messiah. ²For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine clothes joins you for worship. And suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes joins you as well. ³And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes. You tell him, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" But you tell the poor one {to go to a less honorable place, saying}, "You stand over there," or, "Sit on the floor!" ⁴This would show that you thought rich people were better than poor people. It would show that you were making your judgments {about how to treat people} based on evil thinking. ⁵Listen to me, my fellow believers whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to own nothing of value to trust in him very much. He will give them great things when he reigns everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. ⁶But you have treated poor people disrespectfully! Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court {to accuse you in front of judges}! ⁷And they are the ones who insult you because you are Christians! ⁸{So you should not treat rich people better than poor people.} Instead, you should obey the commandment that Jesus said was so important. It is from the law of Moses: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you show love to everyone equally, you will be doing what is right. ⁹But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And {because you are not doing what God has commanded,} God will say that you have broken his law.

¹⁰{God will say this} because if you break one of God's laws, even if you obey all the other ones, it is just as if you had broken all the laws. ¹¹For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder someone, then you have become a person who disobey God's laws.

¹²{Always} speak and act towards others knowing that God will judge you based on the commandment he gave us {to love others}. When we follow that commandment, we obey God freely. ¹³You should speak and act in this way because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who have not acted mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we can expect that God will be merciful to us when he judges us.

¹⁴My fellow believers, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus the Messiah," but they do not do loving things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. ¹⁵{To illustrate,} suppose that a fellow believer, whether a man or a woman, is continually lacking clothes and food for each day. ¹⁶And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, get warm, and have the food you need." But suppose that you then do not give them any clothing or food. Then that will be no help to them! ¹⁷Similarly, if you just say that you believe in Jesus but you do not do anything that demonstrates that, you do not really believe in Jesus.

¹⁸But someone might say {to you} that you have faith, while I have works. {He might claim that a person can express his religion through either faith or works and that he does not need to have both.} {But I would say in response that you cannot} show me your faith without works. I{, on the other hand,} can show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹{Let me illustrate how believing in God without doing what God wants you to do cannot save you.} You believe that there is only one true God. You are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they shake {with fear} because they also know that the one true God is going to punish them. ²⁰Also, you foolish person,

I will give you proof that if someone says he believes in Jesus but he does not do anything that demonstrates that, then what he says does not help him in any way. ²¹{Here is the proof.} Abraham, from whom we are descended, showed that he was willing to offer his son Isaac {to God} as a sacrifice {if God wanted him to do that}. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he showed that he would obey him {and that proved that he genuinely trusted God}. ²²In this way, Abraham obeyed God because he trusted him. When he obeyed him, that helped him trust God completely. ²³That was how the scripture came true that says, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did what was right." Other scriptures say that Abraham was God's friend. ²⁴{From the example of Abraham,} you should recognize that God considers people to be righteous because of what they do, not simply because they trust in him. ²⁵Just as he did for Abraham, God also considered Rahab to be righteous because of what she did. She had been a prostitute, but she took care of the messengers {Joshua sent to spy out the land}. She then helped them to escape by sending them back on a safer road.

²⁶All of this illustrates an important truth. Just as a person's body is not alive if he is no longer breathing, in the same way, a person does not really trust in God if he does not express that trust through what he does.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, most of you should not desire to become teachers {of God's word}. As you know, God will judge us teachers more severely {than he will judge other people}. ²{I will tell you why most of you should not become teachers.} All of us often do things that are wrong. But if anyone is able to avoid saying things that are wrong, he has become the person God intends him to be. He will be able to control all of his actions as well. ³To illustrate, we can put a small metal bar into the mouth of a horse and use it to make the horse go where we want it to go. When we do that, we can direct the horse's large body {just by means of that small device}. ⁴Think about ships too. A ship may be very large and the winds that propel it forward may be very strong. Even so, by using a tiny rudder, the pilot can direct the ship wherever he wants it to go. ⁵Similarly, although our tongues are very small, we use them to brag that we have done great things. Note also that a fire that starts as a small flame can burn up many trees.

⁶Just as a fire burns a forest, when we say bad things, we hurt many people. {What we say reveals that} there is much evil within us. When we say bad things, this contaminates all that we think and do. It can ruin our whole life. It is Satan himself who influences us to speak what is evil. ⁷To give another example, people have been able to tame a wide variety of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and animals that live in the water. ⁸But no one can control the things he says. The things people say are like a dangerous creature that never stops killing people with its venom. ⁹We use speech to praise {God, who is} our Lord and Father. But we also use speech to say that we want bad things to happen to people. {That is very wrong, because} God made people like himself. ¹⁰Someone may use his speech to praise God. But then he will use that same speech to wish that bad things would happen to people. My fellow believers, this should not happen! ¹¹Surely good-tasting water and bad-tasting water do not come from the same source! ¹²My fellow believers, a fig tree cannot produce olives. And a grapevine cannot produce figs. Nor can a salty source produce good water. {Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.}

¹³If any of you are very understanding, you will demonstrate that by living your life properly. Being wise leads us to act gently toward others. ¹⁴But if inwardly you grudgingly resent other people and you think you are more important than they are, you should not claim to be wise. That would be saying that what is false is actually true. ¹⁵People who are envious and selfish are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are thinking and acting like people who do not respect God. They are following their own evil desires. They are doing what demons would do. ¹⁶We can tell that people who are resentful and selfish are not wise, because they do not control themselves. They take part in many different sinful activities. ¹⁷But the person whom God has taught to be wise is, first of all, morally pure. Such a person also makes peace with others. He is kind to them and gets along with them well. He is generous to people who do not deserve it, and he does practical things to help others. He does not favor one

person over another, and he does not pretend to be something that he is not. ¹⁸When people work quietly to help others get along, they can help those others to have good relationships.

Chapter 4

¹I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you inwardly desires to do evil things. Those desires lead you to fight {in order to be able to do those things}. ²You desire to have things, but you do not get {them}. This makes you bitterly resent the people who do have them. But you {still} do not get {what you want}, so you quarrel and fight {with others}. If you pray {to God} instead {for the things you desire}, then God will give you {what you truly need}. ³But even when you do ask God for things, he does not give them to you, because you are asking with bad motives. You are asking for things just so that you can use them to enjoy yourselves in wrong ways.

⁴You are being disloyal to God {by not obeying him}! You must realize that those who behave as evil people do are hostile to God. So if that is how you decide to live, then you will be choosing to be hostile to God. ⁵You must realize that God has purposely told us about this in the Scriptures. There he teaches us that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. ⁶If we are living in ways that do not please God, he is very kind to us. {He will help us live differently if we humbly admit that we have been doing wrong.} That is why this teaching is in the Bible: "God does not help those who are proud, but he does help those who are humble."

⁷So choose humbly to obey God. Firmly determine not to give in to the devil's temptations. This will make the devil give up on trying to tempt you. ⁸Be honest and open with God. If you do, he will welcome you into his presence. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is right. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts and think only right thoughts. ⁹Show sorrow and be sad and weep {because of the wrong things that you have done}. You have been enjoying yourselves, but you should be serious {and realize how much you need to change}. ¹⁰Humbly show the Lord how sorry you are for your sins. if you do that, he will honor you.

¹¹My fellow believers, stop accusing one another of doing wrong. Anyone who accuses and condemns a fellow believer is really accusing and condemning God's commandment {that we should love one another}. But if you speak against that commandment, you are not obeying it. Instead, you are acting like a judge who condemns it.

¹²The only one who can judge people {according to the law} is the one who gave the law. That is God, who is able not just to condemn people {for breaking the law} but also to pardon them {even though they have broken the law}. You certainly are not entitled to take God's place and judge others.

¹³Some of you are {arrogantly} saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money." Now you listen to me! ¹⁴You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. In fact, you do not even know how long you will live! After all, your life is short, like a mist that is visible briefly but then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead {of what you are saying,} you should say, "If the Lord is willing, we will still be alive and we will be able to do one thing or another." ¹⁶But what you are doing is bragging about all the things you plan to do. That kind of bragging is sinful.

¹⁷So if anyone does not do something even though he knows it is the right thing that he should do, he has committed a sin.

Chapter 5

¹Now I have something to say to you rich people {who say you believe in Jesus}. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you are going to experience terrible troubles! ²Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotten. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. ³Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. {When God judges you,} this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are

guilty {of being greedy}. Just as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You should not have been trying to get richer and richer knowing that Jesus was going to return. {When he returns, your riches will be worthless.} ⁴Think about what you have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workers who harvested your fields. These unpaid wages show how unfair you were to these workers. They are crying out to God because of the way you have treated them. The Lord is a God of great power, and he is listening to their loud cries {and he will punish you for what you have done}. ⁵You have bought all the luxuries you wanted for yourselves. Just as cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. ⁶You have arranged for others to condemn honest people. You have arranged for others to kill people who had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. {But God will judge and punish you for doing all these things.}

⁷So, my fellow believers, {even though rich people cause you to suffer,} be patient until Jesus the Messiah comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they have to wait for their valuable crops to grow. They have to wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. {This rain is necessary for the crops to grow and mature so that the farmers can harvest them.} ⁸Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust Jesus the Messiah firmly, because he is coming back soon {and he will judge all people fairly}. ⁹My fellow believers, do not grumble about each other. That way the Lord Jesus will not have to punish you. He is the one who will judge us, and he will come back soon to do that. ¹⁰My fellow believers, as an example {of how to be patient}, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. ¹¹Consider how, when people are able to endure suffering {patiently and faithfully}, we say that God has blessed them. {One example of this is the man named} Job. You know about him {from the Scriptures}. You know that he suffered many things patiently. You also know that God planned {to do good things through what Job suffered}. And from that you can tell that God is very caring and kind.

¹²Now this, my fellow believers, is something very important for you to realize. You must never take an oath by calling on heaven or the earth or anything else to guarantee a promise that you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you {if you go beyond that and make an oath but then do not keep your promise}.

¹³Any one of you who is experiencing trouble should pray {that God would help him}. Whoever is happy should sing songs of praise {to God}. ¹⁴Any one of you who is sick should call the leaders of the congregation to come and pray for him {to recover}. They should put olive oil on him {to help him recover} and, with the Lord's authority, pray. ¹⁵When these leaders pray to God in faith, God will answer that prayer and heal the person who is sick. The Lord will restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him {for those sins}. ¹⁶Because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, admit to each other the sinful things you have done and pray for each other. Then God will heal you. If people who are right with God pray, God will answer their prayers in powerful ways. ¹⁷The prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us. But when he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, the land {of Israel} had no rain for three and a half years. ¹⁸Then Elijah prayed again{, asking God to send rain}, and God made it rain and plants grew and produced crops again.

¹⁹My fellow believers, if one of you stops obeying the true message from God, then another one of you should persuade that person to do once again what God has told us to do. ²⁰I want anyone who helps a sinner to repent to know that because of what he has done, God will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 Peter

Chapter 1

¹I, Peter, whom Jesus the Messiah sent to represent him, am writing this letter to you who believe in him, you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. I am writing to you who live in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away from your true home in heaven. ²God our Father chose you as he himself decided previously, and his Spirit has set you apart in order that you may obey Jesus the Messiah, and in order that his blood may make you acceptable to God. May God act very kindly to you, and may he make you live more and more peacefully.

³Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! It is because he is kind to us and he has shown us great mercy, by causing us to experience the new birth that gives us a living hope, and we receive the new life because God raised Jesus the Messiah to life from the dead ones. ⁴He has enabled us to expect to receive things that he has kept for us in heaven, things that will last forever. ⁵God, by his mighty power, is guarding you as you trust in Jesus. He is guarding you so that he may, at the end of the time in which we now live, completely rescue you from Satan's power. ⁶You rejoice because of what will happen then, but now you are grieving for a short time while you suffer many different hardships. God is allowing you to be tested, as precious metals are tested to see if they are pure. These trials that you are experiencing are necessary. ⁷These hardships happen in order to prove that you really do trust in Jesus. This means more to God than all the gold in the world, which fire can destroy. Because you trust in Jesus, God will honor you very highly when Jesus the Messiah comes again. ⁸You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you believe him, and rejoice with joy that you can hardly express. ⁹because you are experiencing the result of your believing in him, God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

¹⁰Long ago prophets spoke messages that God had shown them about how he would one day save you. They investigated very carefully these things. ¹¹They wanted to know whom the Spirit of the Messiah that was in them was referring to. They also wanted to know what time he was talking about. This was because the Spirit was telling them beforehand that the Messiah would suffer and die, and that glorious things would happen to him afterwards. ¹²God told them that it was not for their own sake that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your sake. They proclaimed them to you because the Holy Spirit whom God sent from heaven enabled them to do that. And even angels would like to know more about these truths about how God saves us.

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds to obey God. What I mean is that you should discipline your minds. Be confident that you will receive the good things that God will kindly do for you when Jesus the Messiah returns from heaven. ¹⁴And because you should obey your heavenly Father, just as children ought to obey their fathers here on earth, do not do the evil deeds that you previously wished to do, when you did not know the truth about God. ¹⁵Instead, just like God, the one who chose you to belong to him, is separate from evil, you also must separate yourselves from evil in everything that you do. ¹⁶Be holy, because it is written in the scriptures that God said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

¹⁷God is the one who judges what each one does, and he does this very fairly. Since you call him 'Father,' behave in a right way while you are living here on earth. You are like people whom others have driven from their homes, because you are living away from heaven, your true home. ¹⁸Live reverently because you know that it was not with things like gold and silver—things that will not last forever—that God bought you, so you could stop behaving foolishly, as you learned to do from your ancestors. ¹⁹Instead, it was with the precious blood of the Messiah that flowed from his body when he died that God bought you. The Messiah was a like the lambs that the Jewish priests sacrificed: Perfect, without any blemishes or spots. ²⁰God chose him to do this before he created the world. But it was not until now, when the world will soon end, that God revealed him to you. ²¹Because of what the Messiah has

done, you are trusting in God, who caused him to become alive again after he died, and who greatly honored him. As a result, God is the one in whom you are trusting and expecting that he will do great things for you.

²²Because you have obeyed the truth about God and have allowed him to make you pure and to love our fellow believers, continue to love each other earnestly and sincerely. ²³I ask you to do this, because you now are living a new life. It was not by means of something that will perish that you received this new life. Instead, it was by means of something that will last forever: The promises of God, which you have believed. ²⁴We know that this is true because, as the prophet Isaiah wrote,

“All people will perish like grass perishes. And all the greatness that people have will not last forever, like the flowers in the grass do not last long.

The grass withers and the flowers die,

²⁵but God’s message endures forever.”

This message that endures is the message about the Messiah that we proclaimed to you.

Chapter 2

¹Therefore, do not act maliciously in any way or deceive others. Do not be hypocrites, and do not envy others. Do not ever speak evil about anyone untruthfully. ²Just as newborn babies long for their mothers’ pure milk, you should desire to learn true things from God, so that by learning it you may become like adults in trusting him. You must do this until the time when God sets you completely free from all the evil in this world. ³Also, you must do this because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly toward you.

⁴Come to the Lord Jesus. He is like the most important stone in the foundation of a building, but he is living, not lifeless like a stone. Many people rejected him, but God chose him and considers him to be very valuable. ⁵And like men build houses with stones, God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit lives. He is doing this in order that you—like the priests who offer sacrifices at the altar, might do things that please God because Jesus the Messiah has died for you. ⁶What the scriptures say show us that this is true: “I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like a very valuable stone, the most important stone in the building, and those who believe in him will never become ashamed.”

⁷Therefore, God will honor you who believe in Jesus. But those who refuse to believe in him are like the builders that the scriptures talk about: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.”

⁸It is also written in the scriptures:

“He will be like a stone that causes people to stumble,

and like a rock that people trip over.

Just as people are injured when they stumble over a rock,

people who disobey God’s message injure themselves;

that is what God determined would happen to them.”

⁹But you are people whom God has chosen to belong to him. You are a group that worship God like priests, and you rule with God like kings. You are a people group that belongs to God, so that you might proclaim the wonderful things he has done. He has called you from your former ways, when you were ignorant of his truth, and he has made you understand the marvelous true things about him. ¹⁰What the scriptures say is true about you:

“Formerly, you were no people group at all,

But now you are God’s people group.

At one time God had not acted mercifully toward you,

But now he has acted mercifully toward you.”

¹¹You people whom I love, I urge you to think about this: You are like foreigners whose real home is in heaven. So you should not do the sinful things you used to want to do, because if you do them, you will not be able to live well with God. ¹²Keep behaving in a good way among those who do not know God. If you do that, although they may say that you do what is evil, they will see that you are doing good things, and at the time when God comes to judge everyone, they will honor him.

¹³Because you wish to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has proper authority. This includes the king, because he has the greatest power. ¹⁴It also includes governors, because God sends them to punish those who do what is wrong and to praise those who do what is right. ¹⁵What God wants is for you to do good. If you do that, you will cause foolish people who do not know God to be unable to say that you have done wrong. ¹⁶Behave as though you were free from having to obey any master, but do not think that you can do evil because of that. Instead, behave as servants of God should. ¹⁷Act respectfully toward everyone. Love all your fellow believers. Honor God, and honor the king.

¹⁸You slaves who are believers, submit yourselves to your masters and completely respect them. Submit yourselves not only to those who act in a good and kind way toward you, but also submit yourselves to those who act in a harsh way toward you. ¹⁹You should do that because God is pleased with those who know what he wants and obey him, and who, for this reason, accept to suffer pain because their masters treat them unjustly. ²⁰God will certainly not be pleased with you if you do something that is wrong and then they beat you for that. But if you do what is good and still suffer harm, you are suffering for doing what is good. If you endure that, God will praise you. ²¹One of the reasons why God chose you is that you might suffer. When the Messiah suffered for you he became an example for you, in order that you would imitate what he did. ²²Remember how the Messiah conducted himself,

He never sinned,

And he never said anything to deceive people.

²³When people insulted him, he did not insult them in return.

When people caused him to suffer, he did not threaten to get revenge.

Instead, he decided to let God, who always judges justly, prove that he was innocent.

²⁴He himself endured the punishment for our sins in his body when he died on the cross, in order that we would stop sinning and start living rightly.

It is because they wounded him that God has healed you. ²⁵Truly you were like sheep that had become lost, but now you have returned to Jesus, who cares for you as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Chapter 3

¹You women believers should submit yourselves to your husbands. Do this in order that if any of them do not believe the message about the Messiah, they may become believers without your having to say anything to them.

²They will believe in the Messiah when they see that you honor them and that you are completely faithful to them.

³Do not try to do this by decorating the outside of your bodies, such as having fancy hair arrangements or wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, make your inner beings beautiful in a way that will not fade. I mean, have a humble and quiet attitude, which is something that God considers to be very valuable. ⁵The women who honored

God, who lived long ago, made themselves beautiful in this way. They trusted in God and obeyed their husbands.

⁶Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do what is right and are not afraid of what your husbands or anyone else may do to you because you are believers.

⁷You men who are believers, just as your wives should respect you, you should conduct your lives in an appropriate way with them. Treat them respectfully, realizing that they are usually weaker than you are. But also realize that God is making them to live forever, just like you. Do this so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

⁸To end this part of my letter, I say to all of you, agree with each other in what you think. Be sympathetic toward each other. Love each other as members of the same family should. Act compassionately toward each other. Be humble. ⁹When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, ask God to help them, because that is what you have been chosen by God to do, in order that he may help you. ¹⁰Consider what the psalmist wrote about the proper way of conducting our lives:

“As for those who want to enjoy life and for good things to happen to them, they must not say what is evil or speak words that deceive others.

¹¹They must continually refuse to do evil, and do what is good instead.

They must try to help people act peacefully toward each other;

they must earnestly urge people to act in a peaceful way,

¹²because the Lord accepts what righteous people do.

He listens to righteous people when they pray, and he answers them.

But he rejects those who do evil.”

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are making every effort to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. “Do not be afraid of the things that other fear; and do not be troubled when people treat you badly.” ¹⁵Instead, acknowledge in your inner beings that the Messiah is your master, whom you love. Always be ready to answer anyone who demands that you tell them about what you are confidently expecting God to do for you. But answer them humbly and respectfully, ¹⁶and make sure that you do nothing wrong, in order that those who speak evil about you may be ashamed when they see the good way in which you are conducting yourselves because you are joined to the Messiah. ¹⁷It may be that God wants you to suffer. If so, it is better to do good deeds, even if you suffer for doing them, than to do evil deeds. ¹⁸I say that because the Messiah died once for the sake of people who have sinned. He was a righteous person who died for unrighteous people. He died in order that he might bring us to God. During the time that he had an ordinary body, he was killed, but God’s Spirit caused him to become alive again. ¹⁹The Spirit also enabled him to go proclaim God’s victory to the evil spirits whom God had imprisoned. ²⁰Long ago, during the time that Noah was building a big boat, those evil spirits disobeyed God when he waited patiently to see if people would turn from their evil behavior. Only a few people were saved in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight persons safely through the waters of the flood, while all the others drowned in it. ²¹That water represents the water in which we are baptized, by which God saves us because he raised Jesus the Messiah from the dead. This water, of course, removes no dirt from our bodies. Instead, it shows that we are requesting God to assure us that he has removed our guilt for having sinned. ²²The Messiah has gone into heaven and is ruling in the place of highest honor next to God, after God caused all the evil and powerful spirit beings to be made obedient to him.

Chapter 4

¹Therefore, because the Messiah suffered in his body, you also be willing to suffer. Those who suffer in their bodies have stopped their sinning. ²As a result, during their remaining time here on earth, they do not do the things that sinful people desire to do, but instead they do the things that God wants them to do. ³I say that to you because you have already spent too much of your time here on earth doing what the people who do not know God like to do. In the past you committed all kinds of sexually immoral acts, you got drunk and then participated in orgies and carousing, and you worshiped idols, which is disgusting to God. ⁴Now your friends are surprised that you do not join with them anymore when they do these things. As a result, they say bad things about you. ⁵But one day they will have to admit to God everything they have done. He is the one who will judge them. ⁶That is the reason why the Messiah preached the good news to the dead. He did that so that, although God had judged them when they were alive, they might by the power of the Holy Spirit live forever as God lives. ⁷All things on this earth will soon come to an end. Therefore, keep thinking sensibly, and control what you think so that you can pray well. ⁸Most importantly of all, love each other sincerely, because if we love others we will not try to find out what they have done wrong. ⁹Provide food and a place to sleep for those Christian travelers who come among you, and do it without complaining. ¹⁰Believers should all use the gifts that God has given them to serve others. They should manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given them. ¹¹Those who speak to the assembly of believers should do that as if they were speaking the very words of God. Those who do kind deeds for others should do it with the strength that God gives them, in order that you might honor God as Jesus the Messiah enables us to do so. May we all praise God because he has all authority to rule everything forever. May it be so! ¹²You whom I love, do not be surprised about the painful things that you are suffering because you belong to the Messiah. Those things are testing you as people test metal by putting it into a fire. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³Instead, rejoice that you are suffering the same kinds of things that the Messiah endured. Rejoice when you suffer, in order that you may also be very glad when the Messiah returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. ¹⁴If others insult you because you believe in the Messiah, God is pleased with you, because it shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, lives within you. ¹⁵If you suffer, do not let it be because you murdered anyone, or stole anything, or did some other kind of evil thing, or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. ¹⁶But if you suffer because you are a Christian, do not be ashamed about it. Instead, praise God that you are suffering because you belong to the Messiah. ¹⁷I say this, because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since he will judge us believers first, think about the terrible things that will happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! ¹⁸That will be as it is written in the scriptures:

"Many righteous people will have to suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven.

So ungodly and sinful people will surely have to suffer much severe punishment from God!"

¹⁹Therefore, those who suffer because God wishes it, should trust God to keep them—God is the one who created them and he is the one who always does what he promises to do. And so they should continue to do what is right.

Chapter 5

¹Now I will say this to those among you who are elders, you who lead the assemblies of believers: I am also an elder. I also am one of those who saw the Messiah suffer, and I will also share some of the glory that the Messiah has in heaven. ²I appeal to you elders to take care of the people who are in your assemblies. Do this as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. Do this, not because you must do it, but instead do it willingly, as God desires. Do not be greedy to get money for doing it, but instead do it enthusiastically. ³Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you, but instead be examples to them by the way in which you conduct your lives. ⁴If you do that, when Jesus, who is like our chief shepherd, appears, he will give each of you a splendid reward. That reward will be like the wreaths that are given to athletes who win races, but your reward will never wither like those wreaths do.

⁵Now I will say this to you young men. You must obey the older men in the assembly. All of you believers should act humbly toward each other, because it is true that God opposes those who are proud, but he acts kindly toward those who are humble.

⁶Therefore, realizing that God has great power to punish proud people, humble yourselves in order that he may honor you at the time that he has determined. ⁷Because he takes care of you, let him take care of all the things that you are worried about.

⁸Always be alert and pay attention, because the devil, who is your enemy, is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it prowls around, seeking someone to kill and devour. ⁹You must resist him by continuing to firmly trust in the Messiah and his message, remembering that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering similar hardships. ¹⁰God is the one who kindly helps us in every situation, and he is the one who chose us to share his eternal glory in heaven because we are joined to the Messiah. And after you have suffered for a while because of things that people do to harm you, he will remove your spiritual defects, he will strengthen you to trust him more, and he will support you in every way. ¹¹I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

¹²Silas has written this letter for me as I have dictated it to him. I consider that he is a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you to encourage you, and I want to assure you that what I have written is a true message about the things that God kindly does for us, things that we do not deserve. Continue to firmly believe this message.

¹³In this city that we sometimes call 'Babylon,' the believers, whom God has chosen to belong to him just like he chose you, send you their greetings. Mark, who is like a son to me, also sends you his greetings. ¹⁴Greet each other with a kiss on the cheek to show that you love each other. I pray that God will give peace to all of you who are joined to the Messiah.

2 Peter

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Simon Peter, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am an apostle {whom he appointed}. {I am writing this letter} to you whom God has caused to believe {in the Messiah} just like he caused us {apostles} to believe {in the Messiah}. {Jesus has done this} by his righteous acts. Jesus the Messiah is our God, and he is the one who saves us. ²I pray that God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful because you know God and Jesus, {who is} our Lord.

³God has given us everything that we need in order to live a life that honors him. {He does this} by his power as God. {He does this} by what we know about him. God is the one who chose us {to be his people} by his glorious and excellent character. ⁴{By his glorious and excellent character,} God has promised that he will do priceless and great things for us. {He has done this} so that by {believing in} what he has promised, you will be able to act like God, {and} you will no longer suffer the moral corruption that is in the world through the desire to do sinful things.

⁵Because God has done all that, do your best to not only believe in the Messiah, {but also} to do good things. {And make sure that you not only} do good things, {but that you also} learn more about God. ⁶{And make sure that you do not only} learn more about God, {but that you also} control yourself {in what you do and say}. {And make sure that you do not only} control yourself {in what you do and say}, {but that you also} remain faithful to God in hardship. {And make sure that you do not only} remain faithful to God in hardship, {but that you also} honor him. ⁷{And make sure that you do not only} honor God, {but that you also} show affection to each other as family members. {And make sure that you do not only} show affection to each other as family members, {but that you also} love others. ⁸{Do these things,} because if you do all these things more and more, then they will make you productive with respect to your knowing our Lord Jesus the Messiah. ⁹{Do these things,} because a person who does not do these things {is not aware that these things are important.} {This person is like} a blind person {who cannot see what is around him,} {or like} a nearsighted person {who can only see things that are close to him.} {This person has even} forgotten that God has forgiven him for the sinful things {he did} in the past.

¹⁰Consequently, you fellow believers, make even more effort to make sure that God has chosen you to be his people. If you do these things I have just told you about, then you will absolutely never become separated from God. ¹¹{This is true} because, {by your doing} thus, God will wholeheartedly allow you to enter into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah will rule {his people} forever.

¹²Consequently, {because these things are so important,} I am always prepared to keep on reminding you about these things. {I will remind you} even though you already know {them} and are firmly convinced of the true teaching that you now have. ¹³Nevertheless, I consider it to be right for me to keep reminding you {about these things} as long as I am alive. ¹⁴{I want to remind you of these things,} because I know that I shall die soon. {I shall die} just like our Lord Jesus the Messiah has made clear to me {previously}. ¹⁵In addition, I will make every effort {by writing these things down} to cause you to keep on remembering these things after I have died.

¹⁶{I will do this} because, when we apostles told you that our Lord Jesus the Messiah is coming back in power {some day}, we were not basing {what we told you} on stories that we had cleverly made up. On the contrary, {we told you} what we saw with our own eyes, the divinely majestic Jesus. ¹⁷{I can say we were eyewitnesses} because {we were there when} God the Father honored him and glorified him, {when Jesus heard} a voice from the majestically glorious God. {And the voice said,} "This is my Son, whom I love very much. I am very pleased with him." ¹⁸We ourselves also heard this voice of God that came from heaven when we were with Jesus on that sacred mountain. ¹⁹And we have what the prophets wrote {previously}, {which is} absolutely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place {that helps people see where they are going}. {That light} will shine until the day {of the return of the Messiah} dawns and {Jesus}, the star that appears

before the morning, gives your minds greater understanding. ²⁰Above all, you should know that no prophet could interpret {his prophecy} by his own imagination. ²¹{This is true} because no one ever prophesied a {true} prophecy according to what a human wanted. On the contrary, those who spoke {prophecies} from God did so by the Holy Spirit guiding them.

Chapter 2

¹But people who falsely proclaimed {messages from God} were also amidst the Israelites. In the same way there will also be people who teach false {messages} amidst you. They will introduce opinions {that will result in} eternal condemnation. They will even reject their owner, {Jesus,} who redeemed them. {As a result of this,} God will soon condemn them {for eternity}. ²And many {people} will do the same unrestrained immoral acts {as these false teachers}. Because of these false teachers, {unbelievers} will speak evil of Christianity. ³And due to their greedy hearts, {these false teachers} will make a profit off of you by telling you lies. God condemned them a long time ago, and God will certainly destroy them.

⁴{This judgment is certain} because God did not let the angels who acted sinfully remain unpunished. On the contrary, he threw them into hell {where they are} chained in darkness. God imprisoned {these sinful angels} there and is holding them there in order to judge them. ⁵And God did not let {the people who lived in} the world long ago remain unpunished. However, he preserved eight people, including Noah, who was a righteous herald, when he destroyed by a flood the ungodly {people who lived in the} world {at that time}. ⁶And God condemned the cities {called} Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed by burning them completely to ashes. {This resulted in God} making {those cities} an example of what will happen to people who dishonor God. ⁷And God rescued Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because of the unrestrained immoral acts of the people who acted lawlessly {in Sodom}. ⁸{When he lived with those wicked people {in Sodom}, that righteous man Lot distressed himself every day by what he saw and heard. {He did so} because of the things people did that were against God's law.) ⁹{Since these things are all true, then you can be sure that} the Lord knows how to rescue people who honor him from being tried. And {the Lord also knows how} to keep those who do unrighteous deeds {ready} {in order} to punish them at the time when he judges. ¹⁰And {he will punish} especially those who keep on doing what their sinful hearts want to do, {which are things that make them} displeasing to God. {These people} also scorn divine authority. How bold {they are}! They do whatever they wish! They are not even afraid to insult God's glorious angels. ¹¹But {God's} angels, {even though} they are much more powerful than these people, do not accuse glorious beings in an insulting manner in front of God! ¹²However, these {false teachers} are like animals that cannot think rationally. According to the way they naturally behave, they were born so that others may capture and destroy them. They say bad things about things they do not even know. God will surely destroy them when it is time for their destruction. ¹³{These false teachers} suffer harm as the proper punishment for their harmful deeds. {They are} pleased to party in an immoral manner {even} during the daytime. {Like} ugly stains {on one's clothing,} {they are disgraceful to your gatherings}! {They even} celebrate their deceptive deeds while eating {a meal} with you! ¹⁴They constantly want to have immoral sexual relations with {every} woman {they see}. They cannot stop sinning. They lure spiritually weak people {into sin}. {As athletes train for sports, these false teachers} train themselves to be greedy. {God} has cursed them! ¹⁵They refuse to live the way God wants them to. They are acting wickedly. They are imitating what Balaam, the son of Bosor, did {long ago}. He loved {to receive money as} payment for wicked deeds. ¹⁶However, God rebuked him for his wicked deed {against Israel}. {And even though donkeys do not speak}, God used {Balaam's} donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his foolish action.

¹⁷These {false teachers} are {useless}, {like} springs that do not give water. {They are like} clouds that the storm pushes away {before they can give rain}. {God} has reserved the darkness {of hell} for them. ¹⁸{This is true} because they persuade people to sin who have recently {become believers and} stopped doing what wicked unbelievers do. {These false teachers do this} by speaking proud words that are not worth anything. {They persuade these people to sin} by doing whatever their sinful natures want to do. ¹⁹{They also do this} by telling their listeners that they are free to do whatever they want while, at the same time, they themselves are controlled

{by their sinful desires} that will destroy them. {This is true} because the thing that overpowers a person's will takes control of that person. ²⁰And if they have stopped doing the things that defile sinful human society by knowing the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah, but those {defiling things} {began to} control them again, {then} their situation is worse now than {it was} at first. ²¹{This is because} it would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the way that pleases God than to learn {this way} and reject {God's} holy commands that {the apostles} taught them. ²²This is a true proverb {that describes} what has happened to {these false teachers}: "They are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

Chapter 3

¹Fellow believers whom I love, this {letter} that I am now writing to you is the second letter {that I have written to you}. {I have written} both {of these letters to you} to remind you of the things that your sincere minds already know. ²{I have written these letters} in order to remind you of the prophecies that the holy prophets spoke a long time ago. {I also want you} to remember what the one who rules over us and saves us has commanded you through the teaching of the apostles {whom we sent to} you.

³It is important for you to understand that people who mock will come and mock {the return of Jesus} during the time shortly before Jesus returns. {Those people} will do whatever they want to do. ⁴{These mockers} will say, "Jesus' promise to return is not true! {We know this} because since Israel's ancestors died, everything has remained the same. It has been the same way since God created everything!" ⁵{They will say this} because they deliberately ignore that God caused the heavens to exist a long time ago by commanding it to be so, and he caused the earth to come out from water and up through water {by commanding it to be so}. ⁶And God, by his command and by water, destroyed the world that existed at that time. {He did so} by flooding the earth with water. ⁷However, God, by the same command, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now for fire. God is keeping them for the time when he will judge and destroy people who act wickedly. ⁸Fellow believers whom I love, do not ignore this one truth: from God's perspective a short period of time is no different from a long period of time! ⁹The Lord is not acting slowly to fulfill his promise of Jesus' return. Some people think {that this is so}. On the contrary, God is being patient with you, because he does not want any of you to be punished eternally. Rather, he wants everyone to repent. ¹⁰In contrast {to what those mockers say}, the time when the Lord returns will come unexpectedly. At that time there will be a great roaring sound and the heavens will cease to exist. God will also destroy the basic elements of nature by fire. Then God will reveal the earth and everything that has been done in it.

¹¹Since God will destroy all these things {I have just mentioned} in the way {I have described}, you must certainly behave in a holy manner and do what pleases God. ¹²{Do these things} while expecting and trying to speed up the time of Jesus' return. On account of that day, God will destroy the heavens with fire and melt the basic elements of nature with heat. ¹³{Although all those events will happen,} we are expecting the new heavens and new earth that God has promised to create. Everyone will be righteous in that new universe.

¹⁴Because this is true, fellow believers whom I love, while you are waiting for these things {to happen}, do your best to make sure that Jesus will see that you are not living sinfully {and that you are} at peace {with God}. ¹⁵And think about this: Our Lord Jesus is patient so that more people can be saved. Paul, a fellow believer whom we love, has also said this when he wrote to you. He wrote using the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶In all the letters that Paul wrote, he also writes about these things {that I have just mentioned}. In his letters are also some {teachings} that are difficult to understand. People who lack knowledge and stability misinterpret those difficult teachings, as well as the rest of the scriptures. {God} will punish them as a result. ¹⁷Because all these things are true, fellow believers whom I love, and because you already know about these things, keep yourselves from ceasing to live faithfully because you let the wrong teaching of those who live like there is no law deceive you into sinning. ¹⁸Rather, live in such a manner that you experience more and more of the kind acts of the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah. And live in such a manner that you know more and more about him.

I pray that everyone will glorify Jesus both at this time and forever. May this truly be so!

1 John

Chapter 1

¹{I, John, am writing to you} about {Jesus,} the Word {of God}, the one who gives life. He existed before there was anything else. We {apostles} listened to him {as he taught people}. We saw him personally. We looked at him and touched him. {So we can testify that he was a real human being.} ²Because he came here to the earth and we saw him, we are proclaiming him to you clearly. The one who has always existed, who had been with his Father in heaven, came here to us. ³We want you to share life with us, and so we are proclaiming to you what we saw {Jesus do} and what we heard {Jesus say}. {If you believe in him,} you will share life, as we do, with God our Father and with his Son Jesus the Messiah. ⁴I am writing to you about these things so that {you will recognize that they are true, and that as a result} we will be completely joyful together.

⁵The message that we heard from Jesus and are proclaiming to you is this: God always does what is right, and he never, ever does anything wrong. He is like a pure light in which there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we share life with God, but we live in an evil manner, we are lying. We are not living truthfully. It is as though we are living in the dark. ⁷But if we live in a pure manner, as God is pure in every way, then we can share life with each other. This is like living in God's pure light. Then God forgives all of our sin and accepts us because his Son Jesus died for us. ⁸If we say that we do not commit sin, we are fooling ourselves. We are refusing to believe the true things {that God says about us}. ⁹But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is always right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned {and reject that sin}, he will forgive us for our sins and he will free us from {the guilt of} everything that we have done wrong. ¹⁰{Because God says that everyone has sinned,} if we say that we have not sinned, we are speaking as if God were a liar! We are rejecting what God has said about us!

Chapter 2

¹You are as dear to me as though you were my own children. Therefore, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you does sin, {remember that} Jesus the Messiah, the righteous one, pleads with the Father {and asks him to forgive us}. ²Jesus is the one who sacrificed his life for us so that God could forgive our sins. And this is true not just of our sins, but of all the sins that all people everywhere have committed!

³When we obey what God commands us to do, then we can be sure that we have come to have a close relationship with God. ⁴If someone says, "I am living in close relationship with God," but that person does not obey what God has commanded, then he is a liar. He is not conducting his life according to God's true message. ⁵But if someone obeys what God has commanded, that person loves God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we have a close relationship with God: ⁶If anyone says that he has a close relationship with God, then he should conduct his life as Jesus did {when he was here on earth}.

⁷Dear friends, I am not writing this to tell you to do something new. Instead, I am writing this to tell you to do something that you have known that you should do since you first believed {in Jesus}. This is {part of} the message that {Jesus gave to us and that} we have already told to you. ⁸However, if we think about this in another way, I am telling you to do something new. It is new because the way that the Messiah lived was new, and the way that you are living is new. That is because you are ceasing to do evil and you are doing good more and more. It is as though you have come out of a dark place and have begun to live in light from God. ⁹Someone might say that he is living in a good way, just as God wants him to do. That would be like living in light from God. But if he hates any of his fellow believers, then he is still living in a bad way, doing what God does not want, like a person who lives in darkness. ¹⁰But if someone loves his fellow believers, then he is truly living well, like a person who is living in light from God. He will not have a reason to do anything evil {as he would have if he hated a fellow believer}. This is like

a person in daylight who has no reason to trip over anything. ¹¹But anyone who hates a fellow believer is living in a completely wrong way. He does not understand how he should live, because the wrong things that he is doing are keeping him from understanding God's way. It is as though he is walking in darkness, and cannot see where to go.

¹²I am writing to you, whom I love as though you were my own children, because God has forgiven your sins because of what Jesus has done for you. ¹³I am writing to you who have been believers longer than the others. I am writing to you because you have a close relationship with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I am writing to you newer but steadfast believers because Satan, that evil being, has tried to tempt you to do wrong, but you have successfully resisted him. ¹⁴I have written to you whom I love as though you were my own little children because you have a close relationship with God the Father. I have written to you who have been believers longer than the others because you have a close relationship with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I have written to you newer but steadfast believers because you are spiritually strong. I have also written to you because you continue to obey what God commands, and because you have successfully resisted {Satan,} that evil being,} when he tried to tempt you to do wrong.

¹⁵Do not desire to be like people who do not honor God. Do not desire the things that they want to have. If anyone desires to be like those people, {he is proving that} he does not love God the Father. ¹⁶{I say that such a person does not love God the Father} because the way that ungodly people live is not the way that God our Father teaches us to live. They want to fulfill their physical desires. They want to get for themselves the things that they see. They boast about all of the things that they own. All of these things come from the selfish and ungodly way of thinking. ¹⁷The people who do not honor God will disappear, along with all of the things that they desire. But the people who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

¹⁸You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, {I want you to know that} this is the time just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that a person is coming who will strongly oppose the Messiah. In fact, many people like that, who are against the true Messiah, are already here. Because of this, we know that it is that time. ¹⁹These people refused to remain in our congregations. However, they never really belonged with us in the first place. After all, if they had belonged with us, they would not have left us. But {when they left us,} then we clearly saw that none of them had actually joined with us. ²⁰But as for you, the Holy Messiah has given you his Spirit. As a result, you all know {what is true}. ²¹I am not writing this letter to you because you do not know the true things {that God has told us}, but because you do know them. You also know enough to recognize and reject every lie that is not one of the true things {that God has told us}. ²²The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Messiah. All who do that are against the Messiah. They are refusing to believe both in God the Father and in Jesus his Son. ²³Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with God the Father. But those who acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are also joined with God the Father. ²⁴Here is what you must do, {unlike those people who deny Jesus}. You must continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard. If you continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard, then you will continue to share life with Jesus the Son and God the Father. ²⁵And what God promised us is that he will enable us to live forever!

²⁶I am writing this letter to you to warn you about people who want to deceive you {about Jesus}. ²⁷Here is what you should do {about those people who are trying to deceive you}. God's Spirit, whom you received from Jesus, continues to live in you. So you do not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything that you need to know. He always teaches the truth, and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you, and continue to share life with Jesus.

²⁸Now, my dear ones, {I urge you to} continue to share life with Jesus. That way, when he comes back again, we will be confident {that he will accept us}. {If we do that,} we will not be ashamed to stand before him when he returns. ²⁹Since you know that God always does what is right, you know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's spiritual children.

Chapter 3

¹Think about how much God our Father loves us! He says that we are his children. In a spiritual sense, this is completely true. That is why people who are unbelievers do not understand us. It is because they have not understood who God is{, and we take after him just as children take after their parents}. ²Dear friends, at present we are God's spiritual children. He has not yet shown us what we will be {in the future}. {However,} we know that when Jesus comes back again, we will become like him, because we will see him as he truly is. ³So all those who confidently expect to see Jesus as he truly is make themselves free from sin because Jesus himself is free from sin. ⁴But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sin is, refusing to obey God's laws. ⁵You know that Jesus came in order to make us free from our sins. {You know} also {that} he never sinned himself. ⁶Those who share life with Jesus do not continue sinning. But all those who continue to sin have not understood who Jesus is and they do not really know him. ⁷So I urge you who are very dear to me not to let anyone deceive you {by telling you that it is all right to sin}. If you continue doing what is right, that will please God, just as Jesus always does what pleases God. ⁸But anyone who continues to sin is behaving like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning, ever since the world began. The very reason that God's Son became a human being was to undo this work of the devil {that kept people continually sinning}. ⁹People do not continue sinning if they have become spiritual children of God because God has made them to be like him. They cannot continually sin, because they are God's spiritual children. ¹⁰People who belong to God are clearly different from people who belong to the devil. Those who do not do what is right do not belong to God. Those who do not love their fellow believers also do not belong to God.

¹¹{You should recognize this because} the message that you heard when you first believed in Jesus is that we should love each other. ¹²We should not hate others as {Adam's son} Cain did. He belonged to {Satan,} that evil being. Cain murdered his {younger} brother {Abel}. I will tell you why he did that. It was because Cain behaved in an evil way, and {he hated his younger brother because} his younger brother behaved in the right way. ¹³Therefore, my fellow believers, you should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. ¹⁴We love our fellow believers, and this assures us that God has made us spiritually alive. But if someone does not love {other believers}, then that person is still spiritually dead. ¹⁵Anyone who hates one of his fellow believers is doing something just as bad as murdering him. And you know that someone who murders another person is not living in the new way that God enables us to live. ¹⁶Jesus taught us how to truly love each other when he willingly died for us. For our part, we should also be willing to do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them. ¹⁷Many of us have the things that are necessary for life in this world. But suppose that we become aware that a fellow believer does not have what he needs. Suppose also that we refuse to provide for him. Then we are not loving him the way that God taught us to love {people}. ¹⁸You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, let us not {merely} say that we love {each other}. Let us love {each other} genuinely by helping {each other}.

¹⁹⁻²⁰By doing that, we can know that we belong to God, who is the source of everything that is true. When we are in God's presence we may feel that we do not belong to God because of our sins. When that happens, we can reassure ourselves that we truly do belong to him. This is because God is more trustworthy than our feelings and he knows everything about us{, including that we have trusted in him}. ²¹Dear friends, when we feel that God does not condemn us {for having sinned}, then we can pray confidently to God. ²²We find that when we pray confidently to God and ask for something, he gives it to us. {We pray confidently like this} because {as people who belong to him,} we do what he commands us to do and we do what pleases him. ²³I will tell you what God commands us to do. We must trust in his Son, Jesus the Messiah. We must also love each other just as Jesus commanded us to do. ²⁴The people who do what God commands share life with God, and God shares life with them. I will tell you how we can be sure that God is sharing life with us. We can be sure of that because we have God's Spirit, whom he gave to us.

Chapter 4

¹Dear friends, there are many people who have a false message and they are going around teaching it to others. So do not trust every teacher. Instead, think carefully about what each teacher says and decide whether it came from God's Spirit {or from a different spirit}. ²I will tell you how to know if someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God {or if he is not}. Those who affirm that Jesus the Messiah came from God and became a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. ³But those who do not affirm {that} Jesus {became a real human being} are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose the Messiah. You have heard that people like that will be coming {among us}. Even now they are already here.

⁴As for you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, you belong to God, and you have rejected what those people teach. You have done this because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is more powerful than the devil, who motivates everyone who does not honor God. ⁵As for those people who are teaching what is false, they think and live in ways that do not honor God. That is why what they say also does not honor God, and that is why other people who do not honor God believe what they say. ⁶As for us, God has sent us. Whoever lives in relationship with God believes and obeys what we teach. Whoever does not live in relationship with God does not believe or obey what we teach. That difference enables us to distinguish between people who teach true messages from God's Spirit and people who teach false messages from the devil.

⁷Dear friends, we must love each other. This is what God wants for us, and it is because he loves {us} that we can love {others}. Those who love {their fellow believers} have become God's spiritual children and are living in relationship with him. ⁸God's character is to love {people}. So whoever does not love {others} is not living in relationship with God. ⁹I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us. He sent his only Son to this earth so that his Son would enable us to live eternally because of what he did for us. ¹⁰I will tell you what loving {someone} really means. Our efforts to love God do not define what it means to love {someone}. No, God himself did that by loving us so much that he sent his Son to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place. When Jesus did that, God could forgive the sins of people who trust in Jesus, instead of punishing them. ¹¹Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

¹²No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, when we love each other, we can see that God lives within us and that he is the one who enables us to love others, just as he intended for us to do. ¹³This is how we can be sure that we are sharing life with God and that God is sharing life with us: He has given us his own Spirit. ¹⁴We {apostles} have seen God's Son {Jesus on earth}, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world {from suffering eternally for their sins}. ¹⁵So God continues to share life with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "He is the Son of God." And so they continue to share life with God. ¹⁶We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others share life with God, and God shares life with them. ¹⁷When we continue to share life with God, then God has achieved his purpose in loving us. As a result, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident {that he will not condemn us}. This is because we are {loving others as we live} in this world just as Jesus does. ¹⁸We will not be afraid {of God} if we truly love him, because those who love {God} completely cannot be afraid {of him}. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid {of God} have not completely understood how much he loves them, and they are not loving {God} completely. ¹⁹We love {God and others} because God loved us first. ²⁰People are lying if they say that they love God but they also hate a fellow believer. After all, we can see our fellow believers. But we have not seen God. So those who do not love one of their fellow believers certainly cannot be loving God, {because it is much easier to love someone whom you can see than someone whom you cannot see}. ²¹Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

Chapter 5

¹All those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah are spiritually children of God. Now, whoever loves anyone who is a father {certainly} loves his child also. {So if we believe in Jesus, then we love God, and therefore we should also love our fellow believers.} ²We can be sure that we truly love others who believe that Jesus is the Messiah when we love God and do what he commands us to do. ³I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands us to do. And it is not difficult to do what he commands us to do. ⁴Here is the reason why it is not difficult for us to do what God commands. All of us who have become God's spiritual children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. There is one reason why we are stronger than everything that is against God. It is because we trust in Jesus. ⁵I will tell you who is stronger than everything that is against God: It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶Jesus the Messiah is the one who came {to earth from God}, experiencing both {the} water {of his baptism} and {the} blood {of his death on the cross}. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus not only {when John baptized Jesus} in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body {when he died}. And God's Spirit declares {truthfully that Jesus the Messiah did these things}, because the Spirit always tells the truth. ⁷So there are three ways by which we know {that Jesus is the Messiah who came from God}. ⁸{Those three ways are:} what God's Spirit tells us, what happened {when John baptized Jesus} in water, and what happened when {Jesus'} blood flowed {from his body when he died on the cross}. These three things all tell us the same thing{, that Jesus came from God}. ⁹We rely on what people tell us when we have to decide about something. But we can certainly rely much more on what God tells us. So let me tell you what God has told us about who his Son is. ¹⁰{First, however, let me say that} those who trust in the Son of God already know that what God says about him is true. But those who do not believe what God says are calling him a liar, because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son. ¹¹Now this is what God has told us {about who his Son is}: "I gave you eternal life, and my Son is the one who makes this life possible." ¹²Those who share life with God's Son {Jesus} have begun to live forever {with God}. Those who do not share life with God's Son have not begun to live forever.

¹³Because I want you to know that you will live forever, I have written this letter to you. This is for you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. ¹⁴I also want you to know that we can be very confident that God wants to do what we ask of him when we pray for what he desires. ¹⁵Since we know that God wants to give us whatever we ask of him, {if it is what he desires,} then we also know that God is already giving us what we ask of him.

¹⁶For example, suppose someone sees one of his fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate him from God eternally. Then he should ask {God to restore the one who is sinning}. If he does that, then God will bring that person back into spiritual life with himself. However, I am saying this only about people who are sinning in a way that would not separate them from God eternally. There is sin that causes people to separate from God eternally. I am not saying that you should pray for people who are sinning in that way. ¹⁷Every wrong thing that people do is a sin {against God}, but there are some sins that will not separate a person from God eternally. ¹⁸We know that everyone who has become God's spiritual son or daughter does not continually sin. Instead, the Son of God protects that person so that Satan, that evil being, does not harm him. ¹⁹We know that we belong to God. We also know that Satan, that evil being, is controlling all the people who are unbelievers. ²⁰We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has made it possible for us to understand {what is true}. He did this so that we can truly know the genuine God. And we are sharing life with the genuine God, {that is,} with his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is truly God, and he is the one who gives us {this new,} eternal life.

²¹I say this to you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children: "Be careful that you never give yourselves to anything that is a false god."

2 John

Chapter 1

¹{From John,} the elder. {I am writing this letter} to you, the congregation {of people} that God has chosen {to belong to him}. I sincerely love all of you believers. Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message {that Jesus taught} also love you. ²{We love you} because we have all accepted God's true message. This true message has become a part of us and will be with us forever. ³God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, the Father's Son, will {continue to} act kindly and mercifully toward us and will make us peaceful. {They will do this because} they are truthful and they love {us}.

⁴I have learned that some of the believers from your congregation are living according to the true message {that God has taught us}. That made me very happy. This is just what our Father commanded us to do.

⁵And now, dear congregation, I ask you {to do what God commanded;} that we should love each other. I am not writing this to you as a new thing that God has commanded {us to do}. Instead, we have known this command to love each other from when we first believed in the Messiah. ⁶This is what it means to love {God and each other}. We should obey what God commands us to do. This is what God commands you, {to love each other,} so you need to do it. You have heard this from when you first believed in the Messiah.

⁷I say this because there are many people in this world who travel around, deceiving people. These deceptive people refuse to say that Jesus the Messiah came to the earth and was a man. This {teaching} comes from the {original} deceiver, the one who opposes the Messiah. ⁸Be careful so that you do not {let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will} lose the reward that we have worked for. So be careful to make sure that you receive the complete reward! ⁹Those who do not continue to believe and teach the things that the Messiah taught, but instead believe and teach other things, do not have {a true relationship with} God. But those who continue to believe and teach what the Messiah taught do have {a true relationship} both {with God,} our Father{,} and {with Jesus,} his Son. ¹⁰So when anyone comes to you who teaches something different from what the Messiah taught, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not even greet him {or wish him well in any way, so that you do not encourage him}. ¹¹If you greet these people respectfully, you are helping them to do the evil things that they do.

¹²I have much more that I want to say to you. But I have decided not to write them to you in a letter. Instead, I hope to be with you soon and to talk with you personally. Then we will be completely joyful together. ¹³Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, greet you.

3 John

Chapter 1

¹You know me as The Elder. I am writing this letter to you, my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love. ²Dear friend, I ask God that he would make everything go well for you, and that you may be physically healthy just as you are healthy in respect to God. ³I know that you are healthy in respect to God because of the fellow believers who come here and who tell me about your truthful way of living. They say that you live according to the true message about Jesus. That makes me very happy. ⁴This is what makes me the very happiest—when someone tells me that the people whom I have helped to follow Jesus are living in a way that matches God’s truth! ⁵Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even those whom you do not know. ⁶Some of them have reported before the congregation here how you have shown that you love them. It is good that you continue to give such people what they need for traveling in a generous way, so that it honors God.

⁷They are traveling in order to be obedient to Jesus, and people who do not believe in Jesus have not helped them.

⁸So we who believe in Jesus ought to give these people whatever they need. Then it will be as though we are working alongside them as they help others to know God’s true message.

⁹I wrote a letter to your group of believers to tell them to help those other believers. However, Diotrephes does not accept anything that I say, because he wants to dominate your group. ¹⁰So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He falsely tells others that we do evil things. He does this in order to harm us by what he says. As well as doing that, he also refuses to welcome the fellow believers who are traveling in order to do God’s work. He even prevents those who do want to welcome them, and banishes them from the congregation!

¹¹Dear friend, do not imitate a bad example like that. Instead, keep imitating good examples. Remember that people who do good deeds truly belong to God. But anyone who keeps doing what is bad has not known God.

¹²All the believers who know Demetrius say that he is a good person. The way that he lives according to God’s true message also shows you that he is a good person. We also confirm that he is a good person, and you know that what we say is true.

¹³When I began to write this letter, I had much more that I intended to write to you. But I do not want to write it to you in a letter. ¹⁴Instead, I hope to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. ¹⁵I pray that God will continue to make your spirit peaceful. The friends here greet you. Please greet for us all of our friends there, personally and by name.

Jude

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Jude, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am a brother of James. {I am writing} to you whom God has called, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom Jesus the Messiah is keeping {for himself}. ²I pray that God will increase his merciful acts toward you and make you more peaceful and make you experience more of his love.

³{Fellow believers} whom I love, I tried my best to write {a letter} to you about how God has saved all of us {who believe}. However, I needed to write {this letter instead} in order to urge you to defend the true things that we believe. {These are things} that God has given for all time to all those whom he has made holy. ⁴{I am urging you to do this} because some men have crept stealthily {into your meetings}. {They are men} whom God has chosen to condemn a long time ago. They do ungodly things. They think that our God permits people to be sexually immoral because he is kind. {They also} oppose what is true about Jesus the Messiah, who alone owns us and rules over us.

⁵Although you previously knew all these things, I desire to remind you {of them}. {Remember} that after Jesus rescued the people {of Israel} from the country of Egypt, he destroyed those people {among them} who did not trust him. ⁶Also, {some} angels did not continue to remain in their proper places where they had authority but abandoned them. {Because they did this} God has imprisoned them forever in darkness {in hell}. {God did this} in order to judge them on the important day {when he judges everything}. ⁷The same is true of {the people who lived in the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities near them. They acted in a sexually immoral way in the same way as those angels did. They participated in all kinds of improper sexual acts. By causing these {angels and people} to suffer for eternity in the fire of hell, God is making them an example {of those who reject him}.

⁸Similarly, these {false teachers} are dreamers who not only make their own bodies dirty by living immorally, but also reject the Lord's commands. They even insult God's glorious angels.

⁹Even the archangel Michael was not so bold as to speak slanderous accusations against Satan when he argued with him concerning the dead body of Moses. Instead, he {merely} said, "May the Lord reprove you!" ¹⁰By contrast, these {false teachers} speak evil words about spiritual things that they do not understand. They are just like animals that cannot think rationally. The things that they are naturally able to understand are destroying them.

¹¹How sad it is for them! They act like Cain, {who murdered his brother}. They have dedicated themselves to committing the same sin that Balaam committed in order to get money. God will certainly destroy them like he destroyed Korah and those who rebelled {against Moses with him}. ¹²These people are shamelessly eating with you. At your fellowship meals they are like rocks hidden under the water that ships crash against. They only take care of themselves. They are {useless,} like clouds that the wind carries away before they can give rain. They are {useless,} like trees that don't bear fruit at harvest time. {They are like trees} that will die twice because God will uproot them. ¹³They are {uncontrollable,} like the sea's thrashing waves. They display their disgraceful acts just like the waves bring up foam. {They are like} stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God is reserving the dark gloom {of hell} for them forever.

¹⁴Even Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, spoke about these false teachers when he said: "Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his holy {angels}. ¹⁵{They will come} to judge everyone and rebuke everyone for all their ungodly deeds that they have done in ungodly ways, and for all the harsh insults that these people, who sin and dishonor God, spoke against Jesus." ¹⁶These {false teachers} grumble {to themselves} and complain {to others}. They live according to their sinful desires and brag about themselves. They flatter people in order to get what they want {from them}.

¹⁷But you {fellow believers} whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus the Messiah said long ago.

¹⁸{Remember} that they told you, "In the last days {before Jesus returns,} there will be people who mock {the true

things that God has told us}. {They will} live according to their own sinful desires that dishonor God." ¹⁹These {mockers} are the people who are making believers angry with each other. {They live according to their} natural instincts. The {Holy} Spirit does not dwell within them.

²⁰However, you {fellow believers} whom I love, by increasing your trust in God and by praying with the Holy Spirit's help, ²¹keep living in a way that enables you to experience God's love. {Do this} while expecting the merciful return of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, {which will result in} living eternally {with him}.

²²And be merciful to those who are confused {about what they should believe}. ²³But rescue other people urgently, as if you are pulling them out of the fire of hell. And be merciful to some other people, but be cautious with them, as if just touching their clothing could make you sinful.

²⁴God is able to prevent you from returning to a sinful life. {He is also able} to take you without sin into his glorious presence. {You will stand there} with great joy. ²⁵There is only one God. He has saved us as a result of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah {did for us}. I pray that everyone will recognize that God is glorious, majestic, powerful, and rules with great authority. {He was like that} before time began. {He is like that} today, and {he will remain like that} forever! May it truly be so!

Revelation

Chapter 1

¹This book has the things that Jesus the Messiah showed to me, John. God showed these things to Jesus in order that he might pass them on to his servants. These things will happen soon. Jesus communicated these things by sending his angel to me, his servant John. ²As a witness I, John, reported everything I saw and heard about the word of God, and the true accounts that were given about Jesus the Messiah. ³God will do good to anyone who reads these words and to any who hear them when they are being read aloud. He will do good to those who listen carefully to them and obey them, for the time when these things happen is approaching quickly.

⁴I, John, am writing this letter to the seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God be kind to you and give you inner peace, for he is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will always exist in the future. The Spirit of God, who is in front of God's throne, has all kinds of power. This is symbolized by seven spirits who are in front of God's throne. ⁵May Jesus the Messiah—who has faithfully told us the truth about God and—also be kind to you and give you peace. For he is the first one whom God raised from the dead, and he is the one who rules the kings of the earth. He is the one who loves us and who erased the record of our sins. He did that by shedding his blood when he died on the cross. ⁶He is the one who has begun to rule over his kingdom; he has set us apart to be priests who worship God his Father as he commanded. It is Jesus the Messiah whom we must honor and praise forever. This is the truth.

⁷Look! The Messiah is coming in the clouds. Everyone will see him, including those who killed him by nailing him to a cross. Every tribe on the earth will be in sorrow and grief when they see him coming. That is the truth! ⁸The Lord God declares, "I am the one who began all things, the Alpha, and I am the one who will cause all things to end, the Omega. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and who will always exist. I am the One who rules over everything and everyone."

⁹I, John, your fellow believer, am suffering as you are because Jesus rules over us. We share together the call to suffer for our faith. We are part of his reign and rule over all things, and we are patiently enduring every trial and test that comes. I was imprisoned and sent to the Island of Patmos because I kept telling people about God's message and the truth about Jesus. ¹⁰On one of the days we worship the Lord with other believers, God's Spirit took control of me. Then I heard behind me someone speaking. His voice was like a trumpet that was being played. ¹¹He said to me, "Write on a scroll what you see, and send it to seven groups of believers. Send it to the believers in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." ¹²When I heard these words, I turned to see who was speaking. Then I saw seven golden lampstands. ¹³In the middle of the lampstands there was someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached to his feet and a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was as white as wool or fresh fallen snow. His eyes were like a brilliant flame. ¹⁵His feet looked like gleaming bronze. When he spoke, his voice had the volume and depth of a great river of rushing water. ¹⁶He was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was coming out of his mouth. His face shone as bright as the sun at midday. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell down at his feet as though I were dead. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the First One who began all things and the Last One who causes all things to end. ¹⁸I am alive, even though I died once, and indeed, I am alive forever! I have power over death and I control the place of the dead. ¹⁹So write down what you have seen. And write down what is happening now. And write down what will happen in the future. ²⁰The meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars represent the angels who watch over the seven groups of believers in Asia, and the seven lampstands represent the seven groups that are there."

Chapter 2

¹“Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands says this: ²I know all you have done. I know that you work hard for me. I know you are patient when you go through hard times. I also know that you cannot tolerate people who are evil, and that you question people about their faith, and you know those who claim to be sent by God, but they are not. ³I know also that you endure patiently when you suffer for believing in me and that you continue to serve me steadfastly, even when people caused you to suffer because you followed me. You have continued to serve and hold to my words even when it was difficult. You did not give up or stop, even though it has been difficult for you. ⁴Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You no longer love each other and me as you did when you first came to trust. You do not have the same love for me now that you had at first. ⁵So, I tell you to remember how you used to love me. Love me again like you did at the first. If you do not, I will come to you and remove your lamp so you will no longer be my people together. ⁶But you do one thing very well: Those Nicolaitans, the people who say you can worship idols and act immorally—you hate what they do, just as I hate it. ⁷Everyone who wants to understand my message must listen carefully to the message that God’s Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together. The message is this: I will allow those who are victorious to eat fruit from the tree that gives eternal life, the tree that is in God’s garden.”

⁸“Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: ‘I am saying these things to you. I am the first, the one who began all things and I am the last, who causes all things to end. I am the one who died and became alive again. ⁹I know about how you have suffered. I know about how you are poor and lack many things that you need (but you are really rich in the things that are eternal and that can never be taken from you). You know what it is like to have people curse you and say terrible things about you because you follow the Messiah. Those Jews (who are not real Jews) who curse you and say terrible things about you, they are members of the gathering of Satan, and not the gathering of God’s people. ¹⁰Do not be afraid of any of the things that you are about to suffer. The truth is that the devil is about to put some of you in prison, to put you in a difficult place where you are being tested to see what kind of faith you have. For a short period of time you will suffer. Continue to trust in me, even if they kill you because you trust in me. and I will put a wreath on your head that will be a sign that you have eternal life and that you have overcome. ¹¹Listen carefully to the message that God’s Spirit speaks to the groups of believers assembled together. All who conquer will never die a second time.”

¹²“Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Pergamum: ‘I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the sword with two sharp edges. ¹³I know where you live: It is where Satan controls people. I know that you firmly believe in me. You did not deny that you believe/trust in me, not even in the time when Antipas, who faithfully told people about me, was alive. People killed him in your city, a city where people habitually obey Satan. ¹⁴But, even so, I see some matters that are hurting your testimony and weakening your obedience. You permit some of your members to teach things like Balaam taught long ago. He taught Balak to eat food that had been offered to idols and that sexual immorality was permitted among God’s people. ¹⁵In that way, you are also permitting some of your members to practice what the Nicolaitans teach, that sexual immorality is permitted, which, of course, it is not permitted. ¹⁶Stop doing this and change your direction, or I will come to you suddenly and I will make war against them with the sword in my mouth, the word of God. ¹⁷Listen carefully to the message that God’s Spirit speaks to the groups of believers. To him who conquers, I will give the hidden manna, that will feed and strengthen you and I will also give him a white stone, on which I will engrave a new name for him, and the name I give him only he will know.”

¹⁸“Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled together in the city of Thyatira: ‘I, the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a flame of fire and whose feet shine like gleaming bronze, am saying these things to you. ¹⁹I know all the good things that you do. I know that you love me and each other, and that you trust in me. I know that you serve others and that you steadfastly endure a lot of difficulties. I know that you are doing these things more now than you did in the past. ²⁰Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You tolerate that woman among your people who is like that wicked Queen Jezebel who lived long ago. She says that she is a prophetess. However, by what she teaches, she is deceiving my servants. She is urging them to commit sexual

immorality and to eat food that they have offered to idols. ²¹Although I gave her time to turn away from her sexual immorality and pagan practices, she did not want to stop. ²²As a result, I will cause her to become very ill. I will also cause those who act immorally as she does to suffer greatly, if they do not stop doing what she does. ²³Some have become like her children by accepting what she teaches, and I will certainly kill them. Then all the groups of believers will learn that I am the one who finds out what everyone thinks and desires. I will reward each of you according to what you have done. ²⁴But I have something good to say about the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira. It is good that you do not accept these wrong things. It is good that you reject what those teachers call their "secret practices" that Satan taught them. I will not burden you with any other commands. ²⁵Just keep believing firmly in me and obey me until I come. ²⁶As for those who conquer Satan and who keep on doing what I command until they die, I will give them my authority over all people. ²⁷They will control them as if they were striking them with an iron rod. They will destroy evildoers just as people shatter clay pots. ²⁸I do all of this with the authority my Father gave me, and I will give the morning star to those who rule with me so that we may have great joy in our victory. ²⁹Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

Chapter 3

¹"Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Sardis. 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know everything that you have done. You appear to be alive, but you are dead. ²Be alert! Become aware of your spiritual need as though you were awaking from sleep, and strengthen yourself spiritually, because you are so useless that you are like someone who is about to die. You must do this because I know that my God considers that nothing that you do is satisfactory. ³So then, keep remembering God's message and the truth that you accepted when you heard it. Always obey it and turn away from your sinful behavior. If you do not do this, I will come to you when you are not expecting me, as a thief comes. You will never know at what time I will come to judge you. ⁴Nevertheless, you have a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. It is as though they have not dirtied their garments. As a result, because they are worthy to live with me, they will live with me and will be pure in every way, like people who are dressed in pure white clothing. ⁵Those who conquer Satan I will dress in these same white garments. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life that contains the names of the people who have eternal life. Instead, I will acknowledge in the presence of my Father and his angels that they belong to me. ⁶Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

⁷"Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Philadelphia: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the One who is holy, the True One. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter my kingdom. I am the one who opens doors so that no one can close them and the one who closes doors so that no one can open them. ⁸I know everything you have done. Be aware that I have opened a door for you that no one can close. I know that although you have little power, you have obeyed what I say, and you have not denied that you believe in me. ⁹Be careful! I am aware that some of your people meet together with those who follow Satan. They claim to be Jews, but I know that they are not true Jews. They are lying. I will cause them to come to you and to bow down humbly at your feet and to acknowledge that I love you.

¹⁰Because you have obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently, I will keep you safe from those who will try to make you disobey me. They will soon do this to everyone in the entire world. ¹¹I am coming soon. So continue to do what I have told you, in order that no one may cause you to lose your reward that God has reserved for you. ¹²I will make those who conquer Satan secure. They will be firm like the pillars in the temple of my God, and they will remain there forever. I will mark them with the name of my God, showing that they belong to him. I will also mark them with the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, the city that will descend out of heaven from my God. I will also mark them with my new name, showing that they belong to me. ¹³Everyone who

wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

14"Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Laodicea: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who guarantees all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God reliably and accurately. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. **15**I know everything that you have done: You do not deny that you trust in me, but you do not love me much. You are like water that is neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot! **16**Because you are neither enthusiastic about me nor concerned about your lack of spiritual growth, I am about to reject you, as if I were spitting lukewarm water out of my mouth. **17**You are saying, 'I am rich and have acquired a lot of wealth. I lack nothing!' But you do not realize that you are lacking in many ways. You are like people who are very wretched and pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. **18**I advise you to obtain from me all that you need, as though you were buying from me pure gold so that you may be truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as though you were buying from me white garments so that you might wear clothes instead of being naked and ashamed. Let me help you to understand the truth, as though you were buying from me eye salve to put on sick eyes. **19**Since I rebuke and correct all those whom I love, turn away with all your heart from your sinful behavior. **20**I am here! I am calling each one, and I am standing and waiting at your door and knocking on the door. If you hear my voice and you open the door, I will come in and we will eat together as friends. **21**I will permit everyone who conquers Satan to sit and rule with me on my throne, just as I conquered Satan and now sit and rule with my Father on his throne. **22**Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together.'"

Chapter 4

1After these things I, John, saw in the vision that there was a door open in heaven. The one whose voice was like a loud trumpet, the one who had spoken to me previously, said to me, "Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later." **2**Immediately God's Spirit began revealing things to me. He showed me a throne in heaven, and on the throne a ruler was sitting. **3**The ruler on the throne shone like a crystalline jasper jewel and like a red carnelian jewel. Around the throne was a rainbow that shone like a brilliant green emerald jewel. **4**Around the throne there were twenty-four other thrones. On these thrones twenty-four elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and had golden crowns on their heads. **5**Out of the throne came flashes of light and loud voices and thunder. In front of the throne were seven burning torches. These are the seven spirits of God. **6**In front of the throne there was also what looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear, like crystal. On each of the four sides of the throne there was a living creature. Each one was covered with eyes in front and behind. **7-8**The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature was like an ox. The third living creature had a face like a man's face. The fourth living creature was like an eagle that was flying. Each of the four living creatures had six wings. These wings were covered with eyes both top and bottom. Day and night they constantly say:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, who rules over all.

He is the one who has always existed,

who exists now, and who will always exist."

9-10The living creatures praise, honor, and thank the one who sits on the throne, the one who lives forever. Whenever they do that, the twenty-four elders lie down on the ground before the one who sits on the throne. They worship him, the one who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns in front of the throne and say:

11"Our Lord and God,

You deserve for all beings to praise you because you are glorious, honorable, and all-powerful.

You alone created everything,

And because you intended that they should exist,

you created them; as a result, they exist.”

Chapter 5

¹I saw that there was a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. The scroll was written on its outside as well as on its inside. It was sealed with seven seals. ²I saw a strong angel who was announcing in a loud voice, “The person who is worthy to break the seals of the scroll and then to open it should come and do it!” ³But no created being in heaven, on the earth, or under it was able to open the scroll and see what was written on it. ⁴I wept loudly because there was no one worthy to do that. ⁵But one of the elders said to me, “Do not cry any longer! Look, the one who is called the Lion from the tribe of Judah, who is the descendant and heir of King David, has overcome Satan! As a result, he is worthy to break the seven seals on the scroll and to open it!” ⁶Then I saw a Lamb standing there in the midst of the four living creatures and the elders around the throne. Although he was alive, he had marks that showed that someone had killed him. He had seven horns, and he had seven eyes that are the seven spirits of God that God sends out over all the earth. ⁷The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. ⁸When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him. They each had a harp, and they had golden bowls full of incense that represents the prayers of God’s people. ⁹The living creatures and the elders sang a new song. They sang:

“You are worthy to receive the scroll and to open its seals
because you were killed, and because you redeemed
people for God from every tribe, language, people,
and people group with your blood when you died.

¹⁰You have caused them to become a people over whom our God rules
and to become priests who serve him; they will rule on the earth.”

¹¹As I continued to look, I heard the voices of many angels around the throne and around the living creatures and the elders. There were millions of them, a crowd so large that no one could count them. ¹²They were singing in a loud voice:

“The Lamb whom they killed—
it is right that we should praise his power, wealth, wisdom, and strength.
It is right that all created things should honor him and praise him!”

¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea say,
“We must forever praise, honor, and glorify the one who sits on the throne
and the lamb.

May they reign with complete power forever!”

¹⁴The four living creatures said, “May it be so!” Then the elders prostrated themselves on the ground and worshiped God and the lamb.

Chapter 6

¹I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven seals of the scroll. Then one of the four living creatures said in a voice as loud as thunder, “Come!” ²and a white horse appeared. There was someone riding it, and he had a bow and

arrows. God gave him a wreath of leaves to wear on his head to show that he was to conquer evil. He went out to continue to do battle and to win. ³Then the one looking like a Lamb opened the second seal, and I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴When he said that, a red horse appeared. There was also someone riding it, and God had given him the power to cause people to no longer live peacefully, but instead to kill each other. For this purpose he carried a large sword. ⁵Then the Lamb opened the third seal, and I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" This time, I saw a black horse appear. There was someone riding it, and he had a pair of balance scales in his hand. ⁶Then I heard a voice that sounded like it was coming from among the four living creatures. It said to the person on the horse, "Make it happen that one liter of wheat will cost so much that a man must work a whole day to earn enough money to buy it. Also make it happen that three liters of barley will sell for the same price. But do not reduce the supply of olive oil or wine." ⁷Then the Lamb opened the fourth seal, and I heard the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸This time I saw a pale horse appear. Someone was riding it; his name was "The one who causes people to die." Someone else was following him; this person's name was "The place where dead people go." God gave these two persons power to kill one-fourth of all people on earth. They could kill them with weapons, or with famine, or with sickness, or with wild animals.

⁹Then the Lamb opened the fifth seal, and I saw under the altar in heaven the spirits of God's servants whom others had killed because these servants had believed God's message, the message to which God himself bore witness. ¹⁰They loudly asked God, "Sovereign Lord, you are holy and true. How long will it be before you condemn and punish the people on earth who murdered us?" ¹¹Then God gave to each of them a white robe, and he told them to be patient a little longer. They had to wait until the complete number of the Lord's other servants and followers would be killed.

¹²Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth seal, and the earth shook violently. The sun became as black as cloth made of black wool. The whole moon became red like blood. ¹³Stars fell to the earth in great numbers, just as immature figs fall when a fig tree shakes in a strong wind. ¹⁴The sky split open and rolled up on either side just as an old scroll rolls up when it is split in two. Every mountain and island was shaken out of its place. ¹⁵As a result, all the people on earth, including kings, high-ranking people, generals, rich people, powerful people, along with everybody else, both slave and free, hid in caves and between the mountain rocks. ¹⁶They shouted to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us so that the one who sits on the throne will not be able to see us, and so that the Lamb will not be able to punish us!" ¹⁷This is the terrible day on which they will punish us. No one will be able to survive!"

Chapter 7

¹After this I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing at the north, one at the east, one at the south, and one at the west. They were keeping back the winds from blowing and destroying things on the earth, on the ocean, or even on any tree. ²Then I saw another angel come up from the east. He was carrying God's seal. With this seal God, who is all-powerful, marks his own people to protect them. This angel called out with a loud voice to the four angels whom God had told to harm the earth and the ocean. ³He said to them, "Do not harm the earth or the ocean or the trees until we have marked the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all God's servants. I heard the number of people whom they marked. The number was 144,000. They were people from every tribe of Israel. They symbolized the complete number of people whom God would protect. ⁵The angels marked twelve thousand people from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, ⁶twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh. ⁷In addition, there were twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe of Issachar, ⁸twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

⁹After these things happened, I saw a huge crowd. There were so many people that no one could count them. They were from every nation, every tribe, every people group, and every language. They were standing before the

throne and before the lamb. They were wearing white robes and held palm branches to wave with their hands in order to celebrate. ¹⁰They shouted loudly, "Our God, the one who sits on the throne, and the Lamb have rescued us from Satan's power!" ¹¹All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders, and around the four living creatures. They all lay before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. ¹²They said, "Yes, it is so! We praise, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We acknowledge that you are completely wise, the powerful one, who is able to do all things. Our God forever! It is so!"

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, "These people who are wearing white robes, do you know who they are and from where they come?" ¹⁴I answered him, "Sir, I do not know. Surely you know who they are!" He said to me, "These are the people who have come through the great tribulation. The Lamb died for them, and God has forgiven them for their sins. It is as if they have washed their robes in his blood and made them clean. ¹⁵Because of this, they are in front of God's throne, and they worship him day and night in his temple. God, the one who sits on the throne, will protect them. ¹⁶As a result, they will never again be hungry. They will never again be thirsty. The sun will never again beat on them, nor will any heat scorch them. ¹⁷This is because the Lamb who is at the throne will take care of them, just as a shepherd takes care of his sheep. He will guide them to the source of eternal life, just as a shepherd leads his sheep to springs of water. God will cause them to no longer be sad. It will be as if he were wiping away all tears from their eyes."

Chapter 8

¹Then the Lamb opened the seventh seal, and there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. ²I saw the seven angels who stand in front of God. He gave each of them a trumpet. ³Another angel came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense in order that he might offer it, with the prayers of all God's people, on the gold altar that is in front of God's throne. Then he burned this incense on the altar. ⁴From the bowl in the angel's hand, the smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of God's people, went up to God. ⁵Then the angel took the golden bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw it all onto the earth. Thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

⁶Then the seven angels, each of which had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. ⁷The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood poured down onto the earth. As a result, one-third of everything on the surface of the land was burned up: one-third of the trees burned up, and one-third of all the green grass was burned up. ⁸Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain burning with fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one-third of the ocean became red like blood, ⁹one-third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one-third of the ships in the ocean were destroyed. ¹⁰Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star, which was burning like a torch, fell from the sky into one-third of the rivers and into one-third of the springs of water. ¹¹The name of the star is Bitterness. As a result, the water in one-third of the rivers and springs became bitter. Many people died from drinking the water because it had become bitter. ¹²Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one-third of the time. The sun did not shine during one-third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one-third of the night.

¹³As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting in a loud voice, "Terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!"

Chapter 9

¹Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the shaft that went down but had no ending. ²When he opened that shaft, smoke rose from it like smoke from a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. ³Locusts

also came out of the smoke onto the earth. God gave them power to sting people as scorpions sting people. ⁴God told the locusts that they should not harm the grass of the earth or any plants or any tree. God said that they should harm only those people who did not have the mark on their foreheads to show that they belonged to God. ⁵God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone. ⁶During the time when the locusts torture rebellious people, the pain will be so bad that people will want to find a way to die, but they will not find any way. They will long to die, but they will not be able to die. ⁷The locusts looked like horses that are ready for battle. They had on their heads what looked like golden crowns. Their faces were like the faces of people. ⁸They had long hair like women's long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions' teeth. ⁹They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots as they are rushing into battle. ¹⁰They had tails like tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their power to harm people during those five months was in their tails. ¹¹The king who ruled over them was the angel of the shaft that went down but had no ending. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean "Destroyer."

¹²That ended the first terrible event. But be aware that two more terrible events are still to come.

¹³Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the golden altar that is in God's presence. ¹⁴The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵Then those four angels went free, those who had waited for that exact hour of that day, month, and year. They went free in order that they might enable their soldiers to kill one-third of the people. ¹⁶The number of those soldiers riding on horses was two hundred million. I heard someone say how many there were. ¹⁷In the vision I saw what the horses and the soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore breastplates that were red like fire, dusky blue like smoke, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning sulfur.

¹⁸Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses' mouths—killed one-third of the people. ¹⁹The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails had heads like snakes by which they harmed people. ²⁰But the rest of the people, those who were not killed by the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur, did not turn from the sinful things they were doing. They did not stop worshiping demons or the idols that they themselves had made of gold, of silver, of bronze, of stone, and of wood. The people did not stop worshiping them, even though they were idols that could not see, hear, or walk. ²¹They did not stop murdering people, or practicing sorcery, or acting in sexually immoral ways, or stealing things.

Chapter 10

¹In the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun. His legs looked like columns of fire. ²He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land. ³He shouted something with a loud voice, a voice like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, it thundered seven times; in the thunder were words that I could understand. ⁴I was about to write the words of the seven thunders, but a voice from heaven said to me, "Keep secret what the thunders said! Do not write it down!" ⁵Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven, ⁶and he asked the one who lives forever—the one who created heaven and everything that is in it, who created the earth and everything that is on it, and who created the ocean and everything that is in it—to say that what he was going to say was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do. ⁷He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, God's secret plan would be finished, just as he had said long ago to his servants, the prophets.

⁸The one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, "Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land." ⁹So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. In your mouth it will taste sweet like honey, but it will make your stomach bitter." ¹⁰I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. In my mouth it tasted sweet like honey,

but then it made my stomach bitter. ¹¹Then someone said to me, "You must speak God's messages again about many nations, people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings."

Chapter 11

¹Then an angel gave to me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, "Go to the temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshiping there. ²But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building because I have given it to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will trample the city of Jerusalem for forty-two months. ³I will send two witnesses to announce what I reveal to them for 1,260 days. They will show they are sad about the people's sin by wearing rough clothes made from goat's hair." ⁴Those witnesses are the ones that are represented by the two olive trees and the two lampstands that are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth. ⁵If anyone tries to harm those witnesses, fire comes from the witnesses' mouths and destroys them. If people want to harm them, the two witnesses certainly kill them in the same way. ⁶Those witnesses will have authority over the sky in order to keep rain from falling during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have authority to cause water everywhere to become blood; they will also have authority to send down to the earth all kinds of plagues. They will do this as often as they wish. ⁷When they have finished announcing to people the message from God, the beast that comes up from the shaft that went down but had no ending will attack them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸The dead bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street of the great city where their Lord was crucified, the city that is symbolically called Sodom or Egypt because its people are very evil like the people who lived in Sodom and Egypt. ⁹Individuals of many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days. But they will not allow anyone to bury their bodies. ¹⁰When the people who live on the earth see that the witnesses are dead, they will rejoice and celebrate. They will send gifts to each other because these two prophets had sent plagues that tormented them. ¹¹But after three and a half days, God will cause them to breathe again and live. They will stand up, and the people who see them will be terrified. ¹²The two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: "Come up here!" Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. ¹³At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse, and seven thousand people will die. The rest of the people will be afraid and will acknowledge that the God who rules in heaven is awesome.

¹⁴That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon after.

¹⁵Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. Voices in heaven shouted loudly, "Our Lord God and the Messiah whom he has appointed can now govern all the people in the world, and they will continue to rule those people forever!" ¹⁶The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones in God's presence, bowed down their faces to the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷They said:

"Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!

You are the one who exists now!

You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have defeated with your power

everyone who has rebelled against you,

and you now rule over all the people in the world.

¹⁸The unbelieving people of the nations were angrily raging at you.

As a result you have become very angry with them.

You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.

The time has come for you to reward all your servants who were the prophets and the others who believe in you, and all those who honor you, and this includes those who are small and those who are great.

It is time for you to destroy the people who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹Then God opened his temple in heaven, and I saw in it the sacred chest, containing God’s promise. Lightning was flashing; it was thundering and rumbling; the earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

Chapter 12

¹Then something very important appeared in the sky. It was a woman, whose clothing was the sun. The moon was under her feet. On her head was a wreath of victory that was made of twelve stars. ²She was about to deliver a child, and she cried out because she was suffering pain. ³Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. On each of its heads was a royal crown. ⁴The dragon’s tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and threw them to the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth in order that he might eat her child as soon as it was born. ⁵Then she gave birth to a son who is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority as if he were using an iron rod. God snatched away her child and took him to his throne. ⁶But the woman fled into the wilderness. She has a place there that God has prepared for her in order that he may take care of her for 1,260 days.

⁷Then there was a battle in heaven. Michael and the angels that he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back against Michael and his angels. ⁸But the dragon did not win the battle; nor did God allow the dragon and his angels to stay in heaven any longer. ⁹Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. The dragon is the ancient serpent, the one whose names are the Devil and Satan. He is the one who deceives people all over the earth. He was thrown to the earth along with all his angels. ¹⁰Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

“Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!

Now the Messiah has begun to rule!

This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.

He was the one who stood before God day and night and told him that they had done what is wrong.

¹¹Our fellow believers overcame him because the Lamb had shed his blood and died for them

and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.

They did not seek to remain alive,

but were willing to let people kill them for speaking the truth about him.

¹²So everyone in heaven should rejoice.

But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and on the ocean because the devil has come down to you.

He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him.”

¹³When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to a son. ¹⁴But God gave to the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle in order that she might fly into the wilderness. There is a place there that God had prepared for her. There God took care of her for three

and one-half years. The serpent, that is, the dragon, was not able to reach her there. ¹⁵Then the serpent poured water like a river from his mouth toward the woman in order to sweep her away with the water. ¹⁶But the ground helped the woman by opening up and swallowing the river that the dragon poured out from his mouth. ¹⁷Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her descendants. They are the people who obey God's commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. ¹⁸Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

Chapter 13

¹Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. ²This beast was like a leopard. But its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He gave him the authority to rule over people as king. ³One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it died. But its wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and followed it. ⁴They also worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast and said, "No one is as powerful as the beast! Who could ever fight against it?" ⁵God allowed the beast to speak proudly and to insult him. God also allowed it to rule the people for forty-two months. ⁶When it spoke, it insulted God, his name, the place where he lives, and all who live in heaven. ⁷God also allowed the beast to fight against his people and conquer them. It had authority to rule over every tribe, over every nation, over the speakers of every language, and over every people group. ⁸All the people living on earth will worship it. Those who worship it are the ones whose names are not written in the Book of Life. That was the book that was written before the creation of the world, and it belongs to the Lamb who was killed. ⁹Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God. ¹⁰If God has decided that some people will be captured by their enemies, they will be captured. If God has decided that some people will die in war, they will die in war. So God's people must endure suffering and be faithful to him.

¹¹Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But it spoke harshly as a dragon does. ¹²It rules people with power in order to do what the first beast wants. It forces the people who live on the earth to worship the first beast, that is, the beast that almost died but whose wound was healed. ¹³The second beast also did awesome miracles, even causing fire from the sky to fall to earth while people watched. ¹⁴He did these miracles on behalf of the first beast. By doing that, he deceived the people on the earth so that they thought they should worship the first beast. But this happened only because God allowed it to happen. The second beast told the people living on earth to make an idol to represent the first beast, the one that was alive, even though someone had killed him with a sword. ¹⁵God allowed the second beast to breathe life into that idol in order that the idol might speak. And the beast commanded that whoever refused to worship the idol should be killed. ¹⁶The second beast also required that people should write the first beast's name on the right hand or on the forehead of everyone, whether these were important people or unimportant people, rich or poor, free or slave. Everyone! ¹⁷The second beast required this so that people could not buy anything or sell anything if they did not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number representing its name. ¹⁸You must think wisely to understand the meaning of the mark. Anyone who thinks wisely should understand that the number represents mankind. It is 666.

Chapter 14

¹But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144,000 people. He had written his name and his Father's name on their foreheads. ²I heard a sound from heaven, which was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps. ³The 144,000 people were singing a new song while they stood in front of the throne, in front of the four living creatures, and in front of the elders. Only the 144,000 people, the ones whom the Lamb had redeemed from among the people on the earth, could learn that song. No one else could learn that song. ⁴Those 144,000 are the people who are spiritually pure,

like virgins are morally pure. They have not made themselves impure by worshipping any false god. They are the ones who accompany Jesus, the one who is like a lamb, wherever he goes. They represent all those whom he has redeemed for God from among the people of earth, in order that he might offer them to God and to the lamb.

⁵These people never lied when they spoke, and they never acted immorally.

⁶Then I saw another angel flying between the sky and heaven. He was bringing God's eternal good news to earth in order that he might proclaim it to people who live on the earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group. ⁷He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created the heaven, the earth, the ocean, and the springs of water." ⁸Another angel, a second one, came after him saying, "The very evil city of Babylon is now completely destroyed! Babylon made people of all the nations engage with her in the passion of sexual immorality. Babylon is like someone who gives another person too much wine to drink!"

⁹Another angel, a third one, came afterward, saying in a loud voice, "If people worship the beast and its image or allow its mark to be put on their foreheads or on their hands, ¹⁰God will be angry with them and his anger will be like strong wine that he will make them drink. He will torment them in burning sulfur in the presence of his holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them continually, day and night. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow its name to be written on them." ¹²So God's people, those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus, must faithfully continue obeying and trusting him. ¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die in union with the Lord." God's Spirit says, "Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, they will rest, and everyone will know the good things that they have done."

¹⁴Then I saw another surprising thing. It was a white cloud, and on the cloud someone was sitting who looked like the Son of Man. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. In his hand he held a sharp sickle. ¹⁵Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, "The time has come to reap the grain on the earth, so with your sickle reap the grain because the grain is ripe." ¹⁶Then the one who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and he harvested the earth. ¹⁷Another angel came out of the sanctuary in heaven. He also held a sharp sickle. ¹⁸From the altar came still another angel. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who held the sickle, "With your sickle cut off the clusters of grapes in the vineyards on the earth! Then gather the clusters of grapes together because its grapes are ripe!" ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle on the earth. Then he threw the grapes into the huge place where God will angrily punish. ²⁰God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city, and blood came out! The blood flowed in a stream so deep that it reached up to the bridles of the horses and extended for three hundred kilometers.

Chapter 15

¹Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels. They were huge and amazing. It was their duty to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, for it will fully show how angry he is.

²I saw what looked like an ocean that looked as though it was made of glass and mixed with fire. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshipping it or its image, and by not allowing its servant to mark them with the number that represents the beast's name. They were standing by the ocean (that was as clear as glass), and they were holding the harps that God gave them. ³They were singing a song like God's servant Moses sang long ago. They sang this to praise the Lamb in this way:

"Lord God, who rules over everything,

whatever you do is powerful and marvelous!

You always act righteously and truthfully.

You are king forever over all the groups of people!

⁴O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.

All kinds of people will come and bow down before you

because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way.”

⁵After this I saw that the temple in heaven was open, where the sacred tent was. ⁶The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the very holy place. The angels were dressed in clean, white linen garments; they wore gold bands around their chests. ⁷One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl filled with wine. The wine symbolized that God, who lives forever, was very angry with the people who had rebelled against him and was going to punish them. ⁸The temple was filled with smoke that symbolized the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God. No one was able to enter the temple until the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways.

Chapter 16

¹In the vision I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He said, “Go from here and pour out on the earth the wine in the seven bowls. This will make the people suffer because God is angry with them.” ²So the first angel went and poured out on the earth what was contained in his bowl. As a result, horrible and painful sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast’s servants to write the beast’s name on them, those who had worshiped the beast’s image. ³Then the second angel poured out upon the ocean what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water changed its appearance, and it turned into blood, but not living blood. It was like the blood of a dead man, and every creature that lived in the ocean died. ⁴Then the third angel poured out upon the rivers and water springs what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water in the rivers and springs turned into blood. ⁵I heard the angel who has power over the waters say to God, “O God, you exist and have always existed. You are the holy one. You are a fair judge of people. ⁶The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink. This is what they deserve.” ⁷Then I heard someone at the altar answer, “Yes, Lord God, you who rule over everything, you punish people rightly and justly.” ⁸Then the fourth angel poured out on the sun what was contained in his bowl. He was given permission to make the sun so hot that it would scorch people with fire. ⁹So the people were severely burned, and they said evil things about God because he had the power to make them suffer in these ways. But they still refused to turn away from their evil behavior and refused to praise him.

¹⁰When the fifth angel poured out on the throne of the beast what was contained in his bowl, it became dark where the beast ruled. So the beast and the people whom the beast ruled were biting their tongues because they were suffering intense pain. ¹¹They insulted God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing the evil things that they were doing. ¹²Then the sixth angel poured out on the Euphrates River what was contained in his bowl. The water in the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. ¹³Then I saw evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon, one from the mouth of the beast, and one from the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴Those spirits were demons who were able to perform miracles. They went out to the rulers of the whole world in order to gather their armies. This is so that they will fight on the important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. ¹⁵(I heard the Lord Jesus say, “You must listen carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. So I will be happy with those who stay alert and keep on living in the right way so that they will not be ashamed. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so that he will not be ashamed in front of other people.”) ¹⁶The evil spirits will gather the rulers at a place named in the Hebrew language Armageddon.

¹⁷Then the seventh angel poured out into the air what was contained in his bowl. As a result, someone said with a loud voice from the throne in the very holy place, “The time for God to punish rebellious people is finished.”

¹⁸When the angel emptied his bowl, lightning flashed, there were rumblings and thunder, and the earth shook. It shook more violently than it had ever shaken since people first lived on earth. ¹⁹As a result, the very large city split into three parts. God also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon had sinned very much. So he made them drink a cup of the wine that made them suffer because he was angry with them. ²⁰Also as a result of the earthquake, every island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. ²¹Huge hailstones, each weighing thirty-three kilograms, fell from the sky onto the people. Then people blasphemed God because he had punished them in this terrible way, and because the hailstones were very large.

Chapter 17

¹One of the seven angels, who had one of the seven bowls, came to me and said, "Come with me and I will show you how God will punish the prostitute, the woman who represents the city in which there are many canals of water. ²The kings of the earth have acted immorally and idolatrously with her. The people on the earth acted immorally in the same way. It was as if they had gotten drunk on wine that she gave them."

³Then God's Spirit took control of me, and the angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was sitting on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had jewelry of gold, precious stones, and pearls; she held in her hand a golden cup. The cup was full of something to drink that stands for the detestable and filthy things that she does when she commits sexual immorality. ⁵There was a name written on her forehead, a name with a secret meaning. It is "This woman is Babylon, the very evil city! She is the mother of all the prostitutes on the earth. She teaches them to do all the filthy, immoral things in the world." ⁶I saw that the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people, those who had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, I was completely amazed.

⁷The angel said to me, "Do not be amazed. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides, the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸The beast that you saw lived previously. Eventually God will destroy him, but now he is not alive. He is about to come up from the shaft that went down but had no ending. When that beast appears again, the people on the earth will be amazed. They are people whose names have not been written in the Book of Life before God created the world. ⁹People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast on which the woman sits symbolize the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. They also symbolize seven rulers. ¹⁰Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. When he comes, he must remain for only a short time. ¹¹The beast that lived before and then was not alive will be the eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers, but God will certainly destroy him. ¹²The ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. They will receive authority in order to rule people together with the beast, but they will rule for only a short time, as if it were for only one hour. ¹³Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result they will give to the beast their right and authority to rule people. ¹⁴The rulers and the beast will fight against the lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself, and who keep serving him faithfully." ¹⁵Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city represent many different kinds of people, and many different groups of people, and different languages that the people speak, where the prostitute sits. ¹⁶The ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will take away everything that is in the city as if they were leaving it naked. They will destroy it as if devouring flesh, and they will burn it completely. ¹⁷They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will let the beast have their power to rule until what God has said is fulfilled. ¹⁸The prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the kings of the earth."

Chapter 18

¹After this I saw another angel, one who had great authority, coming down from heaven. The earth became bright because he was shining so intensely. ²He shouted with a very loud voice, "God is about to completely destroy the very evil city of Babylon. As a result, all kinds of evil spirits will live there, and all kinds of foul and detestable birds will live there. Babylon is like a prostitute ³with whom all the people groups engaged with her in the passion of sexual immorality, which is like getting drunk on too much wine. Yes, and the kings of the earth have done the same things with her. The merchants of the earth have become rich because the people of those cities strongly desired and bought from the merchants many luxuries things."

⁴I heard Jesus speak from heaven. He said, "My people, flee from that Babylon in order that you do not sin as those people do. If you sin as they do, I will punish you in those seven different ways, just as I will punish them. ⁵It is as though their sins have been piled up to heaven and God remembers them, so now he will punish them."

⁶To the angels whom God assigned to punish Babylon, Jesus said, "Pay back the people of that city to the same extent that they harmed other people. Cause them to suffer twice as much as they caused other people to suffer. ⁷To the same extent that Babylon, like a woman, has honored herself and done the things she wanted to do, to that extent torment her and cause her to grieve. Do that because in her mind she thought, 'I rule as a queen! I am not a widow, and I will never mourn as widows do!' ⁸So in one day, terrible calamities will come upon her. The people in that city will die, others will mourn for them, people will be hungry because there will be no food, and the city will burn up. The Lord God is able to punish her because he is mighty."

⁹The kings on earth who have acted immorally with her and have done just what they wanted to do with her will weep and mourn for her when they see the smoke of the fire that will burn there. ¹⁰They will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as she does. They will say, "How terrible it is for Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing her suddenly and swiftly!" ¹¹The merchants of the earth will weep and will mourn for her because no one in her will ever again buy the things that they have to sell. ¹²⁻¹³They sell ornaments made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell all kinds of rare wood, all kinds of items made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble. They sell cinnamon, spice, perfume, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves. ¹⁴The good things you people longed to have are gone! All your luxurious and splendid possessions have vanished! They will be gone forever! ¹⁵The merchants who sold these things and who had become rich will stand far away because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as the city has. They will weep and mourn, ¹⁶and they will say, "Terrible things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman, dressed in clothes made of fine linen cloth and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. ¹⁷But suddenly and swiftly God has destroyed all these expensive things."

Every ship's captain, all people who travel by ship, all sailors, and all others who earn their living by traveling on the ocean will stand far away from the city." ¹⁸When they see the smoke of the fire that is burning there, they will shout, "No other city has ever been like that great city!" ¹⁹They will throw dust on their heads to show that they are sad, and they will shout, weep, and mourn. They will say, "Terrible things have happened to Babylon. That city made many people rich, the people who had ships that sail on the ocean in order to sell their expensive things. God has suddenly and swiftly destroyed that city!"

²⁰Then someone spoke from heaven saying, "You who live in heaven, rejoice over what has happened to Babylon! You who are God's people, including you apostles and prophets, rejoice. You must rejoice; God has justly punished the people there because they acted so terribly toward you!"

²¹Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain, and he threw it into the ocean. Then he said, "You people in the great city of Babylon, God will throw down your city so that it will disappear just as that stone disappeared in the ocean! Your city will be gone forever! ²²In your city, there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers

making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills. ²³No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy your city because your merchants were the most important men in the world. You used witchcraft to deceive people of all groups of people. ²⁴You are also responsible for killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, you are guilty of every murder committed on the earth!"

Chapter 19

¹After these things I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting things like,

"Hallelujah! He has saved us!

Our God is glorious and mighty!

²Praise him because he judges truly and justly!

He has punished the very evil city that was like a prostitute because their people persuaded the other people of earth to act immorally as they did.

Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!"

³The crowd shouted a second time, saying,

"Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will rise forever!"

⁴The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:

"It is true! Hallelujah!"

⁵Someone spoke from the throne and said,

"All you who are his servants, praise our God!

All you who honor him, whether you are important or not, everyone praise him!"

⁶Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people, like the sound of a huge waterfall, and like the sound of loud claps of thunder. They were shouting:

"Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!

⁷We should rejoice, we should be extremely glad, and we should honor him

because it is now time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has made herself ready.

⁸God has permitted her to dress herself in fine linen, bright and clean."

Fine, bright, and clean linen represents the righteous actions of God's people.

⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write this: how fortunate are the people whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!" He also said to me: "These words that God declares are true!" ¹⁰I immediately prostrated myself at his feet in order to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of your fellow believers, those who speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship because it is the Spirit of God who gives people the power to speak the truth about Jesus!"

¹¹Then I saw the heavens open up, and I was surprised to see a white horse. Jesus, the one who was riding on the horse, is called "Trustworthy and Genuine." He judges all people according to what is right; he fights in justice

against his enemies. ¹²His eyes shone like a flame of fire. There were many royal crowns on his head. A name had been written on him. Only he knows the meaning of that name. ¹³The cloak he was wearing was drenched with blood. His name is also "The Message of God." ¹⁴The armies of heaven were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clothes made of clean white linen. ¹⁵A sharp sword extends from his mouth; with it he will strike the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them powerfully as though he had an iron rod. He will crush his enemies as a person crushes grapes in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and who is furiously angry with them because of their sins. ¹⁶On his cloak over his thigh a name had been written: "King who rules over all other kings and Lord who rules over all other lords."

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, "Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you! ¹⁸Come and eat the flesh of all God's enemies who are dead—the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and of the soldiers who rode them, and the flesh of all other kinds of people, whether they were free or slave, important or not. All kinds!" ¹⁹Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies; they had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰The rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast's presence. By doing that he had deceived the people who had accepted the beast's mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹The rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. All the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

Chapter 20

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit, and he was carrying a large chain in his hand. ²He seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent, the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain could not be loosed for one thousand years. ³The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did that in order that Satan might no longer deceive all the many groups of people, until those one thousand years are ended. After that time, Satan must go free for a short time in order that he can do what God has planned.

⁴I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God gave them authority to judge. I also saw the souls of other people whose heads had been cut off because they had spoken the truth about Jesus and had declared God's message. They were people who had refused to worship the beast or its image, and who had not allowed the beast's servants to put the beast's mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They became alive again, and they ruled with the Messiah during those one thousand years. ⁵They were the ones who lived again the first time that God caused dead people to live again. The rest of the believers who had died did not live again until after those one thousand years. ⁶God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. God will consider them holy. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and the Messiah, and they will rule with the Messiah during those one thousand years.

⁷When the one thousand years are ended, God will release Satan from his prison. ⁸Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God's people. There will be so many of them fighting against God's people that no one will be able to count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore. ⁹They will march over the whole earth and will surround the camp of God's people in Jerusalem, the city that God loves. Then God will send fire down from heaven, and it will burn them up. ¹⁰God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

¹¹Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. He was so fearsome that the earth and the sky disappeared from his presence completely; they were no more. ¹²I saw that the people who had died but now lived again were standing in front of the throne. They were both important and unimportant people! The books in which

God records what people do were opened. Another book was also opened, which is the Book of Life in which God has written the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and now lived again according to what they had done, just as he had recorded it in the books. ¹³The people whose bodies were buried in the sea became alive again in order to stand before God's throne. Everyone who had been buried on the land became alive again also in order to stand before the throne. God judged each one of them according to what each one had done. ¹⁴All the unbelievers—those who had been in the place where they waited after they died—were thrown into the burning lake. The burning lake is the place in which people die the second time. ¹⁵God also threw the people whose names were not in the book, the book where God has written the names of the people who have eternal life, into the lake of fire.

Chapter 21

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed. ²I saw God's holy city, which is the new city of Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. God had prepared it and decorated it, just as women decorate a bride in order to marry a man. ³Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God saying, "Listen to this! Now God will live with people. He will live right in the midst of them! They will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴He will cause them to no longer be sad. He will stop them from weeping ever again. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain because God has taken away those things and they are gone forever."

⁵Then God, who sits on the throne, said, "Listen to this! I am now making everything new!" He said to me: "Write these things that I have told you because you can trust that I will certainly cause them to happen." ⁶He also said to me, "I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give water from the spring that causes people to live forever. ⁷I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. I will be their God, and they will be my children. ⁸But those who are cowardly, those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who do witchcraft, those who worship idols, and every liar will all suffer in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time."

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of wine—the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering—came and said to me, "Come with me and I will show you the people who have permanently united with the Lamb as a woman marries a man!"

¹⁰Then God's Spirit took control of me, and the angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. He showed me God's holy city, the new Jerusalem, which was coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It was shining with the brilliant light that came from God himself. The city was shining as a very precious jasper stone shines, and it was clear like crystal. ¹²Around the city was a very high wall. The wall had twelve gates. An angel was at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe. ¹³Three gates were on the east side, three gates were on the north side, three gates were on the south side, and three gates were on the west side. ¹⁴The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

¹⁵The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod, a rod that he used to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶The city was square in shape; it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2,200 kilometers long, and that its width and height were each the same as its length. ¹⁷He measured its wall and reported that it was sixty-six meters thick. The angel used the measure that people normally use.

¹⁸The city wall was made of something like the green stone that we call jasper. The city itself was made of pure gold that looked like clear glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were beautifully made with precious stones. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second foundation stone was sapphire, the third foundation stone was chalcedony, the fourth foundation stone was emerald, ²⁰the fifth foundation stone was sardonyx, the

sixth foundation stone was sardius, the seventh foundation stone was chrysolite, the eighth foundation stone was beryl, the ninth foundation stone was topaz, the tenth foundation stone was chrysoprase, the eleventh foundation stone was jacinth, and the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst. ²¹The twelve gates of the city were something like huge pearls. Each gate was like a single pearl. The city streets appeared to be pure gold that looked like clear glass.

²²There was no temple in the city. The Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb are there, so there was no need for a temple. ²³The city will not need the sun or the moon to light the city because the light coming from God will light the city, and the Lamb will also be its light. ²⁴The people groups will live with the light of the city shining on them. The kings of the earth will bring their wealth into the city to honor God and the lamb. ²⁵The gates of the city will not be shut at the end of the day as they usually are shut because there will be no night there. ²⁶The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. ²⁷Nothing that is morally impure, no one who does deeds that God considers detestable, and no one who tells lies will ever enter that city. Only those people whose names are written in the book that belongs to the lamb, the book that has the names of people who have eternal life, will be there.

Chapter 22

¹Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the throne where God and the Lamb were sitting. ²It flowed down through the middle of the main street of the city. On each side of the river were trees with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. The trees bear twelve kinds of fruit; they produce one crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine in order that their wounds may heal. ³There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. ⁴They will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

⁶The angel said to me: "These things that God has shown you are true, and he will certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon." ⁷Jesus says to all his people, "Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the message that has been written in this book."

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him. ⁹But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!" ¹⁰He also said to me, "Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. ¹¹Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. Those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are perfect should continue to be perfect."

¹²Jesus says to all people: "Listen! I am coming soon! And I will pay back and punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. ¹³I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. ¹⁴God is very pleased with the people who wash their robes and make them clean because they will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever and because they will be able to enter the gates into the holy city. ¹⁵Outside are people who are unholy. They include people who practice witchcraft, people who sin sexually, people who murder others, idol worshipers, and all people who enjoy telling lies and are continual liars. They can never enter that city."

16"I, Jesus, sent my angel in order that he might say to you people who are the groups of believers that all these things are true. I am the descendant of King David whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star."

17God's Spirit and his people, who are like the bride of the Messiah, say to each one who desires to believe, "Come!" Whoever hears this should also say to each one who desires to believe, "Come!" The people who want to come should come! Everyone who desires the water that enables people to live forever should take it as a free gift!

18I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. **19**If anyone takes away any of the message about what I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person's right to eat fruit from the tree that enables people to live forever. He will also take away that person's right to enter God's city. Both these things are described in this book.

20Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, "Certainly I am coming soon!" I, John, reply, "May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!"

21I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God's people. Amen!

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