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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!' ¹⁶Similarly, 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.' ¹⁷You 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. ¹⁸Also 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.' ¹⁹You 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. ²⁰So 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. ²¹Yes, 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. ²²And 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. ²⁴You 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. ²⁶You 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. ²⁸You 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. ³⁰You say, 'If we had lived when our ancestors lived, we would not have helped those who killed the prophets.' ³¹In this way you admit that you are the descendants of those murderers; so, you are like them! ³²You are as ready to murder people as your ancestors were! ³³You people are so wicked! You are as dangerous as poisonous snakes! You foolishly think that you will escape from God punishing you in hell! ³⁴Take 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. ³⁵So 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."

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